



# CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

## 10 Safety Lessons to Teach Your Children

Article courtesy of Diocese of Grand Island, Nebraska

**1. Trust your feelings.** God created us to experience emotions for a reason. When we are faced with danger, we experience fear, preparing us to fight or flee. We experience anxiety or apprehension, at times, as a precursor, warning us in advance of pending danger. Teaching your child to notice and respond to their feelings can help them avoid danger and help you know when to take a closer look at their surroundings.

**2. Treat others with respect and expect**

**respect from others.** As Catholic Christians we are called to respect all human life. We are all part of God's creation and deserving of dignity and respect. By your words, actions and interactions with your children, teach them that they are precious gifts from God. Make it clear that they are to respect others and that they are worthy of respect and dignity themselves.

**3. Question the motives of adults who single you out with expensive gifts, privileges, attention.** Children are born vulnerable. It is the job of adults, especially parents,

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## Shining Light on the Hidden Problem of Elder Abuse

*Caring people can help stop elder mistreatment in their families and in the community*



**By Denise M. Shukoff**

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Elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation are largely hidden, shrouded in secrecy and shame, thriving in silence. Older adults are often reluctant to reveal incidents of abuse, particularly when the abuser is a family member, friend, neighbor, or other trusted individual.

Adding to the problem, many professionals working with older adults often do not understand or recognize the various forms of elder mistreatment, including professionals in law enforcement, aging services, health care, and financial services. Even if they do recognize it, they often do not know where to turn for help.

Studies and reports from professionals suggest that elder abuse in domestic settings is a widespread and escalating serious problem that exists in every community and every neighborhood, whether rich or poor. As people live longer and more independently in the community and as frailty and vulnerability increase, there is greater potential for mistreatment.

Contrary to popular belief, elder abuse occurs more often in people's homes than in nursing homes. Family members are the most frequently reported perpetrators, and substance abuse and mental health issues are often factors in a large number of cases. Financial exploitation is the fastest growing form of abuse.

In 2011, Lifespan as lead agency, partnering with Weill Cornell Medical College and the New York City Department for the Aging, completed the first statewide study of elder abuse in the U.S. Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study found that in a one-year period 7.6% or 260,000 residents over age 60 became victims of abuse; **and it was estimated that only 1 in 24 cases was actually reported.**

Elder abuse takes many forms. It can include physical or sexual abuse, neglect (active, passive and self-neglect), psychological/emotional abuse, or financial exploitation. Multiple forms of mistreatment often occur together.

Certain signs can indicate the presence of abuse, neglect or exploitation. These signs warrant investigation to determine what is

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happening so that steps can be taken to intervene and prevent further abuse. One of the biggest challenges in reducing the incidence of abuse is the lack of understanding about what elder abuse is – victims, their families and friends, and professionals need to recognize it when they see it.

Although this list is certainly not exhaustive, below are a few commonly recognized indicators that may signify the presence of abuse, neglect or exploitation:

- Unexplained bruises, lacerations, injuries, burns, internal injuries, or signs of hair pulling.
- Tearfulness, unexplained paranoia, low self-esteem, excessive fear, agitation, loss of social contact.
- Unexplained sexually transmitted infections, bruising, bleeding, difficulty walking or sitting.
- Malnutrition and/or dehydration.
- Sudden inability to pay bills, buy food or personal items.
- Unexpected or unexplained deterioration of health, or poor personal hygiene.
- Suddenly isolated from family and friends.
- Unexplained or unusual volume of banking activity, sudden withdrawal of money from accounts, or unexplained increases in incurred debt.
- Banking activity is inconsistent with customer's usual habits.
- Extraordinary interest by family member or others in older person's assets.
- Recent interest in and/or caregiving for an older adult by a new acquaintance.
- Disparity between assets and living conditions.
- Confusion, especially over finances or care.
- Unexplained changes or misuse of a power of attorney, or transfer of property.

### **About Lifespan's Elder Abuse Prevention Program**

Lifespan is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing information, guidance and services to help older adults, their families and caregivers take on both the challenges and opportunities of the second half of life. Founded in 1971, and known until 1995 as the Regional Council on Aging, Lifespan has grown from just two programs to more than 30 programs serving older adults and professionals locally, regionally, and around the state. The agency employs over 100 full and part-time staff.

Lifespan is adept at identifying service gaps and launching programs to fill those gaps. In 1995, Lifespan and Catholic Family Center collaborated to start Eldersource, a care management service for unique elder-care situations.

Lifespan's Elder Abuse Prevention Program (EAPP) began in 1986. In 1999, Lifespan launched *It Shouldn't Hurt to be Old*, a public awareness campaign about elder abuse.

