

What is Elder Abuse?

101

2016 National Indian Council on Aging Conference



National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative

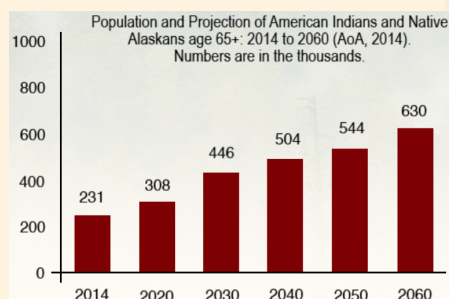
“Restoring respect and dignity by honoring Indigenous elders”

Elder Abuse

- ❖ According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, elder abuse generally refers to any of the following types of mistreatment that are committed by someone with whom the elder has a special relationship (for example, a spouse, sibling, child, friend, or caregiver).

Demographics

- ❖ In 2009, persons age 65 or older made up about 12.9% of the U.S. population, and it is estimated that at the current rate by 2030 they will make up 19% (AoA, 2014).
- ❖ Incidents of elder abuse and/or neglect are expected to increase with the growth of the elder populations.



Implications

- ❖ 90% of elder abuse is committed by a family member (Barton, 2012).
- ❖ Elders who have been abused are at a 200% higher risk of death than those who have not been mistreated (NCOA, 2014).
- ❖ Nationally, financial abuse costs older Americans \$2.9 billion year (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ The above numbers are thought to be underreported because of love for or fear of the abuser.

Types of Abuse

- ❖ According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, there are seven types of elder abuse:
 - Physical Abuse
 - Emotional or Psychological Abuse
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Financial or Material Exploitation
 - Neglect
 - Self-Neglect
 - Abandonment
- ❖ According to Duran and Duran (1995), an additional type of abuse commonly affecting Native American elders is spiritual abuse.

Physical Abuse

- ❖ Physical abuse is defined as the use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ Types of physical abuse may include acts of violence such as striking, hitting, pushing, shaking, slapping, kicking, pinching, or burning. Additionally, inappropriate use of medication, physical restraints, force-feeding, and physical punishment of any kind may also be physical abuse.
- ❖ Physical abuse may not be obvious or easily visible.



Physical Abuse Examples

- Elder hit by adult child
- Elderly man with dementia hitting wife.
- Daughter hits elder stemming from stress of his needs & health
- Drug taking/alcohol use leads to yelling/hitting other family members



Emotional/Psychological Abuse

- ❖ Emotional abuse is defined as the infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ This may include verbal assaults, insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, harassment or disrespect.
- ❖ Examples include:
 - Elderspeak (talking to an elder like an infant)
 - Giving an elder the “silent treatment”
 - Forced isolation

Emotional/Psychological Abuse Examples

- Grown children moving in with elder—drinking, fighting, taking their money, chasing away caregivers
- Confining elder to one room/no interaction with family
- Verbal abuse by young family members
- Children threatening parents/grandparents with nursing home if they couldn't live with her.
- Not listening when elders speak.
- Treating them as if they don't matter any more.

Sexual Abuse

- ❖ Sexual abuse is non-consensual sexual contact of any kind (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ Sexual contact with any person who has not consented or is incapable of consent is considered sexual abuse.
- ❖ Examples include:
 - Rape
 - Unwanted touching
 - Molestation
 - Sodomy
 - Coerced nudity
 - Taking or distributing sexually explicit photographs or videos



Sexual Abuse Examples

- Grandma raped by male high on meth who broke into her house. Ashamed. Would not report or tell anyone. Finally agreed to go to hospital for exam.
- Grandma raped by nephew, wouldn't talk—ashamed
- Elder raped and killed



Financial or Material Exploitation

- ❖ Financial abuse is defined as the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ Examples include:
 - Cashing checks without authorization or permission
 - Forging a signature
 - Misusing or stealing money or possessions
 - Coercing or deceiving an older person into signing documents (e.g., contracts or will)
 - Improper use of conservatorship, guardianship, or power of attorney



Financial Exploitation Examples

- Granddaughter wiped out grandma's bank account.
- Misusing elder's monthly check & not paying for food or bills for elder.
- Family gambled away elder's only income
- Family takes elder's personal items
- Family took elder's check
- Grandchildren pressured elder for money
- Family borrowed money and didn't pay back
- Granddaughter & boyfriend moved in and supported by elder



Neglect

- ❖ Neglect is defined as the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elder. Neglect may include failure of a person who has fiduciary responsibilities to provide care for an elder (e.g., pay for necessary home care services) or the failure on the part of an in-home service provider necessary care (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ Examples include failure to provide necessities such as food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication, comfort, personal safety, and other essentials included in an implied or agreed-upon responsibility to an elder.

Neglect Examples

- Elder confined to home/family wouldn't provide support
- Failing to obtain proper medical treatment for elder
- Family locks elder in home
- Not visiting or taking elders to gatherings

Spiritual Abuse

- ❖ Spiritual abuse is defined as harmful interference with spiritual growth including the corruption of another person's value system. (Doble, R. D. 2006).
- ❖ Examples include:
 - Preventing an elder from attending spiritual activities or ceremonies
 - Theft of an elder's ceremonial items to sell or use without permission
 - Comments or activities which are damaging to the elder's spirit or sexual abuse as a spiritual activity

Spiritual Abuse Examples

- Elder not taken to ceremonies and spiritual events
- Ceremonial items taken from the elder's home by visitors (family, friends, others) for use or sale.
- Sexualized touching, molesting, or rape as a part of spiritual healing or ceremonies.

