

Social Work Roles in Elder Abuse Prevention and Response

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Association of Social Workers

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This report is the last in a four-part NASW series on elder justice. Please visit www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Aging/Aging-Tools to read the accompanying NASW Practice Perspectives, published in November 2021: *Federal Funding for and Administration of Elder Justice Programs, Elder Justice & Racial Justice, and Elder Abuse & COVID-19*.

The problem of elder abuse has garnered increasing federal action within the United States during the past decade. With this focus has come growing recognition of a dynamic, decades-old movement for elder justice. This publication aims both to advance elder justice within the social work profession and to underscore the innumerable contributions of the profession to the elder justice field. Social workers have long been active in elder justice and, in fact, have been among the movement's leaders. Using the *Elder Justice Roadmap* (Connolly et al., 2014) as an organizing framework, this publication describes how social workers—regardless of practice specialty or setting—are responding to and preventing elder abuse at local, state, national, and Tribal levels.

ELDER ABUSE: EVERY SOCIAL WORKER'S CONCERN

The ability to live free from abuse at any age is integral to a just society and, furthermore, is congruent with two core social work values: social justice and dignity and worth of the person (NASW, 2021a). Preventing and addressing elder abuse requires systemic structures, similar to weight-bearing beams in a building. Social workers play integral roles in developing, implementing, and strengthening these systemic structures—programs, policies, education, and research—that help prevent and address elder abuse.

Social work education and training provide excellent preparation for elder abuse prevention and response. The person-in-environment perspective and ecological framework prepare social workers to identify systemic causes and implications of elder abuse and to implement micro-, mezzo-, and macro-level interventions. A commitment to equity and to deepening cultural competence equip social workers to address ageism and other forms of implicit bias and structural discrimination that underlie elder abuse. The *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2021a) guides social workers in promoting the self-determination of older

adults and in responding to ethical challenges. Communication skills enable social workers to interact effectively with individuals, families, groups, and communities about how to prevent and address elder abuse.

Yet, many social workers do not learn about elder abuse while pursuing a social work degree or in subsequent professional development programs. Baccalaureate and



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master's-level social work programs (commonly known as BSW and MSW programs, respectively) must address nine competencies defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (2015b, 2021). These competencies are relevant to social work with older adults and to elder abuse in particular (CSWE, 2017). Moreover, CSWE (2015a) offers elder justice curricula for MSW programs. Given the breadth of social work education, however, neither BSW nor MSW programs are required to teach content specific to elder abuse. Similarly, access to social work continuing education regarding elder abuse varies, although on-demand and distance learning have increased available options. Recognizing these variations, a brief overview of elder abuse is warranted.

The *Elder Justice Roadmap*, a multistakeholder initiative supported by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) during the Obama Administration, published a strategic planning resource in 2014 to prevent and address elder abuse (Connolly et al., 2014). This *Roadmap* report, drawing on multiple reliable sources, defined *elder abuse* in the following manner:

Physical, sexual, or psychological [also known as emotional] abuse, as well as neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation of an older person by another person or entity, that occurs in any setting (e.g., home, community, or facility), either in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and/or when an older person is targeted based on age or disability. (Connolly et al., 2014, Appendix A, p. 2)

As noted in an issue of *NASW Practice Perspectives* (Herman, 2018), the preceding definition excluded the concept of elder self-neglect because “conflating abuse, neglect, or exploitation that one actor inflicts on another with situations involving a sole actor is confusing and counter-intuitive to many stakeholders” (Connolly et al., 2014, Appendix A, p. 2). At the same time, the *Elder Justice Roadmap* report acknowledged that self-neglect “is a critical factor to consider in any discussion about” elder abuse—and that some agencies that address elder abuse also address self-neglect among older adults (Connolly et al., 2014, Appendix A, pp. 2–3).

Furthermore, definitions of “elder abuse” vary across states and other jurisdictions. Consequently, each state or jurisdiction’s definition guides elder abuse prevention and intervention in the respective geographic area. The resource section of this publication includes links to relevant statutes—two documents compiled by the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Law and Aging (2020a, 2022) and others, by the Stetson University Center for Excellence in Elder Law (n.d.)—as well as a list, compiled by the National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI), of elder abuse codes in various parts of Indian Country (NIEJI, n.d.). In many parts of Indian Country, elder abuse codes do not exist; NIEJI’s innovation grants have helped fill these gaps (Gray et al., 2017). It is also important to note that perceptions and definitions of abuse and neglect—as well as terms for these experiences—may vary across cultural communities (Choi et al., 2014; National Center on Elder Abuse [NCEA], 2020a, 2020b, 2021b, 2021c). For example, in Indian Country the definition of elder abuse includes *spiritual abuse*—“actions that damage one’s experience and personal practice of the sacred” (NIEJI & NCEA, 2020a, p. 1). Understanding such distinctions is integral to a culturally and linguistically competent approach to elder abuse prevention and response.

Although the scope of elder abuse remains uncertain, the most recent nationally representative study suggests that one in 10, or 5 million, “community-dwelling” older adults in the United States experience elder abuse each year (Acierno et al., 2010). (A subsequent section will address prevalence during the COVID-19 pandemic.) These figures continue to be used by the federal government in educational efforts such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) (NCEA, n.d.-e). Helpful (and alarming) as these figures are, they exclude older adults who have significant levels of cognitive impairment or who live in nursing homes or other institutional settings. (For the purpose of the 2010 study, such settings excluded independent and assisted living residences.) Many older adults consider a nursing facility or other institutional setting their home, and all facility residents should be embraced as integral members of our communities. Although many nursing home residents live free from abuse, elder abuse within

nursing homes is multilayered and complex. The federal government itself has recently called attention to various types of abusive behavior used by nursing home staff toward residents (HHS Office of Inspector General [OIG], 2019; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2019; U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, 2019), and various advocacy organizations have identified the use of antipsychotic medications as chemical restraints as particularly widespread and problematic (Human Rights Watch, 2018; National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, 2019). Moreover, one federally funded study has found that resident-to-resident elder mistreatment, especially verbal and physical mistreatment, is “highly prevalent” in nursing homes (Lachs et al., 2016, p. 229; see also Bonifas, 2015, for information regarding resident-to-resident aggression).

Given the prevalence of elder abuse across settings, an understanding of elder abuse is particularly relevant to social workers who specialize in aging, health care, mental health, or substance use. However, knowledge about elder abuse is necessary for every social worker, regardless of practice level (micro, mezzo, macro), specialty area, or setting (Herman, 2021). Similarly, any social worker can help prevent and address elder abuse. In fact, elder abuse prevention and response are included in one of the Grand Challenges for Social Work: eradication of social isolation (Lubben et al., 2015). The Grand Challenges is an NASW-supported initiative launched by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare in 2013 (Grand Challenges, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The goal of the Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative is “to champion social progress powered by science”; as such, the initiative constitutes “a call to action for all of us to work together to tackle our nation’s toughest social problems” (Grand Challenges, 2021, para. 1). Furthermore, elder abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), and child abuse have been given equal measure within NASW’s recently updated “Family Violence” policy statement (NASW, 2021b). This

Elder Justice Roadmap: Contextualizing Social Work Roles

The *Elder Justice Roadmap*, a federally funded publication and strategic planning resource developed “by the field for the field” (Connolly et al., 2014, p. iii), identified priorities to enhance four domains pertaining to elder abuse:

- direct services
- education
- policy
- research.

