SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN LATER LIFE: YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

National Sexual Assault Conference
Sept. 2-4, 2015

Honoring the Survivors

Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Abuse in Later Life Program

- Direct training for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges
- Cross-training for victim service providers and others
- Coordinated community response (CCR)
- Victim services
UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

U.S. POPULATION AGE 65 AND OLDER IS ON THE RISE

1990-2050

Number of People (millions)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

Slide courtesy of LifeLong Justice

U.S. POPULATION AGE 65 AND OLDER IS ON THE RISE

Year

Number of People (millions)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012. 2010 Census Summary File 1; U.S. Census Bureau, Table 2. Projections of the population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for the United States 2010-2050 (NP2008-4).
Creating a Comprehensive Framework

- Elder abuse violates human rights, creating unsafe & fearful environments
- Safety must be central to our work
- Safety is only attainable when we build a working relationship with survivors and provide access to all populations including language access

Abuse in Later Life vs Elder Abuse

- Age: 50+
- Gender: Female and male
- Relationship: Ongoing with expectation of trust
- Forms: Physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect, financial exploitation and abandonment

- Age: 60-70; possibly defined by vulnerability
- Gender: Female and male
- Relationship: Any
- Forms: Same with possible additional self-neglect and financial scams

How Are Older People Injured?

- Unintentional injuries
- Well-intended caregivers
- By persons who can’t control their behavior due to medical conditions
- Abuse, neglect and/or exploitation
Abuse, Neglect, and/or Exploitation

• Greed
• Power and control dynamics

Abuse in Later Life  Power & Control Wheel

Intimate Partner Violence
Neglect
Financial Exploitation

TYPES OF ABUSE IN LATER LIFE
Intimate Partner Violence in Later Life

• Significant segment of elder abuse is intimate partner violence
• Long-term relationship
• New relationship
• Late onset

Other relationships

• Adult son, daughter, grandchild
• Caregivers & Care receiver as abuser

Financial Exploitation

• Illegal or improper use of an older adult's funds, property or assets.
• Because not all older adults use the banking system, consider cash, gold, jewelry, antiques, and homes as assets.
Who Commits Financial Exploitation?

• Family members, partners, and trusted individuals
• Caregivers
• Faith leaders or members of a faith community
• Court appointed guardians or persons with powers of attorney
• Strangers who may become “friends” such as in “sweetheart scams”

Unique Challenges

• Additional shame and guilt – self blame
• Unique and powerful bond that may exist between mother and child
• Victims may be blamed as “poor mothers” or “bad parents”
• Complete separation not likely – “you can’t divorce your kids”
• Fewer options available

Neglect & Self-Neglect

• The failure to provide adequate or necessary care to a dependent person by a caregiver
• Failure to care for yourself that results in serious physical harm or substantial damage to quality of life including loss of assets.
ELDER SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual Abuse in Later Life
• Victims: any age and range of ability
• In private dwellings or facility settings
• Offenders: spouses/partners, adult sons, grandchildren, caregivers, family members, and others. Least common offenders—strangers

Sexual Abuse
• Hands-on offenses
• Hands-off offenses
• Harmful genital practices
Sexual Abuse in Later Life

• Sexual abuse may be a tool of power and control
• Perpetrators may target older victims
• Dementia may cause inappropriate sexual behavior

Limited Research

• May exacerbate existing illness
• Brittle pelvis or hip bones more likely to fracture
• Increased vaginal/anal tearing and bruising that may never heal

Memphis Study SA victims 55+

• Average age 68.8
• 89% requested services within 24 hours
• 72% assaults occurred in victims home
• 70% involved penetration
• 51% sustained genital injury compared to 13% with younger victims; 28% required surgical repair
• 9% reported assault compared to 25% with younger victims

Miss Mary
Office for Victims of Crimes, NCALL, Terra Nova Films and Office on Violence Against Women

Unique Issues for Older Survivors

• Language
• Increased shame and guilt
• Definition of rape
• Less likely to have strong support system

