

# *Lifting Up Voices*

## Action Guide

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## **About World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**

Each year, an estimated 5 million older adults are abused, neglected, or exploited. Older Americans lose an estimated \$2.6 billion or more annually due to elder financial abuse and exploitation, funds that could be used to pay for basic needs such as housing, food, and medical care.

Unfortunately, abuse occurs in every demographic and can happen to anyone—a family member, a neighbor, even you. It is estimated that only one in five of these crimes are reported.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) was launched on June 15, 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations (UN).

**World Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic circumstances affecting elder abuse and neglect.**

In addition, WEAAD is held in support of the UN International Plan of Action acknowledging the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue. This observance is a call-to-action for individuals, organizations, and communities to lift up our voices—and those of older survivors—and raise awareness about elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

## ***Lifting Up Voices***

Every day, in subtle and obvious ways, older adults are marginalized and even dismissed, in our society. We see it in statements like “over the hill” or “I’m having a senior moment.” It’s in our actions, when we automatically talk louder to an older person or talk about that person in front of them instead of addressing him or her directly. And it’s in our attitudes when we view older people as incompetent or that being young is good, but being old is sad.

Ageism blinds us to the benefits and strengths of aging and increases our fears of growing older. Worse yet, ageism also creates a culture that ignores and tolerates elder abuse and allows the abuse of older adults to continue.

**“Ageism...like racism and sexism, is a form of prejudice, a form of oppression that not only limits people who are the object of that oppression but which also shapes perceptions of people, both young and old, who hold ageist attitudes.”<sup>1</sup>**

This year, the [National Center on Elder Abuse \(NCEA\)](#) and the [National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life \(NCALL\)](#) invite you to join us in ***Lifting Up Voices*** for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) 2019, a theme that is centered on unifying the parallel fields of Elder Justice and Violence Against Women by bringing to the forefront the lived experiences of older people around the globe.

*Lifting Up the Voices of Older Survivors* is both the title of and the foundation for a new video project started in 2018 by NCALL and [Terra Nova Films](#), with funding from the Department of Justice’s [Office for Victims of Crime](#). These videos, which will be released in conjunction with WEAAD, feature older survivors throughout the United States sharing their stories and experiences of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and financial exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup> Making Space: Merging Theory and Practice in Adult Education, V Sheared, PA Sissel, 2001 p. 140.

*Lifting Up Voices* also builds upon the momentum of NCEA's existing theme, *Building Strong Support for Elders*, which was informed by the [Reframing Elder Abuse](#) initiative encouraging us to consciously think and thoughtfully approach conversations about elder abuse. We are excited to continue developing these initiatives with you for WEAAD 2019.

## **Inviting Older Survivors to Share Their Stories**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is one of many opportunities for older survivors to share their perspectives and experiences. Consider the following ways to lift up the voices of older survivors:

- Host an event for WEAAD and invite survivors to share their stories.
- Invite survivors to write blogs or record vlogs about their experiences.
- Lift up older survivors stories throughout the year by inviting them to speak at an awareness event during Stalking Awareness Month (January), Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April), and Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October).
- Engage the voices of older survivors when working on legislation to enhance protections for victims of elder abuse, stalking, sexual assault, and domestic violence.
- Invite older survivors to join candlelight vigils, marches, rallies, or memorial event for victims.
- Create opportunities for older survivors to speak at support groups.
- Include older survivors in your local Coordinated Community Response team.
- Invite older survivors to join your board of directors.
- Incorporate feedback from older survivors on your agency's resources, programs, and policies.

Some older survivors want to share their story publicly to help others and prevent the pain he or she experienced from happening again. If you invite an older survivor to speak, be prepared to provide emotional support before, during, and after he or she speaks.

