

Abuse of Older People



TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT THE ABUSE

This information is from the **Seniors Legal and Support Service** at Caxton Legal Centre. The service is funded by the state government. It offers free, confidential legal and social work services to older people to help them deal with harm or neglect by trusted family members or friends.

HOW TO GET FREE HELP — STEP BY STEP

Abuse can be financial, verbal, emotional, physical or a combination of these. It is often hard to talk about these problems, and it is common to feel shame about what is happening. If you are worried or fearful and want to know about your options to improve your situation, you can call the statewide helpline on 1300 651 192 and ask for help.

A COMMON STORY

Clarice wants the abuse to stop but is afraid to say something

Clarice is 71 years old. She is very sad because of the way her family is treating her. They do not respect her. They do not listen to her. They are controlling her money and her house. Sometimes there is shouting, swearing, pushing or hitting. She feels unsafe when this happens. Hurtful comments are made about her. She often cares for the grandchildren and is exhausted. Clarice does not want her family to get into trouble. She just wants them to stop mistreating her.

CLARICE'S RIGHTS

Clarice has the right to live a life free from this type of mistreatment. This behaviour is called 'abuse'. Family and community pressure may stop Clarice from speaking out about the abuse.

She may feel ashamed and worried that she won't be believed if she reports this. She may feel afraid of what police will do if she called them. She may feel powerless and not know who to talk to. Clarice may have tried to talk about the abuse in her community, but the mistreatment continued.

It is now time to tell someone else and there are different ways Clarice can be helped. It is Clarice's choice about the type of help she accepts to stop the abuse.

IT'S CLARICE'S DECISION

If Clarice has decided that she needs to tell someone about the abuse, she can talk to someone at the Seniors Legal and Support Service which is:

- a community organisation and not part of the police or government
- free and confidential
- a counselling service, so if Clarice just wants to talk to someone but not do anything, that's okay.

The Seniors Legal and Support Service can:

- provide Clarice with legal advice
- provide social work services to Clarice including assistance with aged care, transport, housing, health and other support services
- give Clarice a list of steps that she can choose from to stop the abuse, and Clarice can decide what steps she wants to take.

Clarice may also decide to talk to:

- someone she trusts in her community to see if they can help
- a trusted neighbour or friend who could contact the Seniors Legal and Support Service for Clarice
- her doctor, who will keep the information confidential unless Clarice agrees for the doctor to assist her by telling another service about her situation
- an aged care worker who provides her with aged care services, who will talk to their manager about how to help Clarice
- a nurse or social worker if Clarice has been admitted to hospital
- police if Clarice is in immediate danger, by calling 000.

WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO CLARICE'S FAMILY

Clarice is worried about her family and what may happen if she tells anyone about the abuse. The worst that can happen is that:

- sadly, her family and community relationships may remain strained or broken and take time to heal

- there may be a court hearing in the Magistrates Court to make protection orders for Clarice to stop her family's behaviour. Clarice's family will not be punished unless they disobey those orders
- if Clarice has impaired decision-making ability, there may be a court hearing in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal to make orders appointing a trustworthy family member or government body to make decisions for Clarice.

The positive things that can happen for the family if Clarice tells someone are that:

- her family may decide to change their behaviours
- Clarice can regain control over her life and money
- she can set up her affairs so that the abuse does not recur
- Clarice can feel safe again
- she can see her lovely grandchildren without having to provide all the care for them
- Clarice can find out about aged care services and activities in her area so that she can maintain her health and independence as long as possible
- support can be arranged to relieve the exhaustion if she has a carer who is stressed out.

Remember, Clarice has the right to be treated fairly. She can ring us for free and confidential advice and support. Then the choice to take any action is hers—we won't push her into anything.



WHERE TO GET FREE HELP

SENIORS LEGAL AND SUPPORT SERVICE

at Caxton Legal Centre for legal advice and social work support and advocacy

Tel: (07) 3214 6333

ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION UNIT

Tel: 1300 651 192

ADA AUSTRALIA

for help to speak up for your decision-making rights or your concerns with aged care services

Tel: 1800 818 338 or 3637 6000

DIVERSICARE

for help with quality in-home care services for culturally and linguistically diverse people

Tel: 1300 348 377

FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS

for help with common debt problems

Tel: 1800 007 007

POLICE LINK

Tel: 13 14 44 or 000 for emergencies

PUBLIC TRUSTEE OF QUEENSLAND

for drafting of free wills and EPAs (for a fee)

Tel: 1300 360 044

TELEPHONE INTERPRETING SERVICE

Tel: 13 14 50

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN

for allegations of abuse against an adult who has impaired decision-making capacity

Tel: 1300 653 187

QUEENSLAND ADVOCACY INCORPORATED

for legal advocacy for people with disability

Tel: 1300 130 582

QUEENSLAND LAW SOCIETY

for contact details for private lawyers

Tel: 1300 367 757

SENIORS ENQUIRY LINE

when you are not sure where to go with a question or problem

Tel: 1300 135 500

Caxton Legal Centre Inc.

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1 Manning Street

South Brisbane Qld 4101

Telephone: (07) 3214 6333

Facsimile: (07) 3846 7483

Internet: www.caxton.org.au

This information is current at February 2019.



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