This framework is used in subsequent sections, which describe various social work roles within the elder justice movement. It is worth noting, however, that the elder justice work of many social workers crosses these four domains.

NASW Colorado Chapter member Bonnie Brandl and NASW New York City (NYC) Chapter member Risa Breckman served as lead consultants for and coauthors of the *Elder Justice Roadmap* initiative and report, respectively. Moreover, NASW Ohio (OH) Chapter member and Social Work Pioneer® Georgia Anetzberger served as a subject matter expert to the project. The contributions of these three social workers and other NASW members are noted (with each member’s permission) throughout subsequent sections. *The efforts noted in this document represent only a fraction of social work involvement in the elder justice movement.* The contributions of innumerable social workers are no less valuable.



conceptualization is consistent with the definition of “family violence” promulgated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Holditch Niolon et al., 2017). Additionally, the revised NASW policy statement reflects a conscious effort on the association’s part to bolster content on elder abuse within its policy portfolio.

With this elder justice backdrop in place, the next section addresses social work roles in elder abuse prevention and response in the context of the *Elder Justice Roadmap* (Connolly et al., 2014).

DIRECT SERVICES

AREA AGENCIES ON AGING (AAAs) AND TITLE VI PROGRAMS

Programs funded by the Older Americans Act (OAA) constitute the core of the Aging Network. Integral to that core are Title VI programs, which serve Indigenous older adults, and AAAs.¹

Nearly all AAAs provide at least one service related to elder abuse, and the average AAA provides seven elder abuse prevention and intervention services—most commonly legal assistance, community education and training, public awareness campaigns, case management, investigations of suspected abuse, and intervention for financial exploitation (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging [n4a] & Miami University, 2017a).

Eighty-four percent of OAA Title VI programs offer at least one service to prevent or respond to elder abuse in Indian Country; the most common programs are community education and training, public awareness campaigns, investigation of suspected abuse, and case management (n4a & Miami University, 2018b).

Social work roles within AAAs and Title VI programs include direct services staff (such as case managers), program managers (such as of telephone reassurance programs), and agency directors. Georgia Anetzberger formerly served as executive director of the Western Reserve AAA, for example, and remains an honorary lifetime trustee (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, April 1, 2021; Western Reserve AAA, 2020). Some social workers also work in Aging and Disability Resource Centers (many of which are also AAAs) and, on the state level, within State Units on Aging (SUAs).



LONG-TERM CARE (LTC) OMBUDSMAN PROGRAMS

LTC ombudsman programs are a key component of the OAA. Such programs operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico (ACL, 2020a). LTC ombudsmen advocate for residents of nursing homes, assisted living residences, board and care facilities, and other residential care communities. The OAA delineates the following responsibilities for LTC ombudsmen:

- Identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents;
- Provide information to residents about LTSS [long-term services and supports];
- Ensure that residents have regular and timely access to ombudsman services;
- Represent the interests of residents before governmental agencies and seek administrative, legal, and other remedies to protect residents; and
- Analyze, comment on, and recommend changes in laws and regulations pertaining to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents. (ACL, 2020a, para. 3)

The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Center (NORC), which is funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), identifies other activities in which LTC ombudsmen frequently engage:

- educating consumers and LTC providers about residents’ rights and good care practices
- providing information to the public regarding nursing homes and other LTC facilities and services, residents’ rights, and legislative and policy issues
- promoting the development of citizen organizations, family councils, and resident councils
- promoting community involvement in LTC facilities through volunteer opportunities. (NORC, n.d., “What Does an Ombudsman Do?” section)

Some ombudsmen also serve people who use home- and community-based services, especially when those services are funded by Medicaid.

LTC ombudsman programs often operate on state, regional, and local levels. Social workers serve at every level, from locally based staff LTC ombudsman to state director. For example, a regional ombudsman program is one of many under the leadership of NASW New York State (NYS) Chapter member Paul Caccamise, vice president of program for the nonprofit organization Lifespan of Greater Rochester Inc. (hereafter “Lifespan”) (P. Caccamise, April

15, 2021). Another NASW member, Laura Norman (Maryland [MD] Chapter), previously served as the LTC ombudsman for five counties, in which she monitored 65 nursing homes and assisted living residences (L. Norman, personal communication, March 23, 2021). Yet, many LTC ombudsman programs are staffed primarily by volunteers (NORC, 2019). Thus, a social worker serving as an ombudsman may be responsible for volunteer recruitment, training, coordination, collaboration, support, and supervision.

APS is a primary setting for elder abuse assessment and intervention.

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS)

Social workers are active in APS on all levels, from entry-level staff to directors. For example, NASW Minnesota (MN) Chapter member Carmen Castaneda is the longtime Adult Protection Program Manager of Hennepin County (Minneapolis). In this role, she works directly with clients, supervises other staff, and presents on various elder justice topics (C. Castaneda, personal communication, March 30, 2021). Castaneda has received several awards for her work in elder abuse prevention and investigation, including an advocacy award from the MN Elder Justice Center (MEJC), and is a regional representative on the board of directors for the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) (MEJC, 2018; NAPSA, 2022). NASW OH Chapter member Carol Dayton, who also serves on the NAPSA board, was APS Chief for Cuyahoga County (Greater Cleveland) from 1993 to 2005 and is currently active in elder justice consultations (C. Dayton, personal communication, April 1, 2021). Fellow Ohioan Georgia Anetzberger was the architect of the state’s protective services law for adults and various amendments and administered APS programs between 1974 and 2002 in three Ohio agencies—the Geauga County Welfare Department, Cuyahoga Department of Human Services, and the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging (hereafter “Benjamin Rose”) (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, May 9, 2021).

Ethical and Legal Considerations for Social Workers Serving as LTC Ombudsmen

Most states and jurisdictions require social workers to report incidents of suspected abuse or neglect to APS. In contrast, the OAA (45 C.F.R. 1324.19(b)(3)(iii)) requires LTC ombudsmen to maintain client confidentiality unless the client requests disclosure of an incident. This conflict in responsibilities is acknowledged in ACL’s frequently asked questions regarding the LTC ombudsman program (ACL, 2018b), which include the following guidance: ACL understands that State agencies and Ombudsmen are working to implement the LTC Ombudsman program in accordance with the Act and the Rule and to address any potential conflicts of interest. ACL encourages State agencies and Ombudsmen who identify licensing organization requirements that are in conflict to determine whether the professional licensing entity is able to provide a waiver or other type of remedy.