Abandonment

- ❖ Abandonment is defined as the desertion of an elderly person by an individual who has assumed responsibility for providing care for an elder, or by a person with physical custody of an elder (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ Signs and symptoms of abandonment include but are not limited to:
 - The desertion of an elder at a hospital, a nursing facility, or other similar institution
 - The desertion of an elder at a shopping center or other public location
 - An elder's own report of being abandoned

Abandonment Examples

- Family goes away leaving elder without food or drinking water.
- Elder is not left with any resources for personal hygiene.

Self-Neglect

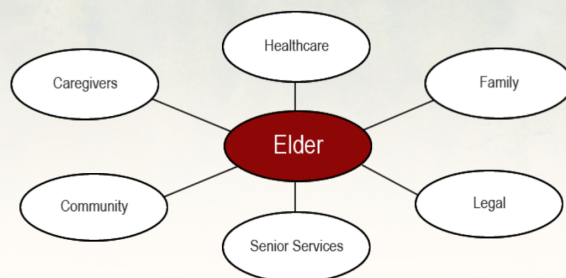
- ❖ Self-neglect is characterized as the behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her personal health or safety. Self-neglect may manifest in an elder as a refusal or failure to provide him/herself with adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication, and safety precautions (NCEA, 2013).
- ❖ The definition of self-neglect excludes a situation in which a mentally competent elder, who understands the consequences of his/herself decisions, makes a conscious and voluntary choice to engage in acts that threaten his/her health or safety.
- ❖ Examples include:
 - Lacking food or basic utilities
 - Refusing medications or hoarding

Elder Protection Team

- ❖ The Elder Protection Team addresses the issues of elder abuse and is dependent upon the resources of each specific tribe. Possible responsibilities of an Elder Protection Team may include:
 - Educating the community and conducting prevention activities
 - Building collaboration and trust among professionals, elders and families
 - Providing empathetic listening
 - Implementing an effective method for responding to elder abuse while maintaining confidentiality
 - Reporting suspected abuse and intervening when necessary
 - Restoring respect of elders

Members of an Elder Protection Team

- ❖ The Elder Protection Team always includes the elder. Due to the complexity of elder abuse, the makeup of the team is individualized, will vary and may include:



Elder Vulnerability

- ❖ Physical changes and old age reduce the ability to conduct activities of daily living and maintain independence.

| Health | Cognitive | Social Isolation |
|---|---|---|
| Poor Vision Poor Hearing Declining Motor Skills Depression | Difficulty with: Processing Information Problem Solving Reasoning Flexibility in Thinking Declining Memory | Poor Health Retirement Loss of Spouse Loss of Friends Lack of Technology Skills |

Levels of Prevention

- ❖ There are many ways to help prevent elder abuse and neglect. There are three levels of prevention, primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention involves education of everyone about what elder abuse is and how to prevent it. Secondary prevention involves work done with elders who are at risk ~ this may include a range of preventative measures such fall prevention or safety scans of the elders home to setting up ways of preventing exploitation. Tertiary prevention is how to prevent elder abuse that has happened to someone before from happening again.



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Resources

- NIEJI PARTNERS**
- Elder Resource Centers**
National Resource Center for American Indian, Alaska Native & Native Hawaiian Elders – University of Alaska Anchorage's mission is to increase and improve service delivery of health issues, long term care including in-home care, elder abuse, mental health, and other issues facing Native communities
<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/elders/>
- Hā Kūpuna National Resource Center for Native Hawaiian Elders – research on improving the health and increasing life expectancy of Native Hawaiian Elders
<http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/hakupuna/>
- National Resource Center on Native American Aging – increasing awareness and advocacy for developing community-based solutions for Native American Elders
<https://www.nrcnaa.org/>
- National Indian Council on Aging – advocating for improved comprehensive health, social services and economic well-being for American Indian and Alaska Native Elders
<http://nicoa.org/>
- Elder Abuse Resources**
National Center on Elder Abuse – resource for policy makers, social services and health care representatives, law enforcement, and families
<http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/>
- Center of Excellence on Elder Abuse and Neglect – University of California's "living laboratory" of innovative approaches to preventing elder abuse
<http://www.centeronelderabuse.org/>
- Elder Financial Protection Network
<http://www.elderfinancialprotection.org/>
- National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center – advocating for rights to residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
<http://tlombudsman.org/>



Resources Cont.

NIEJI PARTNERS

Elder Resource Centers

Adult Protective Services

Bureau of Indian Affairs Adult Protective Services Handbook – A Guide for Protecting Vulnerable Adults
<http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/webteam/documents/document/idc1-026637.pdf>

Administration on Aging – Older Americans Act and Title VI Programs, Adult Protective Services
<http://www.aoa.gov/>

National Adult Protective Services Association
<http://www.napsa-now.org/get-help/>

Legal Resources

National Legal Resource Center
http://nlrc.acf.gov/index.aspx#elder_abuse

National Congress of American Indians: serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities
<http://www.ncai.org/>

Tribal Law and Policy Institute: providing assistance to Native nations and tribal justice systems
<http://www.home.tlpi.org/>

Model Civil Elder Abuse Code and Model Criminal Elder Abuse Code
<https://www.nieji.org/publications>