Elder Abuse in Indian Country

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NIEJI

- National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative
  - National Resource Center for Tribal Elder Abuse
  - Established in 2011
  - Develop resources & maintain repository for culturally relevant elder abuse prevention information for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians

- Mission:
  - Restore Respect and Dignity by Honoring Indigenous Elderly
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.
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).

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 Gray, LaBore, & Carter (2018), an additional type of abuse commonly affecting Native American elders is spiritual abuse.
Spiritual Abuse

- Spiritual abuse is defined as harmful interference with spiritual growth including the corruption of another person’s value system. (Gray et al., 2018).
- 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
  - Sexualized touching, molesting, or rape as a part of spiritual healing or ceremonies.

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
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – June 15th
  – Began 2006
  – International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse & World Health Organization
  – NIEJI held the first event 2012

Tribal WEAAD Events
  – June 15th & other times
  – Elder Abuse Awareness Days, Conferences, Events

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative
If this is an emergency, call 911. To report Elder abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation, view the State/Tribal Hotlines page for local numbers.

Most cases of Elder abuse are undetected, under reported, and unresolved resulting in injury, financial decimation, and even death. The National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI) was created to address the lack of culturally appropriate information and community education materials on Elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation in Indian Country.

COVID-19 Resources
These COVID-19 Tribal Elder Resources will help to inform your communities on how to prevent the spread, protect your Elders and loved ones, and prevent falling for scams.

Elder Abuse Warning Signs

Upcoming Event
Voices of Montana – Fraud Watch Friday
August 6
Listen to Dr. Jacque Gray talk about Elder abuse in Indian Country.
  • View event website
  • View the Presentation

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
Watch NIEJI World Elder Abuse Awareness Day videos
  • Learn more and view videos
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 Abuse Codes

Alabama
- The Poarch Band of Creek Indians

Alaska
- Curyung Tribal Council
- Kenaitze Indian Tribe
- Iliamna & Halibut Indian Tribes of Alaska

Arizona
- Colorado River Indian Tribes
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
- Gila River Indian Community
- Hopi Tribe
- Navajo Nation
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
- Tohono O'odham Nation
- White Mountain Apache Tribe

Code Examples
- Civil Tribal Elder Protection Code Example
- Criminal Tribal Elder Protection Code Example
- Sample Resolution for Adopting Elder Abuse Code

The tribal Elder abuse code allows the tribe to establish laws that protect elderly persons from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. For more information, view the following section of the EPT toolkit:
- Developing Tribal Elder Abuse Codes
## Training Modules

- **Interactive**
- **Engaging**
- **Accessible**
- **Training for Professionals**
  - Elder Abuse
  - Legal
  - Financial Exploitation
  - Caregivers
  - Policy
  - Healthcare Providers
  - Social Services
  - Medication Issues

[https://www.nieji.org/training](https://www.nieji.org/training)
Online Interactive Educational Modules
These educational modules are available to train those working with Indigenous elders to identify and address elder abuse in Indian Country.

The materials presented in the elder justice curriculum are designed to help those working with Native American elderly to understand the various types of elder abuse and become more knowledgeable about elder abuse issues. The materials will assist staff in responding appropriately to Indigenous victims of crimes and their families and enhance provision of culturally sensitive services.

The content for this training is organized for presentation either as a series of workshops or as an individual training. The training modules are designed so the presenter has all necessary information for each section in a format that is easily presented.

Modules
When conducting trainings, always begin the training with the Elder Abuse module. It provides foundational information that is relevant to all other sections.

Elder Abuse
Duration: Approximately 30 minutes
Elder abuse generally refers to many types of mistreatment by someone whom the elder has a special relationship with. Information about the types of abuse, elder protection teams, elder vulnerability, and prevention.

Module Fact Sheets
References


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. http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/nviej


Elder Abuse Resources
National Center on Elder Abuse – resources for policy makers, social services and health care representatives, law enforcement, and families. http://www.elderabuse.org/

Center of Excellence on Elder Abuse and Neglect – University of California’s “living laboratory” of innovative approaches to preventing elder abuse. http://www.cenexelder.org/


National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center – advocating for rights to residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. http://fcorbudsman.org/
QUESTIONS???

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