

Elderly Survivors of Sexual Violence

Facts and Signs

Sexual violence against elderly persons, like all sexual assault, is not about sex but rather about power, control, humiliation and dominance over the abused person. Elderly persons can be especially vulnerable due to frailty and dependence on others.

While stories of abuse by nursing home personnel occasionally make headlines, surveys consistently find that most abusers are family members. A study in 1991 found that 39% of vaginal rapes were committed by an adult son. In some cases sexual abuse of elderly persons is an extension of life-long abuse.

Some signs include:

- Bruises around breasts, thighs or genital areas
- Bleeding in genital areas
- Genital infections
- Sudden changes in behavior or attitude

Generational differences or concerns about "outing" family members can make it especially difficult for elderly victims to talk about sexual abuse. **In many cases, the sexual abuse is discovered by caregivers.**

*Elderly victims need the same things as any survivor of sexual assault. They need to be believed, supported, protected from the abuser and reassured that it is not their fault. Family members and friends of victims may also need help. If you would like additional information or just need to talk, call **SVC at 612-871-5111** day or night.*

