



# SENIOR EXPLOITATION TOOLKIT

## WHO IS JOIN THE MOVEMENT (JTM)?

JTM (Join the Movement Events, Inc.) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, we work together with communities to protect our neighborhoods from human trafficking. Education and awareness were our intended mission when we formed JTM in 2017. We now also provide advocates through our CARE Team who assist all victims of violence. We work with law enforcement, health care professionals, hospitality professionals, schools, libraries, government, non-government, civil organizations, clubs, LGBTQ+, addiction support groups and private organizations.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS PACKET?

This toolkit offers tips and resources that will assist in educating social workers, older adults, and caretakers on human trafficking. **Human trafficking** is modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. **Traffickers** use force, fraud, or coercion to lure their victims and force them into labor or commercial sexual exploitation.

Every year, tens of thousands of men, women, and children are trafficked in the United States. It is estimated that human trafficking generates \$150 billion per year, second only to drug trafficking as the most profitable form of transnational crime.

Human trafficking is a hidden crime as victims rarely come forward, especially when it comes to our seniors, to seek help because of language barriers, fear of the traffickers, and/or fear of law enforcement.

Traffickers look for people who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons, including psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, lack of a social safety net, natural disasters, or political instability. The trauma caused by the traffickers can be so great that many may not identify themselves as victims or ask for help, even in highly public settings.

- Who is vulnerable?
- What are the indicators?
- Who could be exploiting them?
- What do you do next?

[www.itme.org](http://www.itme.org)

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## HOW ARE SENIORS EXPLOITED?

### SENIOR ABUSE CAN TAKE MANY DIFFERENT FORMS, INCLUDING:

- **Physical abuse**, which can range from slapping or shoving to severe beatings and restraining with ropes or chains. When a caregiver or other person uses enough force to cause unnecessary pain or injury, even if the reason is to help the older person, the behavior can be considered abusive. Physical abuse also encompasses behaviors such as hitting, beating, pushing, shoving, kicking, pinching, burning, or biting. It also includes the inappropriate use of medications and physical restraints and physical punishment of any kind.
- **Verbal, emotional, or psychological abuse**, including yelling, swearing, threatening, making insulting or disrespectful comments, or repeatedly ignoring the older adult. Psychological abuse involves any type of coercive or threatening behavior that sets up a power differential between the older adult and his or her family member or caregiver. It can also include treating the older person like a child and isolating the person from family, friends, and regular activities.
- **Sexual abuse**, which includes inappropriate touching, photographing the older adult in suggestive poses, forcing the person to look at pornography, and any unwanted sexualized behavior.
- **Financial abuse and exploitation**, which can range from misuse of an older person's funds to embezzlement. It can include forging checks, taking someone else's retirement or Social Security benefits, or using a person's credit cards and bank accounts without their permission. It also includes changing names on a will, bank account, life insurance policy, or title to a house without permission.
- **Caregiver neglect**, which can be intentional or unintentional, and involves intentionally failing to meet the physical, social, or emotional needs of the older person. Neglect can include failure to provide food, water, clothing, medications, and assistance with activities of daily living or help with personal hygiene.

### HOW TRAFFICKERS OPERATE:

Traffickers prey on people with little or no safety net. They look for people who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons, including economic hardship, violence in the home, natural disasters, or political instability. They will become whatever their potential victim may need: a boyfriend, a protector, a home, social status. Traffickers provide for victims' basic needs to gain their favor and trust.

Traffickers use a variety of strategies to trap victims, including violence or threats of violence, as well as psychological coercion/brainwashing. The trauma can be so severe that many may not see themselves as victims or ask for help.

### SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

Recognizing key indicators can save a life. This is the first step in identifying victims. Not all indicators listed are present in every human trafficking situation. The presence or absence of any indicator is not necessarily proof of human trafficking. If you see something, say something. Call 911.

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## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE?

While many of these symptoms may be the result of disease conditions or medications, their appearance should prompt further investigation to determine and remedy the cause. Cues that cannot be explained medically may signal elder abuse.

- Unexplained bruises, burns, cuts, or scars.
- Lack of basic hygiene, adequate food and water, or clean and appropriate clothing.
- Lack of medical aids (glasses, walker, teeth, hearing aid, medications).
- Sunken eyes or unexplained weight loss.
- Untreated bedsores.
- Dismissive attitude or statements about injuries.
- Unreasonably fearful or suspicious.
- Lack of interest in social contacts.
- Unexplained or uncharacteristic changes in behavior.
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding.
- Venereal diseases or vaginal infections.
- Signs of insufficient care or unpaid bills despite adequate financial resources.
- Large withdrawals from bank accounts or other unusual ATM activity.

## THE INDIVIDUAL FREQUENTLY EXPERIENCES:

- Loss of trust in others.
- Loss of security.
- Depression.
- Feelings of fear, shame, guilt, anger, self-doubt, remorse, worthlessness.
- Financial destitution.
- Inability to replace lost assets through employment.
- Inability to hire attorney to pursue legal protections and remedies.
- Becoming reliant on government 'safety net' programs.
- Inability to provide long term care needs.
- Loss of primary residence.

Interventions to address financial abuse include closing joint bank accounts, having the victim revoke the power of attorney; putting in place a responsible person or agency to assist with managing the victim's funds; and restarting utilities if they've been shut off.

ADRC often works to reduce the isolation of the victim, through putting in services, etc., which reduces his/her risk of continued abuse. In many situations, ADRC refers cases to law enforcement for investigation and prosecution.