If individual concerns remain after such State agency or Ombudsman implementation activities, ACL encourages individuals who hold professional licenses and also serve as Ombudsmen or representatives of the Office to notify their respective licensing organization of this requirement in order to determine whether the professional licensing entity is able to provide a waiver or other type of remedy in order to avoid these conflicts. (ACL, 2018b, Question 6, para. 3–4)

Moreover, many situations with which LTC ombudsmen deal do not venture into the realm of elder abuse (or have already been reported as such). Nonetheless, a social worker serving in an ombudsman capacity needs to consider several factors:

- **whether one represents oneself as a social worker while performing the ombudsman role:** If an ombudsman lists social work credentials on a business card, posts a social work license in the workplace, or uses the title “social worker” while carrying out ombudsman responsibilities, the risk of not reporting suspected abuse or neglect may be greater than for ombudsmen who do not represent themselves as social workers. On the other hand, some states or jurisdictions may require social workers to represent themselves in any professional venture.

Knowledge of licensure laws and regulations is critical.

- **variations in state laws and licensure regulations regarding social workers’ reporting responsibility:** Some states and licensure boards require social workers to report all suspected abuse or neglect, regardless of how they learned about the suspected abuse or neglect. Other states and licensure boards require social workers to report suspected abuse or neglect only if they learned of it in their role as a social worker, but not if they learned of it through nonprofessional channels (such as witnessing an incident in their neighborhood while off duty). For social workers required to report suspected abuse or neglect in all circumstances, the risk of not reporting may be greater than for social workers required to report only if they learn of suspected abuse or neglect in their role as a social worker.

Given these variations, NASW encourages any social worker who carries out (or is considering engaging in) ombudsman responsibilities to take the following actions:

- Be knowledgeable about state or jurisdictional laws and licensure regulations regarding responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- Consult with the professional liability insurer (PLI) to determine if the PLI would cover malpractice claims or licensure complaints brought against the social worker while operating in an ombudsman capacity.
- Schedule an ethics consultation with NASW—a member-only benefit (www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Ethics-Education-and-Resources/Ethics-Consultations)—to discuss the situation.

This potential conflict in reporting responsibilities affects not only social workers, but also other individuals who are mandated to report suspected abuse or neglect under state reporting laws or licensure regulations. Consequently, ombudsman programs that hire social workers or other mandated reporters should also be knowledgeable about, and be prepared to address, potential conflicts regarding reporting responsibility in the OAA, state laws and licensure regulations, and professional standards and ethical codes.

APS personnel receive reports of suspected elder abuse from external social workers and other service providers, from family and friends of older adults, from concerned bystanders (who might or might not be mandated reporters), and from older adults who are concerned about their own well-being and safety. In many states and jurisdictions, reports to APS address suspected elder abuse not only in a private residence, but also in residential care facilities (such as nursing home and assisted living) (McGee & Urban, 2020). After determining if a situation is appropriate for APS to investigate and prioritizing the client's risk level, an APS worker contacts the older adult and conducts an assessment. If necessary, staff conducts crisis counseling and takes emergency protective actions, such as referring to law enforcement and helping arrange for protective orders, emergency shelter, or temporary guardianship (NAMRS 2019 report). The APS worker also identifies resources (such as social services, LTSS, health care, housing, financial assistance, and money management) that support the client's well-being, particularly in regard to the living environment, activities of daily living, decision-making capacity, and health (Nerenberg, 2008). Collaboration with other APS staff, other service providers, and the client is integral to the APS role, as are advocacy and education.

With few exceptions, APS workers must respect a client's right to decline services, including an assessment (Nerenberg, 2008). In practice, however, ethical dilemmas are common, especially in regard to determining capacity and balancing choice and risk, or autonomy and paternalism (Galambos et al., 2018; Nerenberg, 2008; Soniat & Micklos, 2010). The guiding value of the *NAPSA Code of Ethics* illustrates this tension: "Every action taken by Adult Protective Services must balance the duty to protect the safety of the vulnerable adult with the adult's right to self-determination" (NAPSA, 2018, para. 2). Moreover, this dual value is operationalized in NAPSA's ethical principles and practice guidelines (2018). The autonomy–risk tension is also underscored within the APS Workforce Innovations training, a project developed in 2011 by NAPSA with NCEA funding and revised in 2016 by the Academy for Professional Excellence at the San Diego State University (SDSU) School of Social Work (SDSU, 2020).

Similarly, ACL's voluntary consensus guidelines for APS define and emphasize the ethical concepts of person-centered services, least restrictive alternatives, and supported decision making (ACL, 2020c), which are addressed in the next section.

Best practice indicates that guardianship not be implemented unless less restrictive alternatives are not effective. If guardianship is established, a client may still retain certain decision-making rights.

GUARDIANSHIP

As defined by the National Guardianship Association (NGA), guardianship (also known as "conservatorship") "is a legal process, utilized when a person can no longer make or communicate safe or sound decisions about his/her [sic] person and/or property or has become susceptible to fraud or undue influence" (NGA, n.d., para. 1). With its limits on client self-determination, guardianship presents one of the greatest challenges for social workers. Best practice indicates that guardianship not be implemented unless less restrictive alternatives are not effective (Galambos et al., 2018; National Guardianship Network [NGN], n.d.). One alternative to guardianship is supported decision making, a model in which a person makes decisions with the support of trusted individuals or entities (ABA, 2020b, p. 1; ACL, 2021). Other alternatives include the use of representative payees, durable powers of attorney for property, trusts, health care agents or surrogates, and living wills (NGA, 2013; NGN, n.d.). If guardianship is established, a client may still retain certain decision-making rights. NGA's standards (2013) and ethical principles (2016) for guardians encourage promotion of client self-determination by (a) eliciting and, to the extent possible, integrating the client's values, preferences, and goals in decision making and (b) implementing the least restrictive alternatives, drawing on the client's strengths.

Considerations For Social Workers In Guardianship Roles

NASW offers the following considerations for social workers who serve as professional guardians on a paid or volunteer basis (that is, outside the context of a family or other personal relationship):

- Determine whether any of the guardianship responsibilities conflict with the *NASW Code of Ethics* (2021a) and the laws and regulations of one's social work licensing board.
- Ascertain whether representing oneself as a social worker while acting as a guardian is required or prohibited by the social work licensing board. If such representation is not required, omitting it might decrease the potential for conflicts while serving as a guardian. On the other hand, full disclosure regarding mandated reported responsibilities and duty to warn might be essential for informed consent.
- Discuss with other social workers in guardianship roles the types of professional conflicts that could arise and how such conflicts could be resolved. Determine whether guardians may withdraw from a situation—without disciplinary action and without breaching client confidentiality—if professional conflicts emerge.
- Adhere to the requirements of the court and to state (or other jurisdictional) law and regulation regarding certification, bonding, background checks, fingerprinting, and similar measures for guardians and for social workers.
- Maintain professional liability insurance that includes coverage for services as a guardian. It may be necessary to add a rider to the existing policy, increase coverage limits, or purchase a separate policy.
- When serving as a guardian, act on behalf of an individual solely within the parameters of the court order. Avoid dual relationships that could result in conflicts of interest. For example, an individual serving as both a professional guardian and a social work care manager for the same client would be engaged in a dual relationship.
- Guard against potential perceptions of impropriety, especially in relationship to guardianship of assets.
- Follow NGA's *Ethical Principles* (2016) and *Standards of Practice* (2013) and all state and local guidance for guardians when engaging in such work.