EAPP staff protect a growing population of older adults by providing direct social work intervention in a ten-county region, and educating the public and professionals to recognize the signs and symptoms of mistreatment throughout the state. Lifespan also collaborates with other professionals to provide an effective holistic approach to meeting the needs of older adults, along with their families and caregivers.

In 2004 and again in 2010, Lifespan convened two New York State Elder Abuse Summits, bringing together experts from across the state to develop recommendations to address the growing problem of elder mistreatment. Priority recommendations developed by the participants were used to cre-

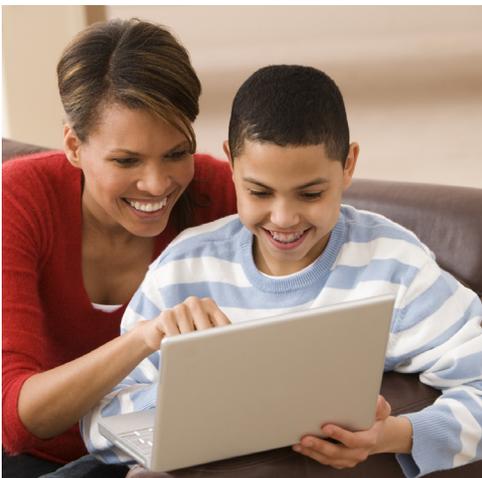


ate the New York State Elder Abuse Action Agenda to address and reduce the prevalence of elder mistreatment in community settings; seeking a more effective, coordinated approach to elder abuse prevention and intervention across the state. The NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse was formed in 2004 to implement the statewide Action Agenda. The Coalition is a multidisciplinary, statewide network of individuals, private organizations and government agencies working individually and collectively to protect older adults from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation, and to ensure that New York State is on the forefront of combating elder mistreatment. In 2012 the Coalition's website was launched, [www.nyselderabuse.org](http://www.nyselderabuse.org).

Frauds, scams and identity theft remain an issue. Older adults are a favorite target for con artists. Typically, these criminals use personal information, persistence and intimidation to swindle money from their victims. Con artists usually appear to be trustworthy and sincere. Unfortunately, scam victims may be too embarrassed or fearful to tell family or friends. Lifespan recently expanded its Scam and ID Theft Prevention

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## **Securing the devices in your home through parental controls**



*Article courtesy of [faithhandsafety.org](http://faithhandsafety.org)*

How we consume media such as TV shows, movies, and music has changed radically. We're now watching through online services such as Netflix, iTunes, or Hulu. A number of streaming media devices or set top boxes are now available that pull content from the Internet. You can watch that content on your computer, TV, tablet, or phone.

As a parent, this explosion of media channels may seem overwhelming and daunting. Where do you begin? The good news is that parental controls are available for many of these channels.

Parental controls help moderate the kinds

of movies, TV shows, and music that can be played or accessed on certain devices. The bad news is that you need to enable parental controls for them to work. A password is normally required to disable or bypass parental controls after they are activated. The kinds of devices that have built-in parental controls are TVs, computers, cell phones (like the iPhone), streaming media services (like iTunes or Netflix), and music players. Some parental control solutions work better than others. It's best to think of parental control solutions like your helper. They're never a substitute for you and they are never a sub-

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& Education Program to provide services in seven Finger Lakes communities.

Lifespan's Financial Services and Geriatric Addictions programs also provide unique services to help address the needs of vulnerable older adults.

EAPP staff work closely with all Lifespan programs to provide a comprehensive approach to client needs. And Lifespan is proud of its collaborations and public-private partnerships that help older adults live rich and meaningful lives free of abuse and exploitation.

### **Typical Case Scenarios**

Unfortunately, there are some very typical case scenarios that are referred to EAPP regularly. The common theme is an older adult being influenced by another person through guilt, persuasion, and/or threats (to be left alone or put in a nursing home if they don't do what is asked; to physically harm the older adult or others, including pets; to not be able to see grandchildren or other loved one; etc.). These tactics are used primarily by perpetrators to gain access to the older adult's money or property – joint accounts, property transfers, powers of attorney – all ways of often getting away with stealing assets because it appears on the surface that the older adult may have given the assets willingly.

EAPP works collaboratively with other Lifespan programs, law enforcement, financial institutions, prosecutors, aging and protective services, medical professionals, and other government and community agencies to investigate, reduce and prevent this most devastating form of elder mistreatment. Without Lifespan's individualized, intensive intervention provided to each victim, older adults would have no place to turn for such coordinated care to help maintain their quality of life now and into the future.



