

Fact Sheet

Where can you report elder abuse?

Many workers identify with the importance of respecting clients' wishes and rights to privacy and confidentiality, and to self-determination. However there may be circumstances where a person at risk or who is vulnerable may require that you discuss the matter with another person or agency.

Workers are not responsible for determining if or when a crime has occurred, however they do need to know when to contact police, or instances where reporting elder abuse is a compulsory requirement.

Where can I report abuse?

- > There is no single point in South Australia where you can report elder abuse. Reporting it depends on many factors including the type and seriousness of abuse, if the person lives in their own home or in a residential aged care facility, if there are services helping the person, and if the person is able to make decisions independently.
- > If you are unsure about who to contact or actions to take, the [South Australian Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line](#) can be contacted on 1800 372 310 for confidential advice, or to provide information about services which may be able to assist.

Residential aged care

- > Reporting suspected or witnessed sexual and physical abuse of people living in residential aged care facilities is compulsory and must be reported to the police within 24 hours of the incident, or when it is first suspected. Assault includes unlawful sexual contact and unreasonable use of force. Reports of this kind can also be made to the [Aged Care Complaints Commissioner](#)

Who else can you contact?

- > [Aged Rights Advocacy Service](#) (ARAS) can be contacted if you or someone you know has concerns about elder abuse and is receiving a community aged care service or is resident of an aged care facility.
- > ARAS can provide confidential support and advice to you or concerned family, or can advocate on your behalf.
- > If you are worried about an older person and anxious about raising the matter with them directly, discuss your concerns with a supervisor or colleague.

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When should you contact police?

- > If you are concerned about the risk of homicide or suicide, or if the person or their property is at significant risk, call police on 000.
- > If the situation is not an emergency call police on 131 444. This may include making general police related inquiries or reporting a crime that has already happened for example physical or sexual assault, theft, or damage to property. The police may document your concerns about events and refer to this later.
- > You may be required to provide the following information:
 - > the day and time of events, and what you heard or witnessed
 - > if you are aware that money or personal belongings are being stolen, explore whether you can support the person to develop a list of items, or to check bank statements.
- > If you decide to contact the police, consider the following:
 - > the older person may not be able to or fear speaking openly with police
 - > whether the person may feel intimidated, protective, or deny or downplay the abuse to the police
 - > police involvement could deter abuse from continuing, or escalate the abuse after the police leave
 - > it is not uncommon for abusers to lie or cover up the situation with police to get them to go away, especially if the older person has memory problems, or difficulties with language or communication.

Resources

- > Refer to Fact Sheet – *What if a person does not consent to take action?*
- > Refer to Fact Sheet – *Screening, risk assessment and abuse identification*
- > Refer to Fact Sheet – *How to support decision-making capacity?*
- > Refer to Fact Sheet - *When can you share information?*

For more information

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