A free legal consultation is available to any NASW member who is considering a guardianship role outside the context of a family or other personal relationship; please contact NASW Member Services at (800) 742-4089 for information.

Similar to APS, guardianship requirements and practices vary by state and jurisdiction. The ABA Commission on Law and Aging (2021) maintains lists of relevant statutes and court rules. In general, guardianship programs can be public or private. Public guardianship programs, which frequently offer services at no cost to clients, can exist as independent state offices or can be administered by courts, counties, or publicly funded social service entities (including SUAs and AAAs) (Regan & Springer, as cited in Teaster et al., 2007). In contrast, private (or professional) guardianship services are fee based and offered by individuals, law firms, other private corporations, nonprofit organizations, or institutions of higher education.

In one unique model, Barry University's school of social work administers both the Office of the Public Guardian for Broward County, Florida—described as the only public guardianship program in the United States operated by a school of social work—and a professional guardianship program (for clients who can afford to pay for services) (Ellen Whiteside McDonnell School of Social Work, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Moreover, the school offers BSW and MSW field placements within the Office of the Public Guardian and training for professional guardians (Ellen Whiteside McDonnell School of Social Work, n.d.-c, n.d.-d).

Although Barry University's program may be unique, social workers across the country are involved in adult guardianship in various ways. Some, such as Paul Caccamise, administer guardianship programs in the context of nonprofit organizations (P. Caccamise, personal communication, April 15, 2021). Some participate in capacity evaluations if authorized to do so within their states or jurisdictions. (According to a 2016 survey of state statutes by the ABA Commission on Law and Aging, seven states permitted social workers to participate in the capacity evaluation process.) Some social workers file petitions requesting that a client have a guardian appointed—or, conversely, that a client have decision-making rights restored. Many provide case management to adults who have been assigned guardians.

Some social workers are, themselves, guardians (on a family, paid, or volunteer basis) for

adults who have been deemed incapacitated. For example, NASW OH Chapter member Nita Bring-Mazurek, a nationally certified guardian, formerly directed a county volunteer guardianship program under the auspices of Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM) and was president of the Ohio Guardianship Association for a couple of years (N. Bring-Mazurek, personal communication, April 6, 2021). Since that time, Bring-Mazurek has occasionally served as a volunteer guardian under the auspices of LMM, always ensuring that any individual for whom she is appointed a guardian is not a current or former client of the agency in which she is currently employed.

Two less commonly known roles for social workers in elder abuse prevention and response are that of court investigator and eldercaring coordinator.

COURT INVESTIGATORS AND ELDERCARING COORDINATORS

Two other court-related roles in which social workers sometimes serve are that of a court investigator and eldercaring coordinator. In relation to elder abuse, a court investigator vets potential guardians for suitability and makes recommendations to a judge. A BSW is one acceptable qualification for court investigators in Ohio (Legislative Service Commission, 2012).

The eldercaring coordination model was developed recently by a task force convened by the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) and the Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC). Elder caring coordination is a court-ordered dispute

resolution process that assists families to resolve high-conflict disputes that affect the older adult's autonomy and safety (ACR & FLAFCC, n.d.-b). Elder caring coordination is distinct from, yet complements, services such as mediation, individual or family therapy, case management or geriatric care management, and provision of legal information or legal representation. The following situations are among those that may prompt a court referral for elder caring coordination:

- multiple court motions regarding nonlegal issues
- competing petitions for appointment as guardian or conservator
- imbalances of power in which access to legal representation varies among parties
- frequent disputes about unmeasurable or unsubstantiated issues
- inability to resolve differences through mediation. (ACR & FLAFCC, n.d.-b)

As one of 20 national organizations from the United States and Canada that participated in the task force, NASW contributed to the development of the *ACR Guidelines for Elder caring Coordination* (ACR, 2015). Since the guidelines were released, the ACR/FLAFCC Elder Justice Initiative on Elder caring Coordination has trained elder caring coordinators in at least 10 states and the city



of Toronto, resulting in referrals of more than 130 individuals for eldercaring coordination (ACR & FLAFCC, n.d.-a). In 2018, the United Nations (UN) recognized eldercaring coordination as an “Awareness to Action Model for the Welfare of Aging Persons” (UN, 2018; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs et al., 2018). Grant funding for eldercaring coordination has included an ACL Elder Justice Innovation Grant (awarded in 2016) to enable Stark County (Ohio) Probate Court and APS to develop an eldercaring coordination program (ACL, 2018a). Information about finding or developing an eldercaring coordination program or obtaining training to become an eldercaring coordinator is included in the resources section at the end of this publication.

EMERGENCY HOUSING FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING ELDER ABUSE

A growing number of emergency shelters for people who experience elder abuse have opened in recent years. One such program is the NYC-based Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale (hereafter “Weinberg Center”) (<https://theweinbergcenter.org/the-weinberg-center-shelter/>), which has been featured in a National Public Radio story (Gotbaum & Simon, 2019). Weinberg Center staff includes NASW NYC Chapter member Glendalee Olivera, senior elder justice specialist. The nation’s first regional emergency shelter for people experiencing elder abuse, the Weinberg Center provides information on how to replicate its shelter model (Weinberg Center, 2019). An initial evaluation of the Weinberg Center’s shelter model noted, among the model’s strengths, the multidisciplinary, holistic, coordinated, trauma-informed approach to service provision and mentioned social work as a core service available to all residents (Smucker et al., 2021).

The Weinberg Center also leads the SPRiNG (Shelter Partners: Regional, National, Global) Alliance, which strives to create a network of regional elder abuse shelters and similar service models across the United States. As of 2021, the SPRiNG Alliance had a membership of 15 organizations across 10 states (SPRiNG Alliance, n.d.). One of those members is the Baltimore-based organization CHANA, which offers “a Jewish response to abuse and trauma within and beyond the Jewish community” (CHANA,

n.d., para. 1). As director of CHANA’s elder abuse program, NASW MD Chapter member Jacke Schroeder designed a three-tiered model to shelter people who have experienced elder abuse: (a) a community-based studio apartment safe house that is age friendly and physically accessible, (b) hotel rooms, and (c) dedicated space in a nursing home (J. Schroeder, personal communication, April 8, 2021). CHANA has received a Governor’s Citation Award, a Maryland Gerontological Association award, and a National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence Founders Award for its extensive services to address neglect, financial exploitation, and physical, sexual, and psychoemotional abuse of adults in later life.

