

## Information and Caregiver Resource Corner



By Laurie Deskavich,  
**Information and Caregiver Resource Center Program Director**

Observed annually in June, National Safety Month focuses on reducing leading causes of injury and death at work and in our homes and communities. According to the National Safety Council, injuries are the leading cause of death for Americans ages 1 to 40. The good news? Everyone can get involved to help prevent injuries.

**Q: What can I do to prevent injuries?**

**A:** You can join the National Safety Council and thousands of organizations nationwide as they work to ensure No One Gets Hurt.

During National Safety Month, LifePath is working on spreading the word to help reduce the risk of injuries. This June, we encourage you to learn more about important safety issues like preparing for the unexpected, preventing slips, trips, and falls, and prioritizing your wellness.

**First for general safety preparedness:**

Emergency situations can happen at any time; it is important that you are prepared for the unexpected long before it happens. Here are some ways to help reduce the risk of many safety issues.

- Research and prepare for natural disasters common to your area, such as severe thunderstorms or tornadoes.
- Have an emergency kit for both your home and car.
- Have a home emergency plan with your family.
- Know your employer's emergency plans and what is expected of you.
- Participate in emergency drills at work and pay attention to lessons learned.
- Store important papers and personal information in a fireproof safe or safety deposit box.
- Check your smoke alarms monthly, change the batteries yearly and replace the alarm every ten years.

Emergency kits can help you prepare for the worst, but only if they are properly stocked and regularly refreshed. To learn about emergency preparedness and emergency kits and what they should contain, go to [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org).

At home, remember to change the batteries in your smoke alarms at least once a year. According to the National Fire Protection Association, three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms (38%) or no working smoke alarms (21%). Smoke alarms save lives. Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths

and injuries. If there is a fire in your home, smoke spreads fast and you need smoke alarms to give you time to get out.

**Second for slips, trips and falls:** In four older adults falls each year. Many falls lead to broken bones or a head injury. Falls are the number one cause of death for those 65 and older, according to the National Safety Council.

Be proactive! Remove clutter or other tripping hazards from walkways, stairs and doorways. Use nightlights in the bathroom and other areas to prevent tripping and falls at night. For older adults, install grab bars in the bathroom to help prevent falls when showering. Also older adults can take balance classes, get their vision and hearing checked each year and talk with their doctors and pharmacists about fall risks from medications.

LifePath's Healthy Living Program offers a workshop to help older adults reduce their risk of falls. "Matter of Balance" has been shown to significantly reduce the fear of falling in those who take the workshop, as well as to increase their sense of control over potential falls.

**Third for prioritizing your wellness:** We ask a lot of ourselves, and over time this can put a strain on our wellness. Prioritize your wellness. Get regular medical checkups, such as an annual physical with age-appropriate tests, exercise, and eat healthy. Get plenty of sleep to avoid fatigue. Fatigue is more than just being tired. If you are missing out on the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep each day, you could become sleep deprived and be at higher risk for the negative effects of fatigue such as depression and other serious health issues. According to the National Institutes of Health, 70 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders.

The Healthy Living Program at LifePath can also help you manage chronic health conditions like heart disease and diabetes as well as learn ways to eat healthier, exercise more, manage pain, and develop healthy habits. For more information, visit [lifepathma.org/events/healthy-living-workshops](http://lifepathma.org/events/healthy-living-workshops) or call Healthy Living Program Manager Andi Waisman at 413-773-5555 x2297 or 978-544-2259 x2297.

To learn more about LifePath's many other programs available to support your independence, call us at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259, email [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org), or visit [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

By being prepared you can make a difference and ensure No One Gets Hurt.

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 can happen at any time; it  
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 prepared for the unexpected  
 long before it happens."

## You're invited to a summer picnic with the Rainbow Elders!



Join the Rainbow Elders for their annual summer picnic on Tuesday, July 17, 2018, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., at a private residence in Greenfield. A rain date is scheduled for Wednesday, July 18.

"We would love to see you!" says JR, Rainbow Elders Steering Committee Member. "People come from all over Franklin and Hampshire county to our

events. It's just a really nice way to connect with people and not feel so isolated. It's a very open and welcoming venue for all of the LGBTIQA elders in the area."

At this afternoon gathering, you can enjoy a catered meal, meander through the daylily gardens on 15 and a half acres of land, and meet with LGBTIQA friends old and new.

RSVP by July 12 online at [LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders](http://LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders) or contact Lynne Feldman, Director of Community Services at [lfeldman@LifePathMA.org](mailto:lfeldman@LifePathMA.org), 413-775-5555 x2215, or 978-544-2259 x2215. You will receive a confirmation with directions. Registrants will receive a call or email should

the event be rained out.

A suggested donation of \$10 is appreciated and will be used to cover expenses for this and future Rainbow Elders events. If you can donate more than \$10, it will help someone else with fewer resources attend. Any donation amount is welcome.

This is a drug-, alcohol-, and fragrance-free event.

Special thanks to Program Champion Lathrop Communities and sponsoring Advocates: Barton's Angels Home Health Care, Franklin Community Cop/Green Fields Market & McCusker's Market, Rockridge, Victory Home Healthcare, and WestMass ElderCare. Thanks also to Community Partner Franklin County Pride.

LifePath's Rainbow Elders offers opportunities and information to build connections and find resources to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, asexual, aromantic, and agender elders, as well as their allies, and educational outreach to agencies, businesses, and the community at large. Rainbow Elders helps people build relationships, give and gain support, grow in knowledge and cultural competence, and advocate for human rights so that everyone can live and age with dignity.

