

# Psychological Effects of Nursing Home Abuse

## Call an experienced Alabama attorney who fights for victims

Families trust nursing home facilities to take care of their loved ones. Unfortunately, in facilities throughout Alabama and the United States, that trust is violated. Many loved ones suffer [nursing home abuse](#) at the hands of staff members.

Abuse is the intentional mistreatment, harm, or exploitation of an individual. There are different forms of nursing home abuse, including:

- Physical abuse – for example, hitting, slapping, or restraining residents
- Emotional abuse – examples include insults, humiliation, or intimidation
- Sexual abuse – this involves any unwanted sexual contact or behavior
- Financial abuse – stealing or misusing a resident's money or property

The trauma of abuse doesn't just go away. Nursing home abuse can have significant psychological effects on residents who are abused. These psychological effects can have a devastating impact on their mental and physical health, and can be severe and long-lasting.

The psychological effects of abuse can take many forms.

**Depression.** Victims of nursing home abuse may experience feelings of persistent sadness and start to feel worthless. They may have difficulty concentrating and can lose interest in many of the things they previously enjoyed.

**Anxiety.** Residents who have experienced any type of abuse may become continuously anxious about their safety and well-being, and worry about being abused again. This can also result in panic attacks, including physical symptoms such as chest pain, sweating, and difficulty breathing.

**Fear.** Victims of abuse may be constantly afraid of their abusers. Symptoms may include rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, chest pain, shaking, and nausea when their abuser is near. Their fear and distrust may extend to other staff members, as well.

**Social isolation.** Older adults in nursing homes who are abused or neglected may not want to talk with others and just want to be left alone. They may withdraw from social activities and relationships.

**Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.** Residents may feel helpless about doing anything to stop the abuse. They may feel like they can't control their own lives and feel hopeless that their situation will change for the better.

**Guilt.** Victims of abuse may feel guilty about what has happened to them. They may believe that they did something to deserve the abuse, or they may feel like they are a burden to others.

**Shame.** Residents who have been abused may also feel ashamed about what has happened to them. They may believe that they are not worthy of love or respect, and they may not want to talk about what has happened to them.

**Anger.** Victims of abuse may feel angry about what has happened to them. They may be angry at their abusers, at the people who did not protect them, or at the world in general.

**Insomnia.** The experience of abuse, and fear that it will happen again, can interfere with sleep. Lack of sleep can have a significant impact on the resident's emotional health, physical health, and overall well-being.

**Grief.** Residents who are abused grieve the loss of their independence, their safety, and their sense of security. They may also grieve for the loss of the relationship they once had with their abuser.

**Eating disorders.** Victims of abuse may change their eating patterns as a coping mechanism. Other psychological effects such as depression or anxiety can also lead to loss of appetite. An eating disorder can harm the physical health of residents.

**PTSD.** In severe cases of abuse, residents may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms include intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, and avoidance of triggers they associate with the abuse.

### **What to do if you suspect nursing home abuse**

If you suspect nursing home abuse in Alabama, there are several steps you can take to report it:

- Contact [Alabama Adult Protective Services \(APS\)](#) at 1-800-458-7214. APS investigates reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults, including those in nursing homes.
- Contact the [Alabama Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program](#) at 1-877-425-2243. The ombudsman program provides advocacy and assistance to residents of long-term care facilities, including nursing homes.
- Contact the [Alabama Department of Public Health](#) by calling their ElderCare Hotline at 1-800-356-9596. The department investigates complaints related to the quality of care provided in nursing homes.
- Contact local law enforcement by calling 911 if you believe the abuse is immediate or life-threatening.

It is important to provide as much information as possible when reporting nursing home abuse, including the name and location of the facility, the name of the resident(s) involved, and any details about the abuse or neglect that you have observed or been told about. Reports can be made anonymously, and all reports are kept confidential.

### **An experienced attorney can help you get justice**

There are different factors that can play a role in nursing home abuse, including staffing shortages, inadequate training of staff, lack of policies and procedures, poor management, and

lack of resources. But ultimately the staff members committing the abuse and the nursing homes themselves are responsible and need to be held accountable for what happened.

However, negligent parties often deny being responsible for abuse. That's why you need an experience Alabama nursing home abuse attorney on your side.

At [Shuttlesworth Law Firm LLC](#), we've been helping victims of nursing home abuse for decades. Attorney Perry Shuttlesworth works personally with clients and their families. His first priority is to ensure that your loved one is safe and is receiving proper care.

Our firm can investigate what happened to your loved one to get the facts about what happened. We gather evidence such as medical records and nursing home employment records. We interview witnesses and consult experts as needed. Attorney Shuttlesworth knows how to build a strong case that gets results.

If you think a loved one is the victim of nursing home abuse in Alabama, we can help. [Contact us](#) as soon as possible to set up a free consultation.