## **CONTACT NUMBERS AND FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If someone is in immediate danger, always call 911.

If you know or suspect an older adult is being harmed in any way:

- For individual assistance for victims through Lifespan's Elder Abuse Prevention Program, call Lifespan, 585-244-8400; toll-free outside Monroe County, 866-454-5110

- NYS Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) Human Services Call Center, 844-697-3505. This Helpline for the NYS Bureau of Adult Services can answer questions about adult services, provide contact information for local Adult Protective Services (APS), or take information regarding abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults and send it to the local county APS unit. Also visit NYS OCFS website for more information and listing of local offices, [www.ocfs.ny.gov](http://www.ocfs.ny.gov).

You can also contact Lifespan for information about free group presentations and training. Lifespan, 585-244-8400; toll-free outside Monroe County, 866-454-5110 For information about the many programs and services offered by Lifespan, visit [www.lifespan-roch.org](http://www.lifespan-roch.org).

Lifespan also manages and provides staff support for the New York State Coalition on Elder Abuse, [www.nyselderabuse.org](http://www.nyselderabuse.org).

For information and assistance on long term services and supports to help people of all ages remain independent in their daily lives in Monroe County, call Eldersource and NY Connects at Lifespan, 585-325-2800. To find local NY Connects programs in other counties call 800-342-9871, or visit [www.nyconnects.ny.gov](http://www.nyconnects.ny.gov).

## **10 Safety Lessons to Teach Your Children** *Continued from page 1*

to look out for the best interest of children. Make it clear to your children that, as their parents, you are the adults whom God has called to take primary care and responsibility for them. Teach your children to be wary of other adults who flood them with gifts and attention. Teach them to question "What's up?" with an adult who wants to spend most of their time with them, hangs out with them and their friends instead of other adults, buys them alcohol, or otherwise tempts them to break your rules. Teach your children to ask the questions, "What's in it for them? Do they have my best interest at heart?"

**4. Avoid going alone.** There is safety in numbers. Encourage your child to take a friend along when going out, to hang out in groups, and to spend time in places where there are trusted adults to supervise or step in if they need help.

**5. Know the Rules for Adult/Child Interactions.** Teach your children what a healthy adult/child relationship is. Teach them what to expect from an adult and what to question. Encourage them to tell you if an adult is breaking the rules, or pres-

uring them to break the rules.

**6. Speak up.** Teach your children to tell someone if they are feeling uncomfortable. Sometimes we think we are doing the right thing by keeping our feelings inside. But if someone is making us uncomfortable, we aren't helping anyone by keeping our feelings to ourselves. If someone cares about us, they will want to know how we feel because they don't want to do anything to hurt us. If they don't care how we feel, then we need help getting out or dealing with that relationship.

**7. Know your comfort zone and expect others to respect your boundaries.** Everyone has a different comfort zone with regard to physical boundaries. That comfort zone can vary depending on the nature of our relationship with others. Teach your children to be aware of their comfort zone. Offer some suggestions about safe boundaries. Give them some ideas of what to do if someone crosses the line.

**8. Be sure someone knows where you are.** Reinforce to your children, that it is your job to keep them safe, but you can't protect them if you don't know where they

are. Remind them, "If no one knows where you are, there won't be anyone to assist you in an emergency." Show them through your words and actions that people who care about each other, even adults, look out for each other in this way.

**9. Talk to your parents.** Keep lines of communication open. Inquire about your child's life. Listen actively as they speak. Teach them by listening, accepting, and respecting their privacy, that they can tell you anything. Let them know that their safety is your top priority, but you can't help them if they don't tell you what is going on.

**10. Remember you have the right to say no if you feel unsafe.** God created us, as human beings, with the ability to make independent behavioral choices. And as human beings, we don't always make good choices. Teach your children that they have the right to set limits on others' behavior if they are feeling unsafe. Help them decide if the behavior another individual is choosing to engage in is right for them. Reinforce to them that God, our creator, wants us to be safe. Teach your children when and how to say no.

## Creating a Safe Environment Newsletter

is published quarterly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester with the aim of helping all of us keep children and vulnerable adults safe at home, at church and in all places in our community.

Comments can be directed to: Karen Rinefierd, diocesan Coordinator of Safe Environment Education and Compliance, 585-328-3228, ext. 1255 or krinefierd@dor.org.

Victims of sexual abuse by any employee of the Church should always report to the civil authorities. To report a case of possible sexual abuse and to receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, contact the diocesan Victims' Assistance Coordinator: Deborah Housel (585) 328-3228, ext. 1555; toll-free 1-800-388-7177, ext. 1555 or dhousel@dor.org.

## RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Bivona Child Advocacy Center**  
(Monroe, Wayne counties):  
BivonaCAC.org / 585-935-7800

**Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:**  
607-737-8479 / chemungcounty.com

**Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:**  
315-253-9795 / cacofcayugacounty.org

**Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program**  
(Ontario County):  
cacfingerlakes.org / 315-548-3232

**Darkness to Light organization:** d2l.org

Steuben County:  
**Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center:**  
www.sthcs.org / 716-372-8532

**NYS State Central Registry**  
(Child Abuse Reporting Hotline):  
1-800-342-3720

**NYS Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center (CARCC)**  
nyscarcc.org / 866-313-3013

**Tompkins County Advocacy Center:**  
www.theadvocacycenter.org  
607-277-3203

**Wyoming County Sexual Abuse Response Team:** 585-786-8846

**Yates County Child Abuse Review Team:**  
315-531-3417, Ext. 6

## Securing devices Continued from page 3

stitute for involved parenting; so never consider them a foolproof solution.

### DEVICES TO SECURE

Thinking about where to start is daunting. To help, we've prepared a list of things to be aware of in your home (and at the home of friends and neighbors). We'll then note options you may or may not have when it comes to parental controls for that specific kind of device or service.

Looking at this list, you'll start to be amazed at all the different devices that you may need to be attentive to. We suggest you create a written inventory of the specific things you find in your home. Write down the manufacturer or vendor along with the specific model of the device to help you stay organized. If you want to enable parental controls, please refer to each item's user manual for specific details. If you don't have a user manual, don't worry. Most companies now have all their user manuals available online. You can also call their support number for more information.

**Televisions:** All new TVs have parental controls, which will allow you to block programming that exceeds the rating level you set. Parental controls on TVs are handled by something called a "V-Chip". The V-Chip in the TVs uses the Parental Guidelines rating system (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, etc.) for TV shows and the MPAA ratings system (G, PG, PG-13, R, etc.) for movies.

**Smart Televisions:** A "Smart TV" refers to a category of TV that is connected to the Internet. A Smart TV allows you to surf the Internet, install apps, watch online content, and even conduct video chats. All Smart TVs use the same parental control V-Chip of a traditional TV, but the chip does not work with any of the "smart" or "network" features. There is no built-in filtering for web site browsing on the TV. You must use an additional solution like OpenDNS or a router with parental controls built-in to control web content. You also can't manage parental control options for apps and streaming services through the TV.

**Cable and Satellite:** Most providers have parental controls available through their set top boxes. Normally, you can block programs by rating, channel or time period. Check your provider's web site for specific instructions on enabling parental controls. Cable and satellite parental controls are independent of your TVs parental control feature.

**Streaming Services:** Netflix, Hulu, Ama-



zon Video, and Crackle are all examples of online streaming services that make movies and TV shows available. These services are available via a web browser, through streaming media boxes, or as an app on your smart phone, tablet, or Smart TV. Some services have parental controls and others do not. Check the options available for the service you wish to use. For those services without

parental controls your only option is to completely remove access to the service.

**Streaming Media Boxes:** AppleTV, Roku, Boxee, and Vudu are examples of streaming media boxes that will pull content from the Internet and show it on your television. Each of these devices offers parental controls. In some cases, you will need to enable parental controls in two places: both on the hardware device itself and the content service you are using.

**Bluray and DVD players:** Today's players allow you to set parental control options for both DVDs and Bluray discs. For protection to work on DVD and Blurays, the discs must be properly encoded and rated (G, PG, PG-13, R, etc.). The best way to moderate content through these players is to be selective with the movies and TV shows that you choose to rent or purchase.

**Smart Phones: and Tablets:** All smart phones and tablets have some basic parental control options. Parental controls should be set for apps to be downloaded and content that can be purchased. Parental control options for streaming services and Internet access must be done through additional parental control options specifically for that device, through the mobile carrier's parental controls, and through services like OpenDNS.

**Computers:** All new Macintosh and Windows computers offer basic, built-in parental control options. You must enable them to work and in most cases, parents will find that these basic controls need to be supplemented with other software solutions like NetNanny, CyberPatrol, and OpenDNS.

**Gaming Consoles:** Gaming consoles like Xbox, Playstation, PSP, and the Wii all have parental control options that will allow you set a rating limit for the games (using ESRB ratings), DVDs, Blurays, and that can be played on the device and will also allow you to turn the web browser off. Online content and apps can only be secured using solutions like OpenDNS and through the specific services enabled on the device.