June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month

One in 10 Americans over the age of 60 have experienced some form of elder abuse, but only one in 14 cases is reported. Women make up approximately 66 percent of elder abuse victims in the U.S.

Elder abuse is any form of abuse – physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and more – perpetrated by an individual who holds power or influence over an elderly person.

> **If an elderly or vulnerable person in your family or in your community is being abused, neglected, or exploited, call 1-800-91-PREVENT (1-800-917-7383) immediately.**

Perpetrators may be nursing home staff, family members, caretakers, even friends and neighbors. In almost 60% of elder abuse and neglect incidents, the perpetrator is a family member. Two thirds of perpetrators are adult children or spouses.

What are some of the warning signs of elder abuse?

- **Physical abuse, neglect, or mistreatment:** bruises, broken bones, abrasions, burns
- **Emotional abuse:** unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness and clarity of mind, unusual depression, strained relationships
- **Financial abuse:** sudden or unexplained withdrawals or other similar changes in financial accounts
- **Neglect:** unusual weight loss, poor hygiene, unattended medical needs, bedsores
- **Verbal abuse:** belittling, threatening or other behavior that subjects the elder to the control and/or influence of another person

(Adapted from the National Council on Aging)

If an older adult is in immediate, life-threatening danger, call 911. All suspected cases of adult abuse and neglect should be reported to your local DSS Office or by calling 1-800-332-6347.

 For more information on elder abuse, you can visit the National Center on Elder Abuse, The Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act or the Maryland Department of Human Services Adult Protective Services.

For more information on this and other women's health issues, please visit the Maryland Commission for Women's Online Health Information and Resource Directory.