ELDER ABUSE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS (MDTs)

Over the past four decades, various types of MDTs have emerged to focus on complex situations of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. MDTs tend to include representatives of APS, law enforcement, city or county counsel, and agencies serving older adults. Some MDTs focus on specific circumstances; these include teams that address elder abuse in Indian Country (NIEJI & NCEA, 2020b), elder death review (or fatality review) teams (NCEA, n.d.-a), and financial abuse specialist teams (NCEA, n.d.-b). Enhanced MDTs (EMDTs or E-MDTs) include

MDTs leverage the capacity of individuals, organizations, and systems to prevent and respond to elder abuse.

the systems-based representatives of traditional MDTs and are enhanced (depending on local availability) with specialists such as geropsychiatrists (or other geriatrics or gerontological mental health professionals), geriatricians, forensic accountants, and civil attorneys (New York City Elder Abuse Center [NYCEAC] at Weill Cornell Medicine, 2021). The E-MDT model was developed and launched in 2012, with funding from ACL, by the NYS Office for the Aging, NYS Office of Children and Family Services Bureau of Adult Services, NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine, and Lifespan (ACL, 2017; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation & NORC at the University of Chicago, 2015). E-MDTs are currently in replication throughout New York and in other parts of the United States.

Typically, each locality determines the auspices for the team and hires or selects from the group an MDT coordinator to facilitate the work of the team (R. Breckman, personal communication, May 14, 2021). Some MDTs are part of elder abuse forensic centers, which not only collaborate to address



challenging situations of elder abuse but may also implement systematic tracking and follow-through, work from a shared location, provide joint in-home visits, provide education and training, and conduct research (Cafaro Schneider et al., 2010; McNamee & Mulford, 2007).

Many MDTs include social workers in various capacities, and some social workers play leadership roles in MDTs. For example, NASW NYC Chapter member Caren Lee coordinates triage of cases to NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine's E-MDTs as part of her role with the organization's Case Consult Unit (C. Lee, personal communication, April 14, 2021). Moreover, Carol Dayton participates in the Cuyahoga County Adult Protective Collaborative's multidisciplinary Quick Response Team, providing APS expertise to help members avert crises in complex client situations (C. Dayton, personal communication, April 2, 2021).

Social workers are also at the forefront of training and technical assistance efforts specific to MDTs. With funding from DOJ's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine has developed and now leads the National Elder Abuse MDT Training and Technical Assistance Center (<https://nyceac.org/national-elder-abuse-mdt-training-and-technical-assistance-center/>), which is managed by NYC Chapter member Grace Cheong (G. Cheong, personal communication, April 14, 2021). This center, which is distinct from DOJ's MDT Technical Assistance Center (www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt-tac), includes four core organizational partners: the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL), Lifespan, NCEA, the USC-based Leonard Davis School of Gerontology (which includes several social work faculty), and Red Wind Consulting (Colorado) (NYCEAC, n.d.). The OVC grant for the National Elder Abuse MDT Training and Technical Assistance Center was preceded not only by NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine's work to develop E-MDTs in New York, but also by the organization's 2014 symposium *Elder Abuse MDTs: Planning for the Future*. Co-organized by Risa Breckman, who cofounded (and, until early 2021, codirected) NYCEAC at Weill Cornell, the MDT national symposium included multiple social workers as presenters, facilitators, and participants. The symposium report (Breckman et al., 2014) remains a valuable resource for elder abuse MDTs.

Elder justice coalitions can also be considered MDTs. For the purpose of this report, such coalitions are addressed within the section on social work policy roles in preventing and responding to elder abuse.

CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

OVC has provided various grants to support the development or strengthening of E-MDTs (OVC, 2019a). One such grant was awarded to the Lummi Nation, which is building Elder Abuse Prevention and Elimination Services. The Lummi Nation's E-MDT includes a clinical social worker (OVC, 2019b). Among the awardees of another OVC grant, designed to support field innovations in addressing elder abuse and financial exploitation (OVC, 2017b), was the NYS-based Pro Bono Net. This nonprofit organization, which helps increase access to legal services across the country, used part of an OVC grant to enhance and promote nationally its Legal Risk Detector, a Web-based legal health "check-up" tool that enables social workers and other service providers in health care and aging to screen older adults for common legal issues, including elder abuse and financial exploitation, and refer them to legal services (OVC, 2017c; Pro Bono Net, n.d.).

Furthermore, at least three entities are using OVC grants to foster partnerships with social service agencies, which commonly employ social workers:

- As part of its project *Successful Aging after Financial Exploitation (SAFE): Financial coaching services for urban and rural older adults*, the Detroit-based Wayne State University is collaborating with a social service agency in a rural part of Michigan to bring SAFE services to clients and is preparing a guide to replicate the model in other social service agencies (OVC, 2020c).
- Apache Behavioral Health Services is enhancing its wraparound service delivery model by developing partnerships with the Tribal court, social services, elder services, and Indian Health Services (OVC, 2020a).
- The nonprofit legal services organization Bet Tzedek is developing a training and formalized collaboration program for law enforcement and social agency personnel to enhance identification of

and appropriate referrals for elder abuse, particularly in rural and underresourced parts of Los Angeles County. Bet Tzedek is also laying the groundwork for replication of this program (Bet Tzedek, n.d.; OVC, 2020b).

Other elder abuse programs rely on funding authorized by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), which was amended in 1988 as part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690) and is administered by OVC. With partial VOCA funding, the Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS) Women's and Family Abuse Program serves adults 50 years and older who have experienced elder abuse or IPV (GLSS, n.d.). Services available for these clients include support groups facilitated by GLSS employee and NASW Massachusetts Chapter member Katie Galenius in various suburbs of Boston (K. Galenius, personal communication, April 15, 2021). Galenius also provides individual counseling for clients who are unable to participate in a support group or are uncomfortable doing so. Another VOCA-supported program is the emergency department (ED)-based Vulnerable Elder Protection Team (VEPT) at Weill Cornell Medicine and NewYork-Presbyterian. NASW New Jersey (NJ) Chapter member Alyssa Elman helped develop, and is now supervising social worker for, the VEPT (A. Elman, personal communication, April 22, 2021). In this role, she not only coordinates the everyday operations of the VEPT, but also serves as a resource for ED and inpatient social workers caring for older adults who may have experienced abuse and participates in New York City's MDTs as needed.

Yet other organizations secure state funding to operate crime victim assistance programs. One such organization is Neighborhood Self Help by Older Persons Project, Inc. (SHOPP), a Bronx-based nonprofit organization that primarily serves African American and Latino older adults. With more than 40 years of service in the Bronx, SHOPP's mission is to educate, empower, and build the capacity of communities by providing services grounded in a model of self-help and mutual assistance (SHOPP, n.d.-a). A multiservice agency led by NASW NYS Chapter member Katherine Martinez, president and CEO, SHOPP offers multiple initiatives that reduce social isolation and promote health and wellness,

thereby reducing the risk of experiencing elder abuse and other crimes (K. Martinez, personal communication, April 14, 2021). Those initiatives include its Senior Network Group Work Program, Caregivers Program, Case Management, Friendly Visiting, Senior Centers, Senior Network Benefit Access Program, NY Connects, and a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community Program. SHOPP also has a Violence Intervention & Prevention (VIP) initiative, which includes an Elder Abuse & Crime Victims Assistance Program (SHOPP, n.d.-b). With support from the NYC Department for the Aging, the NYS Office of Victim Services, and private sources, SHOPP's VIP Program provides advocacy, crisis intervention, supportive counseling, information, referral, safety planning, assistance with protection orders and eviction orders, and other vital services to support older adults who have experienced elder abuse, IPV, or any other crime.

