

Check these boxes if you notice any of the following with a loved one or neighbor.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE & UNUSUAL INJURIES

- The "Pattern" Injury:** Bruises or marks that look like a belt buckle, fingers, or a cord.
- Hidden Bruising:** Injuries on the inner arms, thighs, or torso (areas usually covered by clothing).
- Symmetry:** Bilateral bruising (bruises on both upper arms) which often suggests the person was shaken or grabbed hard.
- Defensive Wounds:** Scratches or bruises on the forearms or palms.
- Broken Appointments:** The caregiver frequently cancels doctor or dentist visits without a medical reason.

2. EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL SHIFTS

- The "Startle" Response:** The person flinches or cowers when someone moves quickly or raises their voice.
- Caregiver Deference:** The person looks at the caregiver for "permission" before answering any question.
- Sudden Silence:** A normally talkative person becomes quiet or "shuts down" when a specific person enters the room.
- Self-Destructive Behavior:** Sudden hair pulling, biting themselves, or refusing to eat.
- Isolation:** The caregiver claims the senior is "too tired" or "doesn't want to see anyone" every time you call or visit.

3. SIGNS OF NEGLECT (CAREGIVER OR SELF-NEGLECT)

- Untreated Medical Conditions:** Rashes, sores, or infections that haven't been seen by a doctor.
- Weight & Dehydration:** Sunken eyes, extreme weight loss, or "paper-thin" skin that stays up when pinched (tenting).
- Medication Mismanagement:** Prescription bottles that are either completely full (not being taken) or empty too soon (over-medication).
- Safety Hazards:** Piles of trash, rotting food, animal waste in the home, or a total lack of heat/cooling.
- Inadequate Clothing:** Wearing a heavy coat in the Tallahassee summer or a thin nightgown in the winter.

4. FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION (THE "PAPERWORK" CRIMES)

- The "New Best Friend":** A neighbor or "handyman" who is suddenly at the house every day and managing the mail.
- Account Discrepancies:** Checks written out to "Cash" or large transfers to people the senior barely knows.
- Signatures:** Signatures on checks or documents that look shaky, forged, or different from their usual handwriting.
- Unexplained Property Transfers:** Finding out the senior "signed over" their car or house title as a "gift."
- Missing Legal Documents:** The senior cannot find their Will, Trust, or Power of Attorney because the caregiver "put them away for safekeeping."
- Utility Shut-offs:** Receiving "Past Due" notices for a senior who has always been meticulous with their bills.

NEED SPECIFIC LEGAL ADVICE?

The information provided in this guide is for educational purposes and does not constitute legal advice or an attorney-client relationship. If you have specific questions about your situation or believe you need formal legal protection, please consult with a qualified elder law attorney.

You may contact your local bar association for a referral, or reach out to our office directly to schedule a confidential consultation:

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