



# The Advocate

A Newsletter From Your Regional Ombudsman Program

JUNE 2008

Serving  
Alexander,  
Burke,  
Caldwell,  
And  
Catawba  
Counties

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## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENES DAY JUNE 15, 2008

### WHAT IS WORLD AWARENESS DAY?

World Awareness Day involves activities to bring greater recognition of mistreatment of older adults wherever they live throughout the world and to highlight the need for appropriate action. It is intended to give abuse and neglect of older adults a global relevance that will sustain and move prevention efforts forward throughout the whole year and years to come.

World Awareness Day involves national and international activities developed by countries, communities, neighborhoods and organizations collaborating in multigenerational and multidisciplinary initiatives. It can encompass volunteer and educational programs, cultural and art events, as well as diverse use of information technology, all aiming to create an awareness of elder abuse and its consequences.

Through collaboration and sharing knowledge, practice and research, the world's collective efforts may actually dream our impossible dream: "my world, your world, our world—free of elder abuse."

No effort is too small to be counted in an awareness campaign.

My World, Your  
World, Our  
World — Free of  
Elder Abuse

## Aggression Between Nursing-Home Residents More Common Than Widely Believed, Studies Find

When people hear about elder abuse in nursing homes, they usually think of staff members victimizing residents. However, research by Cornell University faculty members suggests that a more prevalent and serious problem may be aggression and violence that occurs between residents themselves.

Although such aggression can have serious consequences for both aggressors and victims, the issue has received little attention from researchers, and few proven solutions exist to prevent resident altercations, says Karl Pillemer, director of the Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging at the College of Human Ecology. He has co-authored two articles -- in *Aggression and Violent Behavior* and in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* -- on "resident-to-resident mistreatment" this spring with Weill Cornell Medical College professor of medicine Mark S. Lachs, M.D., and medical student Tony Rosen. Both studies report that verbal and physical aggression between residents is common and problematic, and that more research is necessary to identify risk factors and preventative measures.

"Anyone who spends much time in a nursing home will observe arguments, threats and shouting matches among residents, as well as behaviors like pushing, shoving and hitting," Pillemer said.

"Given that nursing homes are environments where people live close together, and many residents have lowered inhibitions because of dementia, such incidents are not surprising," he said. "Because of the nature of nursing home life, it is impossible to eliminate these abusive behaviors entirely, but we need better scientific evidence about what works to prevent this problem."

The studies found 35 different types of physical and verbal abuse between residents at a large urban nursing home. Screaming was the most common form of aggression, followed by such physical violence as pushing and punching or fighting.

In related work, the authors found that 2.4 percent of residents reported personally experiencing physical aggression from another resident and 7.3 percent reported experiencing verbal aggression over just a two-week period. Most respondents rated the events as moderately or extremely disruptive to daily activities.

In another study, 12 nurse-observers identified 30 episodes of resident-to-resident aggression on just a single eight-hour shift, 17 of which were physical. Research also indicates that victims are more likely to be male, have behavioral problems like wandering and be cognitively impaired.

While such incidents are difficult to prevent, these types of studies will help nursing-home staff manage aggression among patients, Pillemer said.

"At present, staff have few solutions available to them and typical interventions in the nursing home may have negative consequences for aggressive residents, including the use of psychotropic medications or isolation of the resident," said Lachs, co-chief of geriatrics at Weill Cornell. "We hope our work will help inspire a vigorous search for programs that work to prevent aggression and violence among residents in long-term care."

(article from [www.medicalnewstoday.com](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com))

**Help is available.....The Ombudsman program has two wonderful training kits that you can share with your staff on the topic of aggressive behaviors in older adults. "Choice & Challenge: Caring for Aggressive Older Adults Across Levels of Care" and "Dealing With Physical Aggression in Caregiving" are available on loan thru the Ombudsman office. Please contact us at (828) 485-4213 for more information.**

## Prevention of Abuse and Neglect in Long Term Care Settings

The most effective prevention programs, experts say, use a combination of strategies to protect vulnerable elders. In 2002, the National Center on Elder Abuse commissioned a review of prevention research related to abuse in nursing homes and other long term care settings. Strategies identified in the literature include:

- Assure **coordination** between law enforcement, regulatory, adult protection, and nursing home advocacy groups.
- Support **education and training** in interpersonal caregiver skills, managing difficult resident care situations, problem-solving, cultural issues that affect staff/ resident relationships, conflict resolution, stress reduction techniques, information about dementia, and witnessing and reporting abuse.
- Improve **work conditions** , through adequate staffing, enhanced communication between direct care and administrative staff, more time to nurture relationships between staff and residents, humane salaries, opportunities for upward mobility, and greater recognition, respect and understanding for the difficult lives many workers lead.
- Assure **compliance** with federal requirements concerning hiring of abusive nurse aides.
- Promote **environments conducive to good care** .
- Assure strict **enforcement** of mandatory reporting, as well as educate professionals and the public (non-mandatory reporters).
- Improve **support for nurse aides** (support groups).
- Support and strengthen **resident councils** .
- Assure that **hiring practices** include screening of prospective employees for criminal backgrounds, history of substance abuse and domestic violence, their feelings about caring for the elderly, reactions to abusive residents, work ethics, and their ability to manage anger and stress.

## What is Adult Protective Services?

Disabled adults are vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. County departments of social services receive and evaluate reports to determine whether disabled adults are in need of protective services and what services are needed (as required by Article 6, Chapter 108A of the North Carolina General Statutes).

If you have a concern that an elderly or disabled adult is being exploited, abused or neglected, call your county [Department of Social Services office](#).

County agencies protect adults by:

- ✦ Receiving reports and evaluating the need for protective services
- ✦ Planning and counseling with the disabled adult, the family or caregiver to identify, remedy, and prevent problems which result in abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- ✦ Reporting evidence of mistreatment to the District Attorney and various regulatory agencies when appropriate
- ✦ Initiating court action as necessary to protect the adult
- ✦ Mobilizing essential services on behalf of the disabled adult

Disabled adults or disabled emancipated minors present in North Carolina who are reported to be abused, neglected, or exploited and in need of protective services are eligible to receive this service without regard to income.

The new and revised Adult Protective Services Tools are now available on our website [http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/afs\\_aps\\_tool.htm](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/afs_aps_tool.htm).

## UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The 19th Annual NAPSA Conference in collaboration with The Illinois Department on Aging  
"APS: Advocating, Protecting and Serving Vulnerable Adults"

August 26 - 29, 2008

Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers

301 East North Water Street

Chicago, IL 60611

Phone: 312-464-1000

### **SomeOne Cares Christian Caregiver Conference**

**September 16 - 19, 2008**

**Ridgecrest Conference Center**

**Ridgecrest, NC**

7th Annual North Carolina Conference on Aging

October 28 - 30, 2008

Greenville Convention Center & Hilton Hotel

Greenville, NC

For more information: [www.aging.unc.edu.nccoa](http://www.aging.unc.edu.nccoa)

### **Centralina Area Agency on Aging**

**2008 Annual Aging Conference**

**November 6 - 7, 2008**

**Friendship Missionary Baptist Church**

**Charlotte, NC**

**1-800-508-5777**

Western Piedmont Council of Governments

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