

Resources for Health Care Professionals

Fact Sheet
Elder Abuse
June 2008

The Problem of Elder Abuse in Indian Country

As awareness about elder abuse increases nationwide, its presence is also on the rise in Indian Country. Traditionally, American Indian elders have held a place of honor for their wisdom, experience and cultural knowledge.

Unfortunately, this is changing in some communities. With chronic poverty and unemployment common across Indian Country coupled with high rates of depression and substance abuse, financial exploitation by other family members, friends or caregivers is one of the most common ways an Indian elder is abused.

Most elders do not recognize they are being exploited by family members or other caregivers when their money or other prized possessions are taken without their permission and used for another's advantage.

The cultural value many elders grew up with reinforces that they share whatever they have. They may not see others' actions as ultimately harming their own well-being and ability to care for themselves.

Exploitation as a form of abuse is often coupled with psychological or emotional abuse where the elder is threatened or demeaned by the perpetrator.

The next most prevalent form of elder abuse is neglect, with the elder not receiving assistance with activities of daily living, regular meals, etc. necessary for their health and well-being or unable/unwilling to care for themselves. Self-neglect is another prevalent form of abuse where the elder does not willingly accept assistance or does not take care of himself or herself although able to do so.

While physical and sexual abuse are not as common, the growing presence of financial exploitation and neglect constitute dangerous forms of elder abuse that have a strong impact on an elder's health.

Elders also may be victims of institutional or structural abuse by government agencies or health care providers that fail to show them respect or provide proper care.

RESOURCES/TOOLS:

National Association for Area Agencies on Aging (N4A)

N4A is the umbrella organization for the 655 area agencies on aging (AAAs) and more than 230 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S. These agencies coordinate and support a wide range of home- and community-based services, including information and referral, home-delivered and congregate meals, transportation, senior centers, and other services like adult day care.

To contact one of these agencies, call the **Eldercare Locator at (800) 677-1116**

Or the website

<http://www.n4a.org/locator>.

Adult Protective Services

States' adult protective services agencies (nationwide 24-hour Hotline toll-free at **800-624-8404**) are voluntary resources for elders living off- reservation unless the elder lacks sufficient mental capacity or a crime has been committed which may trigger law enforcement to take action.


National Family Caregiver Support Program (NCFSP)

The Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000 established the NCFSP to assist the aging network in developing caregiver support programs. This site contains links to varied caregiver publications, research, resources and tools.

<http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprof/caregiver/caregiver.asp>

National Center on Elder Abuse

Preventing Elder Abuse by Family Caregivers, published by the National Center on



Elder Abuse. This tool is aimed at providing coordination and collaboration between elder abuse prevention and family caregiver networks.

http://ncea.aoa.gov/NCEAroot/Main_Site/pdf/family/caregiver.pdf

Preventing Elder Abuse by In-Home Helpers, published by the National Center on Elder Abuse. This manual explains approaches and techniques for reducing abuse by helpers and highlights best practices, models and resources.

http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/NCEAroot/Main_Site/pdf/publication/preventing.pdf

Developing Training Programs on Elder Abuse Prevention for In-Home Helpers.

A resource for trainers of persons not familiar with personal assistance services who will gain an understanding of the in-home workforce and situations that workers are likely to encounter.

http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/NCEAroot/Main_Site/pdf/publication

Assessment Instrument

The Elder Assessment Instrument (EAI), a 41-item Likert scale, in the literature since 1984, and comprised of seven sections that review symptoms and subjective complaints of abuse. Available at www.hartfordign.org and/or www.ConsultGeriRN.org

New Mexico Geriatric Education Center

The New Mexico Geriatric Education Center (NMGEC) is dedicated to improving the health care of American Indian elders through the education and training of **health care providers**. See NMGEC website for training/education for professionals.

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<http://hsc.unm.edu/som/fcm/gec/>

Using Tribal Values to Develop Elder Protection Code: A Step-by-Step Community Approach

A workbook available at NMGEC or NICOA websites.

The Model Tribal Elder Protection Code (1990)

Publication available through the UNM American Indian Law Center, or at the following website: <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/fcm/gec>.

National Indian Council on Aging

The National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA) strives to improve health and social services for American Indian and Alaska Native Elders nationwide, including providing education, awareness and advocacy about elder abuse.

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National Resource Center for American Indian, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian Elders

A program of the University of Alaska Anchorage whose mission is to examine issues on elder health, long-term health care systems, and prevention of elder abuse and exploitation based on the Native perspective.

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