For more information on working with survivors who want to share their stories, please consider the following resources:

- [From the Front of the Room: A Survivor's Guide to Public Speaking](#) created by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) provides a basic overview of the issues that face survivors who desire to speak publicly about their experiences with intimate partner violence. It provides guidance for the survivor speaker to maximize their physical and emotional safety and ensure the overall success of the speaking engagement. This guide is designed to explore the journey of sharing their story with the public.
- [Tips for Working with Older Survivors Who Want to Share Their Stories](#) is a short video clip created by the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life. It shares some strategies for working with older survivors who may want to share their lived experience during training events or with the media. Video presenters: Bonnie Brandl, Lisa G. Furr, and Anne Menard. (run time: 5:55)

### **Some Important Considerations:**

- Not all older survivors should share their story publicly.
  - Always be sure to consider safety and confidentiality concerns first.
  - How is this person doing emotionally?
  - How comfortable is this person with public speaking?
- Consider helping the survivor write/update their emotional and physical safety plan before sharing their story.
- Ask the survivor about transportation needs and help make arrangements if needed.
- Consider these strategies to prepare the survivor on what to expect at the event.
  - Ask the survivor what they need to be comfortable at the event.
  - Discuss how long the event will be, any timing they may need to consider with meal times and medications.

- Discuss seating options, length of time standing and set up of the room.
- Be explicit with the survivor about the audience they will be sharing their story with.
- Arrange for an advocate to accompany the survivor at the event, to serve as their support person from start to finish.

### **Accessibility:**

Creating an accessible event makes it easier for *all* people to participate fully. This is particularly important when inviting older survivors who may have specific accessibility needs. Some tips for creating accessible events include:

- Make sure event space is budget friendly and easy to access via public transportation.
- Ensure event space can accommodate people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices easily.
- Use ample signage and large print on any printed materials.
- Have speakers and audience members use microphones at all times when speaking.
- Arrange for sign language and spoken language interpreters.
- For more tips on how to create an accessible event, check out The Vera Institute for Justice's End Abuse of People With Disabilities [Tip Sheet Series](#).

### **Equity and Inclusion:**

Being inclusive of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and language is critical when working to lift up the voices of older survivors. When planning an event for survivors to share their stories, having representation of the whole community ensures that the stories and experiences of those who often are excluded do not go missing.



As you prepare, think about those in your community who often go unserved or underserved, including People of Color, People with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, and Immigrant communities. Fostering representative events helps dismantle oppression and opens-up access to healing services and justice supports for all victims.

## Sample Social Media Posts

### Twitter

Join us in #LiftingUpVoices this World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Visit <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> to find out how! #WEAAD

Get involved in this year's World Elder Abuse Awareness Day campaign: #LiftingUpVoices. Learn more: <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> #WEAAD

Together, we can shed light on elder abuse. Share your story with #LiftingUpVoices to bring awareness & inspire others. <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> #WEAAD

This #WEAAD, we're #LiftingUpVoices to inspire & empower all older survivors. <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV>

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15. This year's #LiftingUpVoices campaign honors the lives & experiences of older survivors. Learn more: <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> #WEAAD

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (#WEAAD)! This year, we're #LiftingUpVoices to show the power of story. More at: <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV>

How will you lift up the voices of older survivors? Share your #WEAAD plans using #LiftingUpVoices. <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV>

Always be sure to consider safety and confidentiality concerns of older survivors first before asking them to share their stories. Learn more at: <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> #LiftingUpVoices #WEAAD

#LiftingUpVoices of older survivors means that we are including them in our research, outreach & education, policy advocacy, and services. Learn more at <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> #WEAAD

For WEAAD, we're #LiftingUpVoices of older survivors and raising awareness about the role everyone can play in preventing elder abuse. <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> #WEAAD

Join @NCEAatUSC and @NCALL\_US in confronting #ageism and #LiftingUpVoices of older survivors for #WEAAD. <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV>

## **Facebook**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is June 15! This year, join NCALL and @NationalCenteronElderAbuse in using #LiftingUpVoices, a campaign to honor the lives & experiences of older survivors. Many older adults who are harmed display amazing personal strength and courage during difficult times. Some older survivors may choose to speak out about their experiences to help other victims know that they are not alone and help is available. Download our Action Guide with tips for working with older survivors who want to share their stories, shareable campaign graphics, and sample social media posts. Visit <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> to learn more.