Additional Challenges

• Bruising incorrectly attributed to aging, medication, or caregiving
• Memory impairment may hinder reporting, investigation, and follow-up
• Hearing impairment or physical limitation may make forensic exam challenging
Cognitive Issues with Older Survivors

• Delusion/delirium
• Dementia
• Depression

Alzheimer’s Disease

• One in eight persons age 65 and over (13%) has Alzheimer’s disease
• Nearly 1/2 of persons over 85 have Alzheimer’s disease
• Short term memory may be compromised
• Accounts of abuse may be accurate even if other statements are not

Cognitive Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporary or Intermittent</th>
<th>Permanent or Progressive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Trauma</td>
<td>• Depression or other mental illnesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of food or water</td>
<td>• Traumatic brain condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Infections</td>
<td>• Dementia</td>
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<td>• Offender tactics</td>
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<td>• Medications</td>
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<td>• Fatigue</td>
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Elders with Dementia

- Older adults with dementia are at a greater risk of physical and emotional abuse, financial exploitation and neglect.
- Studies have shown that 34-62% of people with dementia are abused by their caregivers.

- Source: NCEAA (2012) Research Brief: How at Risk for Abuse are People with Dementia?

2008 Study of SA in Facilities

- 27% of Elder SA abuse cases were substantiated.
- 83% of alleged perpetrators were staff members but only 4% confirmed – none arrested.
- Victims average age – 82.
- 8% male.

Broken Trust: AI
Maine Public Broadcast Network
Ideas for Responding

• Victims may be fearful of consequences of reporting
• Watch for coded disclosures
• Avoid assumptions
• Preserve evidence and report to LE
• Provide victim-centered support

WORKING WITH OLDER SURVIVORS

Ageism in Society
Historical Trauma

“...a cumulative emotional psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences.” Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart

Listen to the Grandmothers
Affects of Historical Trauma

• Lack of trust in services
• Hesitant to give information about personal life
• Misperceptions or fears
• Compliance just to please workers

Working with Survivors

• Understand generational influences/history
• Understand historical trauma
• Respect cultural and generational differences
• Recognize and respect relationship with offender
• Clearly understand impact of trauma

Forensic Exam & the Elder Victim

• Physical condition may not tolerate a pelvic exam & may require visual exam
• Use caution with medications
• Increase risk of infections & STD’s
• Assure all sexual assault advocates and nurses are trained in issues surrounding elder abuse
Forensic medical exam, cont.

• Slow down!
• Avoid emergency room exams; find quieter more private location
• Hearing impairment may require additional time & attention
• Sit with victim and explain exam steps before you begin
• Provide interpreters when necessary

Mandatory Reporting

• Requires individuals to report some cases of abuse and/or neglect to law enforcement, social services and/or a regulatory agency.

Advocates & Mandated Reporting

• Protect the relationship
• Inform the victim on what will happen during the investigation
• Safety plan with the victim
COLLABORATION
The act of working together; united labor

Community Coordinated Response

Know the Basics – Adult Protective Services (APS)
• Response often defined by statute
• Investigate allegations of abuse/neglect
• Self-determination philosophy
• Referral to services
• Limited confidentiality
• Safety focused on environment & victim
• Caregiver stress
Know the Basics – Aging Network

- State and Area Agencies on Aging Services provide variety of services, i.e. transportation, chore services, respite care, meals on wheels and many other services.
- Ombudsmen – advocates for residents of institutional facilities. Every state is required to have an Ombudsman Program.
- Other Programs: Senior centers, peer counseling groups and other local programs designed for older adults.

Building an Inclusive Organization

- Respect, dignity and self determination as part of the organization's stated mission, vision and values;
- Incorporate purposeful practices to eliminate institutional racism, ageism, and oppression as well as other barriers to services;
- Include the voices of older survivors to guide the work

Questions?

Graphics from Isis International
Resources Available on Thumb Drive

• Abuse in Later Life Power & Control Wheel
• Outreach Strategies
• Resource List that includes electronic links to Abuse in Later Life Resources
• Providing Services to People Assaulted in Care Facilities
• PowerPoint Handout

The starting point for a better world is the belief that it is possible. Margaret Mead
Contact Information

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