

Washington Dependent Adult Abuse Reporting

Each county in Washington has its own Adult Protective Services department to help elder adults and dependent adults who are the victims of abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation.

Who do I contact to report an incident in Washington?

Washington's Adult Protective Services program, within the Department of Social and Health Services, investigates reports of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults, including older adults and adults with disabilities.

To report suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult in Washington, call the statewide EndHarm helpline at 866-END-HARM (866-363-4276), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How much time do I have to report an incident?

A mandated reporter who has reasonable cause to believe abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect of a vulnerable adult has occurred must immediately report the suspected harm to the Department of Social and Health Services and must also immediately contact law enforcement when sexual assault, physical assault, or fear of imminent harm is suspected. **RCW 74.34.035**

What is a "vulnerable adult" in Washington?

A "vulnerable adult" includes a person age sixty or older with functional, mental, or physical inability to care for self, a person under guardianship or conservatorship, a person with a developmental disability who receives services, a resident of a nursing home, assisted living facility, adult family home, or similar facility, and a person who receives home health, hospice, home care, or similar services or who directs personal care with a paid personal aide. **RCW 74.34.020**

What is "abandonment," "abuse," "neglect," "financial exploitation," and "self-neglect" of a vulnerable adult in Washington?

"Abandonment" means action or inaction by a person or entity with a duty of care that leaves a vulnerable adult without the means or ability to obtain necessary food, clothing, shelter, or health care. **Wash. Rev. Code § 74.34.020(1)**

"Abuse" means the willful action or inaction that causes injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or punishment, or that results in physical harm, pain, or mental anguish. Abuse includes physical, sexual, mental, and personal exploitation. **Wash. Rev. Code § 74.34.020(2)**

"Neglect" means the failure of a person or entity that has a duty of care to provide the goods and services that maintain physical or mental health of a vulnerable adult, or the failure to avoid or prevent physical harm or mental anguish. **Wash. Rev. Code § 74.34.020(16)**

"Financial exploitation" means the illegal or improper use, control, or withholding of a vulnerable adult's property, income, resources, or trust funds by any person for profit or advantage other than for the person's lawful use. **Wash. Rev. Code § 74.34.020(7)**

“Self-neglect” means the failure of a vulnerable adult, due to cognitive, mental, or physical limitation, to perform essential self-care tasks such as providing food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or safety, which creates a serious risk to health or safety. **Wash. Rev. Code § 74.34.020(22)**

Who is a mandatory reporter in Washington?

A person who works as a licensed health care provider, social worker, case manager, employee of the Department of Social and Health Services or another social service agency, law enforcement officer, operator or employee of a nursing home, assisted living facility, adult family home, home health agency, home care agency, adult day health program, or adult day care program, or in another role listed in Washington law, is a mandated reporter for abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect of vulnerable adults. People who are not in a statutory mandated reporter category still have authority to report suspected abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect of vulnerable adults. **RCW 74.34.035; RCW 74.34.020**

Are Clergy mandatory reporters in Washington?

No. **Wash. Rev. Code § 74.34.020(13)**

Where can I find Washington law on elder and dependent adult abuse?

Washington’s main vulnerable adult protection rules are in the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults Act, found in the Revised Code of Washington, chapter 74.34.