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## **THE MOST FREQUENT SCAMS:**

### **FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION:**

Is a fast-growing form of abuse for seniors and adults with disabilities.

Who could that involve?

- Caretakers
- Family members
- Neighbors
- Friends and acquaintances
- Bank employees
- Pastor
- Doctors or nurses

### **COMMON SCAMS BY STRANGERS:**

- Lottery & sweepstakes scams “You’ve already won! Just send \$2,500 to cover your taxes!”
- Home repair/traveling con men “We’re in your area and can coat your driveway / roof really cheaply?”
- Grandparent scam: You’re called and told your grandson is in jail and needs you to send money immediately!
- Charity scams: falsely soliciting funds for good causes; very common after disasters.
- I’m from the utility company; I need you to come outside with me for a minute (while accomplice steals valuables).
- Roof repair, yard work, home repair scams.
- Telemarketing scams and accompanying threats.
- Money sent via telegraphs to people claiming lottery winnings.

### **COMMON SCAMS BY “PROFESSIONALS”:**

- Predatory Lending – seniors pressured into taking out inappropriate reverse mortgages or other loans.
- Annuity sales – the senior may be pressured into using the equity realized from a reverse mortgage (or other liquid assets) to buy an expensive annuity which may not mature until the person is well into their 90’s or over 100.
- Investment/securities schemes – pyramid schemes; unrealistic returns promised; dealer is not licensed.
- Internet phishing – false emails about bank accounts
- Identity theft – credit cards opened fraudulently, etc.
- Medicare scams – these are the costliest in terms of the dollar amounts.

### **COMMON WAYS FAMILY MEMBERS AND TRUSTED OTHERS EXPLOIT VULNERABLE ADULTS:**

- Using a Power of Attorney, given by the victim to allow another person to handle his/her finances, as a license to steal the victim’s monies for the perpetrator’s own use.
- Taking advantage of joint bank accounts in the same way.
- Using ATM cards and stealing checks to withdraw monies from the victim’s accounts.
- Threatening to abandon, hit or otherwise harm the victim unless he or she gives the perpetrator what he/she wants.

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- Refusing to obtain needed care and medical services for the victim to keep the person's assets available for the abuser.
- In-home care providers charging for services; keeping change from errands, paying bills which don't belong to the vulnerable adult, asking the vulnerable adult to sign falsified time sheets, spending their work time on the phone, and not doing what they are paid to do.
- Reports of financial exploitation of vulnerable adults often involve allegations of abuse and neglect as well. Report to ADRC who investigates all the reported types of abuse, assesses the victim's cognitive capacity, and takes appropriate steps to stop or mitigate the abuse to the extent possible.

### **CAREGIVER NEGLECT:**

This can be intentional or unintentional, and involves purposely failing to meet the physical, social, or emotional needs of the older person.

Neglect can include failure to provide food, water, clothing, medications, and assistance with activities of daily living or help with personal hygiene.

### **IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!**

- Don't assume this is a "victimless" crime.
- Be aware of the red flags we just talked about.
- Keep your eyes open.
- Take note of what they are wearing, height, hair color, etc. car license plate.
- Never confront a suspected trafficker or the victim.
- Report suspicious activities.

### **IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!**

- People who witness any form of abuse should call 911.
- A state-by-state list of places to report elder abuse is available on the U.S. Administration on Aging's National Center on Elder Abuse by calling 800-677-1116.

Call 911 if it's an emergency or call your local Police Department. Local law enforcement is always an option to ask them to do a wellness check.

**Do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert the victim.**

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## **JTM CARE TEAM:**

The CARE (Community Advocate Resource Evaluation) Team is a group of community members fully trained as advocates for victims of violence, which includes human trafficking, domestic abuse, and sexual assault. We offer advocacy services to local hospitals for emergency intake of victims of violence. The CARE Team also includes male advocates so all our victims can feel comfortable during the forensic examination at the hospital. Currently, we are committed to providing advocates for Aurora Lakeland Hospital, Elkhorn, WI; Burlington Memorial Hospital, Burlington, WI; Aurora Medical Center, Mt. Pleasant, WI. We are now also providing advocates for the Walworth County Child Advocacy Center.

The CARE Team provides advocacy services at the Walworth County Jail in Elkhorn. This can include emergency services as needed and follow up on a regular basis with victims. This includes a regular visit with the survivor, so they know they have support. We will also assist in providing a recovery program for the survivors when they are released from jail. Each case is different, and the response will be appropriate for the survivor we are assisting while incarcerated.

JTM now has a CARE Team franchise called Vision Beyond Eyes (ViBE) Kibera slums and Embakasi East (Tassia & Soweto) in Nairobi, Kenya. We have trained 16 men and women community leaders as advocates for victims of violence. They are trained to assist victims of human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

JTM also provides CARE bags to victims as needed. The CARE bags are given to victims by the Forensic Nurse Examiner at the time of services provided at the hospital. The CARE Bags include travel sized toiletries that include shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, and any other items that will help fill a basic need. The bags are plain backpacks or totes without any logos. We also provide CARE bags to those incarcerated at the jail, but they are not given the items until they are released, along with their own personal possessions. All the items provided are collected by members of our local community. We believe that every victim should know that we are a community that cares. They are never alone.

## **References and Resources:**

**National Anti-human trafficking hotline – 1-888-373-7888**

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Contact your local Department of Health & Human Services ADRC

Call **911** if you feel this is an emergency.

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