



NASW Practice Alert

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2019: Lifting Up Voices

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Join NASW in observing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) this month and in advocating for elder justice throughout the year. Now in its 15th year, WEAAD raises awareness about elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation and reaffirms our society’s commitment to the principle of justice for all.



One characteristic of a just society is that people of all ages are regarded and treated fairly. Such fairness relies, in part, on the ability to create and maintain social relationships and to participate meaningfully in the community. These strong connections not only decrease social isolation and enhance the well-being of individuals, but also strengthen the entire social fabric.



Throughout our lives, we rely on systemic structures to enable social engagement and community participation. These structures are akin to weight-bearing beams in a building. Yet, because such “support beams” for older adults are often lacking or weak, the risk of social isolation increases as we age. Isolation, in turn, can increase the likelihood we will experience elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Fortunately, programs and policies can be implemented to prevent isolation, thereby reducing the risk of elder abuse. Moreover, when elder abuse does occur, systemic structures can equip us to respond quickly and effectively.

Social workers play multiple roles in the elder justice movement. They created some of the first programs to address elder abuse and remain active in program development and administration. Social workers engage in elder justice–focused education, research, policy development, and advocacy. Additionally, social workers help older adults who have experienced elder abuse by providing crisis intervention, supportive counseling, resource linkage, service coordination, and advocacy, among other activities.

A recent [blog](#) by NASW Ohio Chapter member Georgia Anetzberger, written for the California Elder Justice Coalition, illustrated how social connectedness and other protective factors prevented one older adult from experiencing elder abuse, including self-neglect.



What is NASW doing to promote elder justice?

- As a member of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), NASW helped to develop LCAO’s [reauthorization recommendations](#) for the Older Americans Act. This document, which was sent to Congress in late April, includes recommendations to strengthen Adult Protective Services (APS), the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, and the federal interagency Elder Justice Coordinating Council.
- NASW created an [advocacy alert](#) urging Congress to raise federal budget caps and to increase funding for all OAA programs by 20 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2020. The alert highlighted the President’s proposal to eliminate the Social Services Block Grant, which would decrease funding for APS.



The association also created an [advocacy alert](#) supporting reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. The legislation includes funding for programs serving older adults.

- NASW wrote a **letter of support** for the Stop Senior Scams Act (S. 149), which would mitigate elder financial exploitation by implementing a Senior Scams Prevention Advisory Council.
- The association also wrote a **letter of support** and created an **advocacy alert** for the Geriatrics Workforce Improvement Act (S. 299), which boosts federal funding for and reauthorizes the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and the Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACA) program. According to the late 2018 **notice of funding opportunity** (which NASW disseminated), one of the primary objectives of GWEP is to train health professions providers, students, and faculty to assess and address the social determinants of health, including elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation; moreover, GWEP applicants were encouraged to partner with elder justice programs.

Your help is needed to protect elder justice programs within the federal budget, to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, and to pass the Geriatrics Workforce Improvement Act. Use NASW's **advocacy alerts** to contact your members of Congress today.



In addition to legislative advocacy, NASW is also engaged in programmatic work to promote elder justice:

- NASW serves on the advisory board of **National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)**, a resource center funded by the Administration for Community Living and based at the University of Southern California (USC) Keck School of Medicine.
- NASW also serves on the Reframing Elder Abuse Committee, which helps inform and disseminate an **NCEA–FrameWorks Institute initiative** to strengthen communication about elder abuse, thereby promoting effective social policy solutions. As part of this initiative, NASW wrote a **blog** for NCEA on the parallels between the Reframing Elder Abuse initiative and the social work profession. Moreover, NASW, NCEA, and the FrameWorks Institute presented a **three-hour NASW preconference workshop** on the Reframing Elder Abuse initiative at the 2018 NASW national conference.
- NASW recently published a Practice Perspective, ***Strengthening Communities for Elder Justice***, to educate social workers about the Reframing Elder Abuse initiative and to position the social work profession as a leader in elder justice.
- The association is a national partner in the fifth annual **WEAAD Global Summit**, convened by the National Adult Protective Services Association, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. An on-demand video will be posted to the summit page following the June 11 event.

How can you get involved in WEAAD and elder justice?

The 2019 WEAAD theme, *Lifting Up Voices*, unifies the elder justice movement and the movement to end violence against women by sharing the lived experiences of older adults. This theme was established by NCEA and the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL).



Although WEAAD is on June 15, elder justice activities are occurring throughout and beyond the month of June. It's not too late to get involved.

- Find events, tools, tips, images, an action guide, public service announcements, and text templates in NCEA's **WEAAD toolkit**, which includes theme-specific materials developed jointly with NCALL. Post your own WEAAD activity to the events page to attract participants and spur creativity. Submit art to the WEAAD Virtual Art Gallery or encourage your clients to do the same. Most materials are available in both English and Spanish, and some fact sheets are also available in Chinese and Korean.

Use the **WEAAD toolkit** to plan or enhance not only your observance in June, but also your elder justice activities throughout the year.



Learn how to talk about elder abuse

FREE e-course with code: WEAAD2018
bit.ly/ElderAbuseFWA
DHHES-071070

FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE

This advertisement was paid for by the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) at York School of Medicine of USC.

Learn how to communicate more effectively about elder abuse by accessing the FrameWorks Institute–NCEA video lecture series, *Reframing the Conversation on Elder Abuse*, at no cost through June 14, 2019. After clicking “add to cart” and “check out,” enter the discount code WEAAD2018. The FrameWorks *Talking Elder Abuse* toolkit is available, free of charge, on an ongoing basis.