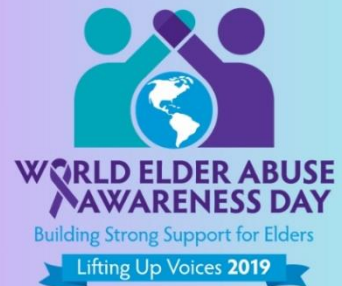
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (#WEAAD) is one of many opportunities for older survivors to share their perspectives and experiences. Being inclusive of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and language is critical when working to lift up the voices of older survivors. When planning an event for survivors to share their stories, having representation of the whole community ensures that the stories and experiences of those who often are excluded do not go missing. Visit <https://nceausc.tk/WEAADLUV> to learn more. #LiftingUpVoices

## Shareable Graphics

Download all graphics at once [HERE](#).

### Banners





**WORLD ELDER ABUSE  
AWARENESS DAY**

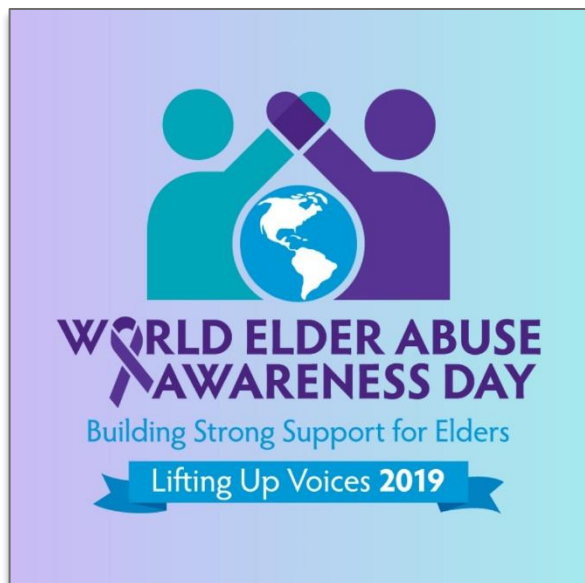
Building Strong Support for Elders

Lifting Up Voices **2019**



## Web Graphics





## Online Resources

### Websites



**National Center on Elder Abuse**  
[ncea.acl.gov](http://ncea.acl.gov)



**National Clearinghouse on  
Abuse in Later Life**  
[ncall.us](http://ncall.us)

### Join Us on Social Media

[National Center on Elder Abuse on Facebook](#)

[National Center on Elder Abuse on Twitter](#)

[National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life on Facebook](#)

[National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life on Twitter](#)

## More Ways to Take Action Throughout the Year

Elder abuse has a profound effect on millions of older adults as well the people who love and care for them. Older victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are being harmed every day. As 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day, cases of elder abuse are increasing.

Here are a few ways you can raise awareness of elder abuse and support older survivors throughout the year:

- Educate older adults, family members, and professionals by providing training or organizing conferences and other events.
- Commit to raising awareness of elder abuse through social and print media and awareness campaigns throughout the year.
- Include images of older adults and examples of abuse in later life in general education materials and presentations.
- Confront ageist messages in the media by writing editorials or engaging in social media to encourage positive portrayals of older adults and visibility of persons of all ages.
- Involve older adults from diverse backgrounds in a meaningful way in creating, reviewing, and implementing programs and policies.
- Visit an elderly neighbor who lives alone.
- Volunteer for a program or organization that benefits seniors.
- Work with adult foster care homes, continuing care retirement communities, or long term care residential facilities to establish emergency housing options for older victims.
- The NCEA offers many ways for people to connect with us and stay abreast of the latest resources and activities in the elder justice field. Connect with the NCEA:  
<https://ncea.acl.gov/connectwithus/index.html>
- Join the national community of advocates and others committed to promoting respect and dignity across the lifespan by joining [NCALL's advocates' listserv](#) or [e-newsletter list](#).