

# 2016's States with the Best Elder-Abuse Protections

by [Richie Bernardo](#) | Dec 7, 2016

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Abuse happens every day and takes many forms. Anyone can become a victim of abuse, but [vulnerable older Americans](#) — especially those who are women, have disabilities and rely on others for care or other type of assistance — are among the easiest targets for such [misconduct](#). By one estimate, elder abuse affects as many as 5 million people per year, and 96 percent of all cases go unreported.

Unless an aggressive course of action is taken to prevent further abuse, the problem will grow as America becomes an increasingly aging nation. The U.S. Census Bureau expects the population aged 65 and older to [nearly double](#) from 43.1 million in 2012 to 83.7 million in 2050, much to the credit of aging Baby Boomers who began turning 65 in 2011.

Fortunately, states recognize that elder abuse is a real and growing issue. But sadly, only some are fighting hard enough to

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## States with the Best Elder-Abuse Protections

Overall Rank ↕	State ↕	Total Score ↕	'Prevalence' Rank ↕	'Resources' Rank ↕	'Protection' Rank ↕
1	District of Columbia	71.46	25	2	4
2	Nevada	70.92	2	3	27
3	Massachusetts	66.62	10	8	12
4	Wisconsin	66.14	12	4	33
5	Missouri	65.22	11	15	8
6	Tennessee	60.14	16	16	16
7	Iowa	59.78	8	20	18
8	Louisiana	59.76	1	14	42
9	Vermont	59.59	6	21	19
10	Hawaii	58.78	5	49	3
11	New York	58.44	9	48	1
12	Pennsylvania	58.33	4	32	13
13	Georgia	57.68	19	12	35
14	West Virginia	57.59	28	10	24
15	Maryland	55.56	33	6	21
16	North Carolina	55.25	18	31	9
17	Maine	53.23	23	27	14
18	Kansas	52.59	21	43	11
19	New Hampshire	51.79	3	36	38
20	Washington	50.63	31	35	10
21	Delaware	50.53	26	30	

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22	Arizona	50.05	36	5	46
23	Texas	50.00	15	45	29
24	Indiana	49.85	13	47	28
25	Minnesota	49.08	17	33	36
26	Connecticut	49.03	29	23	32
27	Oregon	48.70	40	11	15
28	Mississippi	48.25	27	18	49
29	Oklahoma	46.06	35	28	17
30	Ohio	45.47	30	24	39
31	Michigan	45.33	7	46	48
32	Montana	45.17	44	1	20
33	Colorado	44.69	34	25	30
34	Arkansas	44.57	38	37	5
35	Utah	43.78	37	13	50
36	Virginia	43.64	22	44	44
37	Alaska	43.62	43	19	6
38	Florida	43.34	14	50	47
39	Illinois	43.09	32	34	31
40	New Mexico	42.76	39	17	41
41	Nebraska	42.23	24	51	40
42	Alabama	41.91	20	41	51
43	Kentucky	39.98	42	9	43
44	Idaho	34.70	41	38	34
45	North Dakota	33.61	47	22	2
46	New Jersey	29.72	45	40	22
47	South Dakota	28.37	46	29	25
48	Rhode Island	28.31	49	7	26
49	California	18.93	50	42	7
50	Wyoming	18.18	48	26	45
51	South Carolina	12.49	50	39	37