Another crime victim assistance program outside the auspices of OVC is an initiative of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (hereafter "Inspection Service"). The Inspection Service investigates and prosecutes instances of mail fraud, defined as "any scheme that uses the U.S. Mail® to obtain money or something of value by offering a product, service, or investment that intentionally does not live up to its claim" (Inspection Service, 2021b).² Mail fraud can originate by mail, phone, or online and tends to affect older adults more than younger age groups (Inspection Service, 2021a). Moreover, people who experience mail fraud once are at greater risk of experiencing it again (N. Gray Davis, personal communication, March 30, 2021). The agency employs a small cadre of "victim specialists"—social workers and people with social services experience—to help prevent and mitigate mail fraud using three telephone-based methods:

- **contacting people whom the Inspection Service has identified as experiencing mail fraud to educate them about the problem:** Repeated phone calls are frequently needed to gain the trust of call recipients and to help them understand the nature of the fraud they have experienced.
- **helping connect people who have experienced mail fraud with social services:** Older people who experience mail fraud frequently lose significant amounts of money and may need

assistance with rent or mortgage payments, utilities, and food.

- **alerting local social service agencies of people in their catchment area who have experienced mail fraud:**

As a law enforcement agency, the Inspection Service has the authority to disclose such information. (Additionally, the Inspection Service notifies APS of every instance of mail fraud. Should victim specialists identify or suspect new instances or types of elder mistreatment, they report such occurrences to APS.) (N. Gray Davis, personal communication, March 30, 2021)

Victim specialists work with people across the United States and in the territories. Although the program is only a few years old and has not yet been evaluated formally, anecdotal evidence suggests inroads are being made (N. Gray Davis, personal communication, March 30, 2021).

ABUSE IN LATER LIFE (ALL) PROGRAMS

The ALL initiative, administered by the DOJ Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), helps states, localities, Tribes, and nonprofits serve people 50 years and older who experience elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, with a strong focus on IPV, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (NCALL, 2018). Creating and enhancing a coordinated community response (CCR) to these problems is one facet of ALL (OVW, 2019). Similar to elder abuse MDTs, CCR programs (also known as CCR teams) bring together various disciplines, organizations, systems, and sectors. CCR programs began in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1980 and have been replicated across and beyond the United States over the past four decades (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2017; Pence & Shepard, 1999).



Abuse in Later Life programs operate at the nexus of elder abuse and intimate partner violence.

Although CCR programs vary, teams often prioritize interagency collaboration to bolster practices and policies that enhance the safety of people who have experienced IPV and hold accountable people who use abusive behavior (Furr & Davis, 2019). For example, with the support of both ALL and VOCA grants, the District of Columbia's Collaborative Training & Response for Older Victims (DC TROV) has trained detectives, judges, court personnel, faith community leaders, and other stakeholders. DC TROV also prompted the introduction of, and successfully advocated for, legislation that criminalized financial exploitation committed by undue influence (Seniors Protection Amendment Act of 2000, 2001/2016/2021). That legislation also catalyzed creation of an Elder Justice Section at the DC Office of Attorney General (M. O'Brien, personal communication, April 6, 2021).

CCR teams typically include representatives of health care entities, social service organizations, courts, legal services, law enforcement,

crime victim advocacy programs, and IPV intervention programs; some CCR teams also include representatives of faith communities and of organizations serving specific cultural communities (OVW, 2019). Several of the settings represented in CCR teams may incorporate social workers, and some are led by social workers. For example, with the support of an ALL grant to CHANA, Jacke Schroeder established and continues to facilitate a 40-member CCR team, which includes representatives from the city's aging services division, APS program, police department, district and circuit courts, and the licensing body for nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The team meets quarterly to foster a person-centered, integrated response to abuse of people 50 years and older. Informed by a citywide assessment of adults and adult-serving organizations, CHANA has conducted training for numerous stakeholders, helped agencies review policies and protocols to ensure responsiveness to older clients, and created new resources (such as an Elder Abuse Victim Advocates program and the previously referenced shelter options) to fill gaps in services, among other accomplishments (J. Schroeder, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

The ALL initiative also funds service delivery, including some services provided and administered by social workers. For example, one ALL program is directed by NASW Georgia Chapter member Paula Dobbs, community clients programs manager at LiveSafe Resources (P. Dobbs, personal communication, April 11, 2021). The program assists people who have experienced elder abuse with counseling, emergency shelter, and transportation; accompaniment to health care and legal appointments associated with their experience of abuse; and financial assistance for rent, medications, and utilities (LiveSafe Resources, n.d.). Moreover, with the support of an OVW E-MDT grant, LiveSafe Resources hosts and facilitates the Justice for Elderly and Disabled Individuals E-MDT to discuss specific situations of elder abuse. Another organization, the Idaho-based Nampa Family Justice Center, uses ALL funding not only to convene a CCR team and train various stakeholders, but also to provide assessment, safety planning, and referrals for people who have experienced abuse in later life (A. Groen, personal communication, April 6, 2021).

EDUCATION

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Social work faculty teach undergraduate and graduate social work students about elder abuse. One such educator is NASW Michigan Chapter member Joy Swanson Ernst, who has taught courses on gerontological social work at Hood College in Maryland and currently teaches at Wayne State University. Furthermore, Ernst collaborated with other social work educators and CSWE to prepare the publication *Elder Justice Curriculum Models for MSW Programs*, developed with the support of the John A. Hartford Foundation (CSWE, 2015a). This document is a useful resource for any educator who wishes to create or enhance course content on elder abuse.

Social workers in academic settings also educate other disciplines about elder abuse. For example, Risa Breckman taught at Weill Cornell Medicine for more than 20 years and recently retired as assistant professor for gerontological social work in medicine. In this role, Breckman taught medical students, faculty, and staff about elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation; codeveloped the program *Interview of Decisional Abilities*, which teaches APS staff how



Social workers provide education about elder abuse under the auspices of college and university degree programs, professional development programs, and community and public awareness campaigns.

to gather specific information used to determine clients' decision-making abilities; and cofounded the previously referenced NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine, which provides extensive educational programming for professionals in the community (R. Breckman, personal communication, April 4, 2021). Similarly, Georgia Anetzberger, an adjunct assistant professor in the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), incorporates elder abuse in her course on aging policy and services delivery. Also an adjunct professor in the CWRU School of Medicine, Anetzberger has enhanced knowledge about elder abuse through presentations and meetings with students electing geriatrics specialties, among other activities (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, April 2, 2021).

