

**Contact your local Council on Aging  
for additional resources**

Acushnet	508-998-0280
Attleboro	508-223-2235
Berkley	508-821-3105
Dartmouth	508-999-4717
Dighton	508-823-0095
Easton	508-230-0544
Fairhaven	508-979-4029
Fall River	508-324-2401
Freetown	508-763-9557
Mansfield	508-261-7368
New Bedford	508-991-6250
North Attleboro	508-699-0131
Norton	508-285-0218
Raynham	508-824-2740
Rehoboth	508-252-3372
Seekonk	508-336-8772
Somerset	508-646-2833
Swansea	508-676-1831
Taunton	508-821-1425
Westport	508-636-1026

OFFICE OF THE BRISTOL COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
**THOMAS M. QUINN III**

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**ELDER ABUSE  
PREVENTION**

*“Information is the best defense against elder abuse.”*



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New Bedford, MA 02740  
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*Follow us online!*



# Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III



Elder abuse prevention is more important now than ever. Medical and scientific advances are allowing us to live longer, healthier lives — and so, the senior population is growing. Thousands of seniors suffer abuse or neglect and only a fraction report the abuse. Why? Because they are unaware that abuse is taking place, because they are ashamed about having been victimized, because the abuser is a relative or a loved one or for any number of other reasons.

Law enforcement, service providers and caretakers, working together, can dramatically reduce the harm—whether it be emotional, physical, or financial—that the seniors in our community suffer. It is our responsibility as a community to do more to protect those who are vulnerable, and this often includes the elderly.

Crimes against those who have the fewest resources and least ability to keep themselves safe are the most intolerable. Through education, we can help seniors to recognize signs of abuse and empower them to take steps to prevent it.

## *What is elder abuse?*

Elder abuse is an act or omission which results in serious physical or emotional injury of an elder or financial exploitation of an elder.

## *Who abuses elders?*

Elders can be abused by caregivers, family, friends, professionals or strangers. Most often the alleged perpetrators are relatives.

## *What are some types of abuse?*

### **1. Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is doing or failing to do something that results in the harm or risk of harm to an elderly person.

- Some examples of physical abuse may be confinement, unreasonable physical constraint, hitting, pushing, shoving, shaking or kicking of an elder and inappropriate use of medication.
- Some signs of physical abuse may be black eyes, broken bones, bruises, burns, welts, emotional withdrawal, general withdrawal from conversation or depression.



## 2. Psychological Abuse

Psychological Abuse is the willful infliction of mental or emotional anguish to an elder with threats.

- Some examples of psychological abuse may be threats to, belittling of, yelling at, isolation and/or humiliation of an elder.
- Some signs may be significant unrelated weight loss or gain, stress-related conditions, an elder cowering in the presence of the abuser, emotional withdrawal, general withdrawal from conversation or depression.

## 3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when there is sexual contact without the elder's consent.

- Some examples of sexual abuse may be rape, showing of pornography, inappropriate touching or exposure.
- Some signs of sexual abuse may be bruises around breasts and/or genitals, unexplained venereal disease or genital infections, bleeding, emotional withdrawal, general withdrawal from conversation, shame, fear or depression.

## 4. Neglect

Neglect is the failure of caregivers to fulfill their responsibilities or provide needed care.

- Some examples may be not helping an elder to the bathroom to bathe, clutter, lack of food, water and medications.
- Some signs may be bedsores, dehydration and malnutrition, inadequate clothing, urine or feces odor.

## 5. Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is the taking of money or property from an elder or the use of property or possession without the elder's permission that is contrary to the elder's needs or best interest.

- Financial abuse can take the forms of: theft, identity theft, telemarketing, vacation deals, sweepstakes, charities, lottery, internet, home improvement plans.

Some signs of financial abuse may include:

- Numerous bank withdrawals
- Increased or unusual credit card activity
- Changes in a will or Power of Attorney when elder is mentally or physically unable to make such changes
- Missing financial documents (checks, stocks, bills)
- Caretaker obsessed or focused solely on an elder's finances
- Strangers who befriend elders and offer to manage or assist with the elder's finances and/or assets



### How to protect yourself

- Take care of your health and stay active
- Avoid isolation and stay social
- Check caregiver and professional references
- Shred bills and important documents before throwing away
- Protect your Social Security Number and passwords
- Sign credit cards immediately
- Don't give out personal information unless you initiated the contact or have verified who it is
- Don't send cash by messenger or overnight mail
- Review bank and credit card statements every month
- Don't let anyone pressure you into a quick decision
- Don't be afraid to hang up on solicitor calls
- Call **National Do Not Call** to have your number removed from the telemarketer list **1-888-382-1222**
- Never click on links in unsolicited emails
- Get a free annual credit report

### How to get a free Credit Report

You are entitled to a free annual credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus.

**(Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion).**

To order your reports, call **877-322-8228**, or go to **[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)**

### Where to Report Elder Abuse

Contact your local  
Police Department or  
**dial 911 for an emergency**

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Elder Affairs  
Statewide Elder Abuse Hotline  
**1-800-922-2275****

**Bristol Elder Services, Inc.**  
1 Father DeValles Blvd., Unit #8  
Fall River, MA 02723  
**508-675-2101**

Bristol Elder Services, Inc. (Bristol) is designated by the state as the agency responsible for investigating and providing protective and crisis services in the communities of the greater Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton areas. Bristol is the local resource for seniors who are abused, neglected, exploited or self-neglecting. A report should be made whenever a person has cause to believe that abuse is occurring or has occurred. A report may be filed by calling Bristol Elder Services.



*The mission of **SAFE** is to prevent and eliminate abuse of elders through community collaboration in education, awareness, advocacy, intervention and resource development.*