Read more and sign up to receive emails with future Rainbow Elders event invitations and relevant news and information at [LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders](http://LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders).



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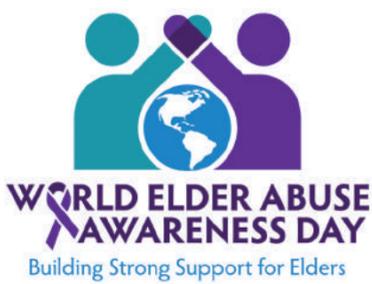
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## Together, we have the power to prevent elder abuse

Know the signs to look for and actions you can take to make a difference

By Dean Lagrotteria, Regional Director of the Elder Protective Service Program for Berkshire and Franklin Counties, LifePath

On June 15, 2018, we recognize another World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. A day officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly on December 2011. A day to highlight the difficult issue of elder abuse.

Elder Abuse Awareness Day is recognized each June 15, and since the last Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2017, another **5 million** elders have been abused.

How many of the people who you know suffer from elder abuse? Look around your church, your senior center, the bus you ride, the diner you eat at or in your own family. Out of the ten people you see who are over 60, at least one of them has suffered or is suffering from some form of abuse, according to the National Council on Aging.

We all know the types of abuse. It involves physical, emotional, and yes, sexual abuse. It can take the form of financial exploitation or neglect. Self-neglect, which is the inability or unwillingness to care for oneself, is also of a concern.

It has been said for many years that elder abuse must be stopped and prevented, but yet it continues. Despite best efforts to intervene and educate the public, another 5 million have suffered abuse this past year. According to the National Institute of Justice:

- another \$36.5 billion has been lost due to financial exploitation
- 130,000 elders have suffered physical abuse
- 10,000 elders have been neglected
- 580,000 elders have suffered emotional abuse
- 45,000 elders have been sexually abused

Last year LifePath received 1,219 reports of abuse in Franklin and Berkshire Counties and in the North Quabbin area. Abuse or neglect was confirmed in approximately half of those reports.

Yes, it is a large number of people. It often seems as if the problem is increasing. The number of Americans ages 60 and older is projected to more than double from 46 million today to over 98 million by 2060. The problem will not end anytime soon.

**However, there is good news.**

The positive news is that, nationally, there has been a greater awareness and knowledge of elder abuse. People have come to recognize the signs of elder abuse

*“If you suspect abuse of someone over 60 and in Massachusetts, call the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-800-922-2275 or file online at [www.mass.gov/report-elder-abuse](http://www.mass.gov/report-elder-abuse). The hotline is open 24/7, your name is confidential, and an elder’s rights are respected.”*

and are intervening. There has been movement to strengthen elder abuse laws and to develop better tools to prevent elder abuse.

Below are just two of the many recent changes in elder abuse prevention.

In October 2017, the president signed the Elder Abuse Prevention Act, which helps to prevent elders becoming victims of fraud and places significant penalties on perpetrators.

In Massachusetts in 2017, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs under the guidance of Secretary Bonner revised the regulations governing Elder Protective Services. They have also started several new training programs to give the protective services workers greater flexibility and skills in investigating and intervening in elder abuse.

### What can you do help prevent elder abuse?

Educate yourself about elder abuse and learn the signs of elder abuse. Below are just some of the signs:

**Physical abuse or mistreatment:** Bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions, burns

**Emotional abuse:** Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness, or unusual depression; strained or tense relationships; frequent

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arguments between the caregiver and older adult; belittling, threats, or other uses of power and control by individuals

**Financial abuse:** Sudden changes in financial situations

**Neglect:** Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, unusual weight loss

**Check out the following three websites** to learn more about the types, prevention, causes, and signs of elder abuse.

- International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: [www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse)
- The National Institute on Aging: [www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse)
- The National Center on Elder Abuse: [ncea.acl.gov](http://ncea.acl.gov)

**Advocate for policy and continued funding:** I ask that all of you on June 15, 2018, do your part to prevent elder abuse. Call, write or email your state and federal legislators and Governor Baker. Tell them that elder abuse prevention is important to you. Ask that they continue to provide financial resources to support programs such as home-delivered meals, Elder Protective Services, transportation programs, housing programs and councils on aging to name just a few. Below are the links to find your local legislator, Governor Baker and federal congressman.

- **Visit “Find My Legislator” for your state senator or representative:** [malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator](http://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator)
- **Governor Charlie Baker:** [www.mass.gov/governor/constituent-services/contact-governor-office/#email](http://www.mass.gov/governor/constituent-services/contact-governor-office/#email)
- **U.S Representative:** [www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)
- **U.S Senator:** [www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

**If you suspect abuse of someone over 60 and in Massachusetts, call the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-800-922-2275 or file online at [www.mass.gov/report-elder-abuse](http://www.mass.gov/report-elder-abuse).** The hotline is open 24/7, your name is confidential, and an elder’s rights are respected.

The police can be contacted for information and assistance as well. If an older adult is in immediate, life-threatening danger, call 911.

If the abuse occurring in a nursing or rest home, contact the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program. Call LifePath at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 for the Ombudsman program in our area.

**Wear purple:** Purple is the color that represents World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. On June 15, 2018, please wear something purple to show your support for the prevention of elder abuse.

**Elder abuse is a daily concern. It affects us all, but you are the solution. You can make a difference. Do something and help someone you know or love.**

*You can learn more about Elder Protective Services at LifePath at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).*

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