

# Rhode Island Coalition for Elder Justice

Working together for a Safe and Just Elder Community



Dear Community Partner,

In 2018 Saint Elizabeth Community received an “End Abuse in Later Life” grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to create the Rhode Island Coalition for Elder Justice and provide elder abuse training. The Coalition identified action steps to take for all who support older adults or adults with developmental disabilities, to protect them from abuse.

Research shows that approximately one in ten older adults experiences abuse. Elder abuse often happens in the home where the person is isolated. Most often, abuse is perpetrated by a family member or trusted person. Out of fear, older adults and adults with developmental disabilities do not tell anyone about the abuse. Therefore, it is imperative that all Rhode Islanders, including those who work with older adults and adults with developmental disabilities, recognize the signs of abuse and report abuse so that older adults and adults with developmental disabilities remain safe.

**According to Rhode Island General Law, anyone who suspects abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect of an older adult, 60 years or older, is mandated by law to report to the RI Office of Healthy Aging, Adult Protective Services Unit (APS).** APS is responsible for investigating reports of abuse of Rhode Islanders by a family member, caregiver, or person with duty of care. APS will assess the older adults’ needs and provide the necessary services.

**Reports can be made 24/7 online at [oha.ri.gov](http://oha.ri.gov) or phone 401-462-0555.**

**Rhode Island General Law also requires a report to be filed on abuse of a person with developmental disabilities with the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH).** The Quality Assurance (QA) Unit at BHDDH advocates for and protects adults with disabilities when violations occur that may have an adverse effect on an individual’s health, safety, welfare, rights, or quality of life. **Reports can be made 24/7 via phone 401-462-2629.**

**Additionally, a report should be filed with the RI Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman for known or suspected concerns of abuse or neglect of a resident in a nursing home or assisted living facility or by hospice or home care providers.** The LTC Ombudsman program works to resolve problems and promote policies and protections to improve long-term services and support. **Reports can be made via phone 401-785-3340.**

As a community there is so much we can do to help older adults and adults with developmental disabilities remain safe from abuse and neglect. The RI Coalition for Elder Justice has developed and updated a “*Reporting Elder Abuse/Neglect Protocol*” for organizations to implement. The purpose of the protocol is to establish a framework policy and reporting procedure for reporting suspected or known abuse of older adults and adults with developmental disabilities. We hope this tool will be of great assistance to you or your organization. Members of the RI Coalition for Elder Justice are happy to assist you or your organization with implementing the protocol and providing no-cost elder abuse training to members of your organization. Please feel free to contact Melanie Monteiro at [mmonteiro@stelizabethcommunity.org](mailto:mmonteiro@stelizabethcommunity.org) with questions and training requests or visit the RI Coalition for Elder Justice website to register for training <https://rielderjustice.org/>.

Thank you for your continued dedication and service in helping protect Rhode Island’s older adults and adults with developmental disabilities.

RI Coalition for Elder Justice  
Protocols Committee  
<https://rielderjustice.org/>

AGENCY NAME

**Policy Name:** Reporting Elder Abuse/Neglect  
**Policy No.:**

**Effective Date:**  
**Revision Date:**

## PURPOSE

In the United States and around the world elder abuse is a silent epidemic. Research shows that approximately one in ten older adults experiences abuse (Acierno et al., 2010; Rosay et al., 2017). Elder abuse often happens in the home where the person is isolated. Most often, abuse is perpetrated by a family member or trusted person. Out of fear, older adults and adults with developmental disabilities do not tell anyone about the abuse. Therefore, it is imperative that all Rhode Islanders, including those who work with older adults and adults with developmental disabilities, recognize the signs of abuse and report abuse so that older adults and adults with developmental disabilities remain safe.

Abuse of an *older adult* or an *adult with developmental disabilities* is a crime as stated in RI General Laws 42-66-8, "Abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect of elderly persons" - "Duty to Report" and 40.1-27-2, "Abuse of Persons with Developmental Disabilities" - "Duty to Report".