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per Resident Aged 65+

1. Louisiana
2. Nevada
3. New Hampshire
4. Pennsylvania
5. Hawaii



per Resident Aged 65+

47. North Dakota
48. Wyoming
49. Rhode Island
- T-50. California
- T-50. South Carolina

Highest Total Expenditures on Elder-Abuse Prevention per Resident Aged 65+

1. Massachusetts
2. Rhode Island
3. Arizona
4. Nevada
5. Wisconsin



Lowest Total Expenditures on Elder-Abuse Prevention per Resident Aged 65+

45. Texas
46. Maine
- T-47. Alaska
- T-47. Georgia
- T-47. Missouri

Highest Total Long-Term Care Ombudsman-Program Funding per Resident Aged 65+

- T-1. Alaska
- T-1. District of Columbia
3. Montana
4. Vermont
5. Ohio



Best State  
vs  
Worst State

Lowest Total Long-Term Care Ombudsman-Program Funding per Resident Aged 65+

47. Hawaii
48. New York
49. Tennessee
50. Florida
51. Nebraska

17x Difference

Most Eldercare Organizations & Services per Resident Aged 65+

1. Alaska
2. Vermont
3. Wisconsin
4. Montana
5. North Dakota



Best State  
vs  
Worst State

Fewest Eldercare Organizations & Services per Resident Aged 65+

47. Rhode Island
48. Missouri
49. Texas
50. Delaware
51. Florida

63x Difference

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experts in fields such as social welfare and aging for insight and advice on such matters. Read about the panelists below and their thoughts on the following key questions:

1. What are the most common types of elder abuse?
2. How can policymakers protect the elderly from abuse, financial or otherwise?
3. Should there be legal restrictions against caregivers financially benefitting from the death of the person he or she was caring for?
4. What can families do to protect elderly family members from being abused financially?

### Peter A. Lichtenberg

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Director of the Institute of Gerontology and Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute and Professor of Psychology at Wayne State University



#### What are the most common types of elder abuse?

Financial exploitation, emotional abuse, neglect and self-neglect.

#### How can policymakers protect the elderly from abuse, financial or otherwise?

My expertise is on financial abuse. Several things:

1. Fund the elder justice act so that more enhanced multidisciplinary teams to combat elder abuse can be created.
2. Increase the responsibilities/standards for the financial services industry so that failing to follow elder exploitation safety rules can bring fines to the band/planner etc.
3. Provide funding to implement evidence based instruments and methods.
4. More aggressively pursue exploiters and make criminal penalties tougher.

#### Should there be legal restrictions against caregivers financially benefitting from the death of the person he/she was caring for?

Any caregiving relationship less than 18-24 months long should absolutely prohibit a professional caregiver from receiving funds from the estate of their older client.

Family caregivers are more complicated - but in general, changes to estate plans (that benefit the family caregiver) in the last 6-12 months of life should carry with them a presumption of undue influence so that attorneys would be required to provide a higher level of assessment before making any changes.

#### What can families do to protect elderly family members from being abused financially?

Communication is so important and so is a plan - who will become involved if someone notices an older person becoming confused or having bill payment issues? Planning before a crisis occurs is the biggest key to avoiding financial exploitation.

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and the District of Columbia across three key dimensions: 1) Prevalence, 2) Resources and 3) Protection.

We evaluated these dimensions using 10 key metrics, which are listed below with their corresponding weights. Each metric was scored on a 100-point scale, with 100 representing the “best protection against elder abuse.”

Finally, we calculated the overall score for each state based on its weighted average across all metrics and used the resulting scores to rank the states accordingly.

### Prevalence – Total Points: 40

- Share of Elder-Abuse, Gross-Neglect and Exploitation Complaints: Full Weight (~40.00 Points)

Notes: This metric was calculated by dividing the number of elder-abuse, gross-neglect and exploitation complaints by the number of residents aged 65 and older. “Complaints” include those made to the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

### Resources – Total Points: 30

- Total Expenditures on Elder-Abuse Prevention per Resident Aged 65 & Older: Full Weight (~10.00 Points)
- Total Expenditures on Legal-Assistance Development per Resident Aged 65 & Older: Full Weight (~10.00 Points)
- Total Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Funding per Resident Aged 65 & Older: Full Weight (~10.00 Points)

### Protection – Total Points: 30

- Financial Elderly-Abuse Laws: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Eldercare Organizations & Services per Resident Aged 65 & Older: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Presence of Elder-Abuse Forensic Centers: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Number of Certified Volunteer Ombudsmen per Resident Aged 65 & Older: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Frequency of Assisted-Living Facilities Inspections: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Quality of Nursing Homes: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)

Note: This metric measures the percentage of certified nursing-home beds rated 4 or 5 stars.

Sources: Data used to create this ranking were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, Aging Integrated Database, National Conference of State Legislatures, Administration on Aging - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, California State Association of Public Administrators, Public Guardians & Public Conservators, ProPublica and United Health Foundation.

### Author



#### Richie Bernardo

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Richie Bernardo is a personal finance writer at WalletHub. He graduated with a Bachelor of Journalism and a minor in business from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Previously, he was a...

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