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Current knowledge about elder abuse is vital for social workers and other disciplines. Moreover, skills training is integral to elder justice program development and implementation. Drawing on both their theoretical grounding and their practical experience, many social workers educate and train their social work colleagues and other service providers in various aspects of elder abuse prevention and intervention. These professional development activities can take several forms:

- Many social workers provide continuing education programs on elder abuse to help social workers meet licensure requirements. Such programs are offered by the NASW national office (www.socialworkers.org/Careers/Continuing-Education) and chapters (www.socialworkers.org/About/Chapters/Find-a-Chapter), among other entities. One on-demand course, *Heightening Awareness of Older Adult Self-Neglect and Mistreatment*, is available as part of the Supervisory

Leaders in Aging (SLA) Principles program (www.socialworkers.org/sla).³

Moreover, two recent NASW virtual forums have included sessions on elder abuse: Georgia Anetzberger presented a workshop on elder self-neglect during the 2017 NASW Virtual Conference, *Aging Through the Social Work Lens*, and Bonnie Brandl presented a workshop on abuse in later life as part of the 2019 NASW Virtual Forum *Addressing Domestic Violence Through the Social Work Lens*.

- Numerous social workers provide supervision and consultation to colleagues on elder justice issues. For example, NASW California (CA) Chapter member Adria Navarro maintains a consulting practice in which she provides clinical supervision, training, and evaluation on elder justice issues. Her supervisees include graduate social work interns of the Southern CA Geriatric Social Work Education Consortium (www.picf.org/partners-in-action/gswec/) (A. Navarro, personal communication, March 31, 2021). Georgia Anetzberger has served as a consultant for numerous projects. In 2004, Anetzberger developed Ohio's first APS-specific core curriculum at the request of the OH Department of Job and Family Services (then the OH Department of Human Services).

The curriculum was used until 2015, when a national curriculum became available. Anetzberger also developed the OH Domestic Violence in Later Life Training Curriculum in 2003 at the request of the OH Domestic Violence Network and OH Association of AAAs (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, April 4, 2021).

- Some social workers have formed study groups to stay abreast of professional literature addressing elder abuse. For example, NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine created an elder abuse journal club, which meets regularly (R. Breckman, personal communication, February 5, 2020). Similarly, NAPSA maintains a Research to Practice Interest Group, which offers a journal club, Webinar series, listserv, and briefs (www.napsa-now.org/research-to-practice-interest-group/).
- Each AAA is required to provide (directly or through contract) Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection Activities, which are funded by Title VII of the OAA (n4a, 2017a). These activities include not only outreach and education campaigns, as previously described, but also provider training for recognizing elder abuse. The OH-based Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging (WRAA), in which Nita Bring-



Mazurek serves as director of community and waiver services, conducts annual training on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation for its care managers and waiver service coordinators, all of whom are mandated reporters of elder abuse. The agency occasionally offers community education events, as well.

- With support from a contract from the OH Department of Job and Family Services, both employed and retired social workers train APS workers around the state (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, February 5, 2020). Moreover, NASW OH Chapter member Farida Kassim Ejaz has developed and implemented numerous trainings on how to understand, screen, and report adult abuse; her audiences include care managers coordinating care for dually eligible Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries (a collaboration with Georgia Anetzberger; Ejaz et al., 2017), Senior Companion Program volunteers (Bibbo & Ejaz, 2019), and real estate agents.
- The Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), funded and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), highlighted training on elder abuse as a social determinant of health and partnerships with elder justice programs in its Notice of Funding Opportunity for federal fiscal year 2019 (HRSA, 2018). The GWEP site Collaborative Action Team training for Community Health – Older adult Network (CATCH–ON), codirected by NASW Illinois Chapter member Robyn Golden, has included elder abuse screening and assessment tools in its tool box for health care clinicians (CATCH–ON, n.d.). A list of GWEP grantees (as of May 2022) is available on the HRSA site (<https://bhw.hrsa.gov/funding/covid19-telehealth-fy2020-awards/geriatrics-workforce-enhancement>). GWEP’s forerunner was the HRSA Geriatric Education Center (GEC). As director of the Western Reserve GEC in the early 1990s, Georgia Anetzberger incorporated the topic of elder abuse within educational programming. She subsequently conducted research on the extent to which such programming was included in GECs nationwide (Anetzberger, 1993).

- Some social workers have developed creative video projects to train service providers about elder abuse prevention and response. Social workers can incorporate these videos in trainings or create videos specific to their communities. For example, NCALL—a federally funded resource center founded (and, until early 2021, directed) by Bonnie Brandl—recently created three resources for public use:

- ◊ NCALL library of more than 30 video clips featuring subject matter experts, including Brandl and Risa Breckman (www.ncall.us/resources/video-library)—Titles include *Enhancing Agency Policies to Address Abuse Across the Lifespan*, *Historical Trauma, Resiliency and a Strength Based Approach*, *Safety Planning, Training DV/SA [Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse] Staff on Abuse in Later Life*, and *Training Other Professionals on Abuse in Later Life*.
- ◊ *Lifting Up the Voices of Older Survivors*, an OVC-funded video project of NCALL and Terra Nova Films, Inc. (www.liftingupvoices.net) (OVC, 2017a)—These videos and action guide, released in conjunction with WEAAD 2019, feature older adults throughout the United States sharing their experiences of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking, and financial exploitation. The series follows a similar OVC-funded series by NCALL and Terra Nova Films (OVC, 2013).
- ◊ *Working with Older Survivors of Abuse: A Framework for Advocates* (Brandl, 2016). This tool kit, developed by Brandl in collaboration with Breckman and other professionals, is a written guide with links to 34 video interviews with social workers and other subject matter



experts (<https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/ncall/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/12072922/GP-Captioned-June2016.pdf>).

- Similarly, under Breckman’s leadership, NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine created a *Quick Clips* video series (<https://nyceac.org/quick-clips/>), in which social workers and other experts observe a brief elder abuse dramatization video and respond from 16 perspectives, such as advocacy, case management, diversity, health care, mental health, prosecution, and protective services.
- Social workers convene service providers of various disciplines to share and enhance knowledge about elder abuse:
 - ◊ NASW NYC Chapter member Martha Pollack, senior director of elder abuse prevention services for the nonprofit organization JASA, plans both the annual Elder Justice Conference and training modules for the JASA Elder Justice Training Institute (M. Pollack, personal communication, April 6, 2021). A recent JASA Webinar two-part series, planned and moderated by Pollack, addressed improving outreach to and elder justice services for the LGBTQ community; Paul Caccamise was one of the presenters (P. Caccamise, personal

communication, April 15, 2021).

Another recent JASA Webinar, *New Challenges Facing Frontline Workers: Effectively Serving Our Older Clients during the Pandemic*, featured NASW NYC Chapter member Randi Anderson, wellness & clinical counseling and training consultant (R. Anderson, personal communication, April 13, 2021).

