



Outreach and Public Awareness Strategies: Reaching Out to Older Victims and Survivors of Abuse

Create Materials on Abuse in Later Life

- Include diverse images of older individuals on materials
- List phone numbers of services for older adults and elder abuse/adult protective services on resource materials.
- When developing materials about domestic abuse or sexual assault in later life, consider using a larger font, an easy to read font, and color contrast to improve readability.
- Include articles on abuse in later life in agency newsletters.
- Create placemats to be used at meal sites and by meals on wheels containing information about abuse in later life and agency phone numbers.
- Use language that is comfortable for older people. Phrases such as “abuser,” “domestic violence,” “sexual assault,” and “elder abuse” may not connect with older adults. Consider terms such as person causing harm or person harming you. Describing specific forms of abuse such as withholding medicine, refusing to let you go out with friends, putting you on an allowance etc., often resonates with older adults more than professional jargon.

Facilitate Presentations on Abuse in Later Life

- Include examples of older victims in presentations about general domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Invite older survivors to participate on survivor panels.

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)

A project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

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- Facilitate presentations on abuse and available services at events where seniors gather such as meal sites. Ideally have several trainers from different disciplines.
- Talk to audiences of older adults as if they might be victims or may know older victims. Do not focus on discussing domestic violence or sexual assault as if it might only happen to their children or grandchildren.
- After presentations, stay and join activities or visit to build relationships.
- Organize “Safety in Your Home” sessions that include information on abuse in later life.

Attend Events Where Older Individuals Gather

- Host a booth at events where older individuals gather offering information on abuse in later life and give-away items.
- Purchase give-away items (e.g., pens, magnets, magnifying glasses) that have contact information for APS and domestic and sexual abuse victim service programs, along with aging services phone numbers so an abuser will not get suspicious.

Make Your Agency Accessible and Welcoming for Older Adults

- Display information in your office that would be useful for older victims (information on Social Security, pensions, aging service networks, adult protective services, and abuse in later life).
- Create a service directory of resources for older victims of abuse in your community.
- Display images of older individuals in your office.
- Wear a button or have a sign in your office stating that you are someone who listens to questions about abuse.

Build Relationships with Professionals from Other Disciplines to Increase Referrals

- Organize cross-trainings of domestic abuse and sexual assault victim advocates, aging services network, and APS staff.
- Organize trainings for other allied professionals like law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, health care professionals, and Faith communities.
- Organize brown bag lunches with other professionals who work with older victims to network and discuss successes and challenges.
- Provide information on abuse in later life at elder abuse and aging conferences and events.
- Develop a media campaign addressing abuse in later life (e.g., organize a breakfast for reporters; draft press releases).
- Invite APS and aging services network professionals to participate on family violence committees.
- Invite domestic and sexual abuse agency staff to attend elder abuse committees.
- Provide training on abuse in later life to individuals who may have contact with abuse victims (e.g., meals on wheels volunteers, drivers, beauticians, utility meter readers, postal carriers, dentists).
- Participate in statewide/tribal efforts focused on abuse in later life (either through statewide/tribal domestic and sexual violence coalitions or Department on Aging).
- Join the Board of Directors of a local nonprofit focusing on issues related to seniors and/or domestic or sexual violence.
- Volunteer at a local aging services network agency.
- Volunteer at a local domestic or sexual violence agency.
- Apply for funding with other organizations to create services for older victims of abuse.

- Organize a fatality review team for elder abuse cases.
- Organize training models and create materials addressing abuse in later life for justice professionals (law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and probation and parole).
- Organize training modules and create materials addressing abuse in later life for health care providers, including nursing home staff.
- Organize training modules and create materials addressing abuse in later life for substance abuse service providers, mental health service providers, and the faith-based community.
- Invite older victims/survivors to tell their story on panels, video-taped, or in writing. Always keep victim safety in mind.
- Research abuse in nursing homes, assisted living, and other regulated facilities in your area. Offer to provide training to staff on identifying and responding to abuse.
- Collaborate with disabilities specialists working with older victims that may be blind, hard of hearing, Deaf, have a physical disability, cognitive limitations, or psychiatric disabilities.
- Provide information to beauty parlors, dentists, and massage therapists.
- Ride along with meals on wheels volunteers or public health officials if abuse is suspected.

Enhance Public Awareness

- Write articles for your state medical journal, state bar association journal, and local newspapers and newsletters.
- Display information regarding abuse in later life and the available senior services such as vans, taxies, buses, or other public transportation.
- Organize activities for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15.

- Include older victims in activities for Stalking Awareness Month (January), Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April), National Crime Victims' Rights Week (April), Older Americans Month (May), and Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October),
- Distribute materials where older people gather. Put up posters in clinics frequented by older patients, beauty parlors, grocery stores, and senior centers.
- For radio and television public awareness messages, use market research to determine times and shows older people frequently listen to or watch. Target public service announcements and/or advertising during these shows, specifically mentioning abuse in later life.
- Appear on talk shows or news programs that older people watch or listen to and discuss abuse in later life.
- Approach print media who specialize in aging issues and ask them to do a story on older victims of abuse.