

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

June 15th

One in ten older adults in the United States experiences abuse, neglect, or exploitation every year. Sadly, many reports indicate that harm is too often a daily occurrence for older adults in nursing homes across the country. For example, the HHS Office of the Inspector General ([OIG](#)) has found that, on average, one-third of Medicare beneficiaries experience harm within about two weeks of entering a nursing home. The OIG found that 59 percent of the harm residents experienced was preventable.

While the federal Nursing Home Reform Law clearly sets out standards of care that nursing homes must follow, weak enforcement of those standards has created an environment in which even the most shocking violations may not be classified as causing resident harm:

- A maggot infestation on a resident's scrotum due to the nursing home's inadequate housekeeping and maintenance.
- A resident's head being "wedged" between her mattress and a bedrail due to the nursing home's identification and assessment failures.
- A resident suffering a broken shinbone after the nursing home failed to prevent an "avoidable" accident.

For more examples of so-called "no harm" deficiencies, please see our [Elder Justice](#) newsletter.

What Can You Do?

Learn. Nursing home residents and their families need to be aware of what rights and protections residents are entitled to under federal laws and regulations. In the absence of the appropriate identification of – and penalties for – abuse and neglect, residents and families must be proactive about making sure residents have access to quality care and a decent quality of life. For more information and useful resources, please visit LTCCC's [Learning Center](#).

Report. Nursing homes are required to report suspected cases of resident abuse, neglect, and/or crime within a specified amount of time. However, residents and families do not have to wait to report resident harm. Anyone can report suspected cases of resident harm or abuse to the state health department, local law enforcement, and other appropriate agencies. To learn more, please visit our [Abuse, Neglect, and Crime Reporting Center](#).

Participate. Nursing homes must protect and promote the formation of resident and family councils. These councils provide a safe space to share concerns, seek support, and exchange information. Most importantly, they can lead to better care. To learn more, please see visit our [Family & Ombudsman Resource Center](#).

Advocate. Speak out in support of nursing home residents by contacting your legislators. You can use our [Action Center](#) to send letters to your legislators about the urgent need to improve nursing home care.