*An **older adult** is a person 60 years or older per Rhode Island General Laws.*

*An **adult with intellectual or developmental disabilities** is a person, eighteen (18) years old or older and not under the jurisdiction of the department of children, youth and families who is either an adult with intellectual or developmental disabilities or is a person with a severe, chronic disability per Rhode Island General Law 40.1-21-4.3 (also reference RI General Law 40.1-1-8.1).*

The law requires all those who suspect a Rhode Island resident is a victim of any form of elder abuse to report to the RI Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) Adult Protective Services (APS) Unit on-line at [www.oha.ri.gov](http://www.oha.ri.gov) or by calling OHA at 401-462-0555. Reports can be made 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Reports of abuse of a person with developmental disabilities are filed with the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) at 401-462-2629. Reports can be made 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

A report should be filed with the RI Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman for known or suspected concerns of abuse or neglect of a resident in a nursing home or assisted living facility or by hospice or home care providers. Reports can be made via phone 401-785-3340.

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for reporting suspected or known abuse of older adults or adults with developmental disabilities.

**Agency Name** is committed to protecting the rights, safety and dignity of each of its clients.

Any employee, volunteer, or vendor of **Agency Name** who has reasonable cause to suspect or knows that an older adult or an adult with developmental disabilities has been abused, exploited, or neglected as defined in RIGL, 42-66-8 and 40.1-27-2 must report such information immediately to the Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) or the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) or the RI Long Term Care Ombudsman.

Any employee, volunteer or vendor shall report the suspected abuse to their appropriate agency supervisor in accordance with agency policy and per the agency's incident report protocol.

### **POLICY**

Any employee, volunteer, or vendor who is told of, is a witness to, or suspects abuse of an older adult or an adult with developmental disabilities **must** immediately report the abuse, as required by law, to OHA, BHDDH or the RI Long Term Care Ombudsman.

Employees and volunteers will report to their agency supervisor in accordance with agency policy.

**Agency Name** will conduct an annual Elder Abuse training for all staff members and volunteers.

### **PROCEDURE**

#### I. Reporting Procedures

##### a. When to Report:

Report to OHA, BHDDH or the RI Long Term Care Ombudsman and the agency supervisor immediately upon witnessing, suspecting or learning of the abuse.

##### b. What to Report:

An employee, volunteer or vendor must report to OHA, BHDDH or the RI Long Term Care Ombudsman any suspicion of or any known abuse including physical abuse, abandonment, isolation, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, financial exploitation or self-neglect. Reports can be made anonymously. Per RIGL § 42-66-11, all reports and reporters of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation and self-neglect are confidential.

**\*\*Employees or volunteers must also make a report to the agency supervisor.**

##### c. How to Report:

File an on-line report with the Office of Healthy Aging at [www.oha.ri.gov](http://www.oha.ri.gov) or call 401-462-0555, or the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals at 401-462-2629 or the RI Long Term Care Ombudsman at 401-785-3340.

##### d. What to Document:

OHA: ([www.oha.ri.gov](http://www.oha.ri.gov)) Complete the report form by clicking on the "Report Elder Abuse" tab in the upper right-hand corner of the website home page. This tab will take

you to the “Secure Web Intake Link” where the “Protective Services Report” is located. All required information must be entered for the report to be received successfully.

BHDDH: Call 401-462-2629 to report suspected abuse of a person with developmental disabilities. Reports can be made anonymously.

RI Long Term Care Ombudsman: Call 401-785-3340 to resolve problems related to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of individuals who reside in Long Term Care (LTC) facilities or for any person in hospice and/or homecare.

\*\*Agency supervisor – report the incident according to agency procedures.

- e. Annually, all staff shall be trained in the recognition and reporting of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect.
- f. Established procedures for reporting suspected or known abuse of older adults or adults with developmental disabilities, does not preclude a reporter’s responsibility to report suspected or known abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

II. I have read this policy and understand that under RI General Law I must report all suspected abuse of an older adult or adult with developmental disabilities to the Office of Healthy Aging or the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals or the RI Long Term Care Ombudsman. This signed statement will be placed in my personnel file.

III.

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Name and Job Title

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Disclosure**

*While every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy of content, the Rhode Island Coalition for Elder Justice assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this material. The information provided and expressed within this publication is intended as a guide only.*

**Citations**

*Acierno, R., Hernandez, M. A., Amstadter, A. B., Resnick, H. S., Steve, K., Muzzy, W., & Kilpatrick, D. G. (2010). Prevalence and correlates of emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse and potential neglect in the United States: the National Elder Mistreatment Study. American journal of public health, 100(2), 292–297. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.163089>*

*Rosay, A. B., PhD, & Mulford, C. F., PhD (2017). Prevalence estimates and correlates of elder abuse in the United States: The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Journal of elder abuse & neglect, 29(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2016.1249817>*