- Customize the brochure, fact sheets, presentation slides, and other free materials available through the [Support & Tools for Elder Abuse Prevention](#) (STEAP) initiative. A partnership of NCEA and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, STEAP provides an easy way to engage and educate your colleagues and your community about the role each of us can play in preventing and responding to elder abuse.



- Use the [Elder Justice Roadmap](#) report (coauthored in 2014 by Marie-Therese Connolly with NASW members Bonnie Brandl [Colorado Chapter] and Risa Breckman [New York City Chapter]) to inform and evaluate your elder justice activities in the areas of education, research, policy, and direct services. The report, a strategic planning resource to prevent and address elder abuse, has identified priorities for public and private engagement at the local, state, and national levels.



Join or start an elder abuse multidisciplinary team (MDT). The USC Center on Elder Mistreatment has compiled a [list of MDTs](#). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Justice offers a free [MDT Guide and Toolkit](#) and runs an [MDT Technical Assistance Center](#).

- If you participate in a state elder justice coalition (or a state elder justice association, commission, council, network, partnership, or task force), urge the coalition to join the [National Network of State Elder Justice Coalitions](#) (NNSEJC). This network was launched in April by five social workers. The first conference call will be on July 24, 2019. If you don't participate in a state elder justice coalition, ask NNSEJC if one exists in your area; if it doesn't, read this [NCEA blog](#) about how to start one.

National Network of State Elder Justice Coalition founders and steering committee members, pictured left to right: Lisa Nerenberg; Georgia Anetzberger, NASW Ohio Chapter member; Risa Breckman, NASW New York City Chapter; Iris C. Freeman; and Paul Caccamise, NASW New York State Chapter. The network will host its inaugural conference call on July 24, 2019.



- Submit comments to the Administration for Community Living on the priorities and activities of the [Elder Justice Coordinating Council](#). The council is a federal interagency body that coordinates federal activities to prevent and address elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. **Comments are due** on September 30.

How are you observing WEAAD in your community?

By sustaining, enhancing, and creating policies and programs that strengthen social supports in our communities, we can prevent elder abuse—and we can address elder abuse more quickly and effectively when it does occur. Post a message to either the [MyNASW community](#) or the [NASW LinkedIn group](#), using the hashtag #WEAAD, to let your social work colleagues know of your WEAAD activities and your ongoing work to end elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Let's work together to build a just society for all.

Resources

NASW ELDER JUSTICE RESOURCES (2018–2019)

[*Advocating for Social Workers in Aging, Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, Clinical Social Work, Health Care, and School Social Work*](#)—includes a summary of NASW's elder justice advocacy in 2018

[Legislative advocacy alerts](#)—includes multiple alerts related to elder justice

[NASW Supervisory Leaders in Aging \(SLA\) Principles program](#)—recently released in an online format with support from the John A. Hartford Foundation; includes a module on elder abuse; available to social workers & other service providers at any career stage

[The Reframing Initiative in the Context of Social Work](#)—blog written for NCEA's WEAAD 2018 series

[Strengthening Communities for Elder Justice](#)—NASW Practice Perspective (October 2018)

[Turn to NASW for Resources on Aging](#)—flyer summarizing aging-related resources available to NASW members & the public

OTHER NONGOVERNMENTAL NATIONAL RESOURCES

[Council on Social Work Education Gero-Ed Center](#)—*Elder Justice Curriculum Models* (prepared by NASW Michigan Chapter member Joy Swanson Ernst)

[Elder Justice Coalition](#)

Forum on Global Violence Prevention, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine—includes proceedings from a workshop on elder abuse & other information relevant to elder justice

National Adult Protective Services Association

National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

National Network of State Elder Justice Coalitions

WEAAD Fifth Global Summit

NCEA & USC RESOURCES

- **NCEA home page**
- **Complete list of NCEA fact sheets**
- ***Support & Tools for Elder Abuse Prevention***—NCEA & the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- **WEAAD toolkit**—NCEA, with NCALL
- **USC Center on Elder Mistreatment**
- **USC Judith D. Tamkin International Symposium on Elder Abuse**—February 2020
- **USC Training Resource on Elder Abuse**

THE FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE & NCEA RESOURCES

- ***Reframing the Conversation on Elder Abuse video lecture series***—use code WEAAD2018 through June 14, 2019, to access free of charge
- ***Talking Elder Abuse tool kit***—available at no cost on an ongoing basis

OTHER FEDERAL OR FEDERALLY SUPPORTED RESOURCES

Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging

- **ACL Elder Justice Hub**
- **APS Technical Assistance Resource Center**
- **Eldercare Locator**
- **National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System**
- **National Center on Law and Elder Rights**
- **National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative**
- **National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life**
- **National Ombudsman Resource Center**
- **National Resource Center on LGBT Aging**—resources specific to elder abuse
- **National Resource Center on Women and Retirement Planning**—includes information on fraud and other forms of financial exploitation

- **Prevention of Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation**
- **Protecting Rights and Preventing Abuse**

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)—information, tools, & resources specific to older adults

Elder Justice Coordinating Council

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation & CFPB—*Money Smart for Older Adults* program

Federal Trade Commission—*Pass It On* campaign & [consumer.gov](https://www.consumer.gov); information about scams & identity theft

Office of the Inspector General, Social Security Administration—scam awareness campaign

U.S. Department of Justice—Elder Justice Initiative

U.S. Postal Inspection Service—information for older adults on avoiding scams

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission—information for older adults on avoiding investment fraud

U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging—hearings & resources on elder abuse, especially financial exploitation

Please refer to NASW's 2018 Practice Perspective, *Strengthening Communities for Elder Justice*, for additional resources.