- ◇ With a grant from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services/ William B. Hoyt Memorial NYS Children and Family Trust Fund, Lifespan conducts training in outreach to and elder justice services for the LGBTQ+ community. This initiative has involved collaboration with LGBTQ+ community organizations, such as an advocacy alliance, health clinic, and SAGE: Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders (P. Caccamise, personal communication, April 15, 2021). Lifespan also has a broad elder abuse educational initiative, funded by the NYS Office for the Aging and Monroe County Office for the Aging, that addresses a variety of topics based on community needs. Under the auspices of this initiative, the organization conducts trainings for various service providers both in Rochester and throughout the state.
- ◇ In 2018, NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine and the Weinberg Center held a symposium entitled *Advancing Trauma-Informed Responses to Elder Abuse*. The 2020 symposium report, coauthored (in part) by Risa Breckman and fellow NYC Chapter member Leslie Mantrone (Breckman et al., 2020), is an important addition to the literature on both elder justice and trauma-informed service delivery.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

As noted previously, public awareness campaigns and community education are among the most common elder justice activities conducted by AAAs and Title VI programs; such activities are common in other elder justice organizations, as well. For example,

Lifespan's elder abuse educational initiative targets not only service providers but also the general public, such as groups for older adults. Moreover, Lifespan uses NYS Office for the Aging funding to disburse elder abuse prevention minigrants, such as to the Akwesasne Reservation and nonprofit organizations, thereby enabling grantees to conduct WEAAD events or to provide education and training in their own communities (P. Caccamise, personal communication, April 15, 2021).

Social workers are often keenly attuned to how older adults, family caregivers, and other members of the public perceive elder abuse. Drawing on this knowledge, social workers are well positioned to develop and implement such campaigns. NASW encourages social workers in such roles to enhance their effectiveness by incorporating the evidence-based Reframing Elder Abuse communications strategy, developed by the FrameWorks Institute (hereafter "FrameWorks") and NCEA (FrameWorks, 2020b; Herman, 2018; NCEA, n.d.-c).⁴ NCEA's Support and Tools for Elder Abuse Prevention (STEAP) initiative (<https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/STEAP.aspx>), developed in partnership with USAging (formerly n4a), offers free, ready-to-use, customizable materials that incorporate the Reframing Elder Abuse strategy. Social workers may also find

useful the materials available via the Reframing Aging Initiative, developed by FrameWorks in collaboration with the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and seven other national aging-focused organizations. Currently led by GSA (FrameWorks, 2020a; GSA, n.d.), this initiative provides communications strategies to counter ageism, which is correlated with elder abuse (NCEA, 2021a; Pedroso de Lima et al., 2018; World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).⁵

Social workers are influencing elder justice policy on local, state, national, and international levels.

POLICY

Some social workers influence local and state-level elder justice policy as leaders or employees of AAAs, SUAs, or other Aging Network entities. Other social workers serve on advisory committees to local and state governments. For example, the OH Department of Aging has contracted with the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) to develop the state's Strategic Action Plan on Aging (SAPA), which will improve the health and well-being of older adults in the state. HPIO has convened a SAPA



Advisory Committee, on which NASW OH Chapter members Georgia Anetzberger and Stephanie FallCreek serve, to provide guidance on SAPA priorities, outcomes, and strategies (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, March 15, 2020; HPIO, 2020). Reducing elder abuse and neglect is one of four overall outcomes included in SAPA (Aly et al., 2021).

Yet other social workers work in private-sector organizations, such as NASW OH Chapter member Jacob Santiago, assistant health policy analyst with HPIO, who contributed to SAPA. The Center for Community Solutions, also based in Ohio, improves health, social, and economic conditions through nonpartisan research, policy analysis, communications, and advocacy. The center has long worked to prevent and address elder abuse, primarily through its Council on Older Persons (COOP) (www.communitysolutions.com/collaborations/council-on-older-persons/); as of spring 2021, multiple social workers participated in COOP, including Georgia Anetzberger and fellow NASW OH Chapter members M.C. “Terry” Hokenstad and Sarah Parran. COOP’s accomplishments include developing Ohio’s APS law, reforming Ohio’s guardianship law, and establishing the Cuyahoga County Department of Senior and Adult Services (<https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/divisions/detail/senior-and-adult-services>) and the department’s Options for Independent Living program (<https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/programs/detail/options-for-independent-living>) (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, March 15, 2020). Likewise, NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine educates elected officials about elder abuse, collaborates with other nonprofit organizations and with governmental entities to develop effective elder justice policies, and promotes an ageist-free approach to elder abuse programming (NYCEAC, 2019). Furthermore, CHANA, under Jacke Schroeder’s leadership, advocated successfully in 2017 for modification of Maryland’s Health Care Decisions Act (HCDA) (1993/2017/2020) to prohibit any individual who is the subject of an interim, temporary, or final protective order from serving as either a health care agent or surrogate decision maker (Act of May 25, 2017, ch. 657; J. Schroeder, personal communication, April 8, 2021). This exclusion marked a significant step in preventing abuse of adults of all ages, including abuse in later life.

NASW Social Work Pioneer® and OH Chapter member Patricia (Pat) Brownell, associate professor emerita of social service at Fordham University, has been active in elder justice work at an international level. Brownell and Argentinian social worker Rosa Perla Resnick successfully advocated for the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) to achieve special consultative status as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the UN in 2004 (P. Brownell, personal communication, May 4, 2021), and Brownell was named the organization’s first main representative to the UN (INPEA, 2004). In that role, she promoted UN recognition of a WEAAD observance, launched by INPEA and WHO at the UN on June 15, 2006 (INPEA, 2006; P. Brownell, personal communication, May 4, 2021; USC Center for Elder Justice, n.d.-a). She was also instrumental in securing NASW’s support of WEAAD in 2012 and in inspiring the association’s ongoing commitment to the observance. Brownell currently serves as one of two United States representatives on INPEA’s board of directors (INPEA, n.d.).

Another social worker advocating for elder justice on an international level is NASW Social Work Pioneer® and NYC Chapter member Cynthia Stuen. Stuen is the International Federation on Ageing’s (IFA’s) main representative to the UN (IFA, n.d.-b), participates in the Global Alliance for the Rights

of Older People (<https://rightsofolderpeople.org/>) (C. Stuen, personal communication, May 12, 2021), and chairs the NGO Committee on Ageing–NY (NGO Committee on Ageing–NY, n.d.). In these capacities, Stuen advocates for the human rights of older persons within the UN and globally. The ability to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation is integral to this human rights perspective (IFA, n.d.-a; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2011; UN General Assembly, 2011) and has been a focus of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, which considers the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and identifies possible gaps and potential solutions (OHCHR, 2017).

ELDER JUSTICE COALITIONS

Many social workers are involved in elder justice coalitions or networks, such as three established by Georgia Anetzberger—one local, one regional, and one statewide—in Ohio:

- The Greater Cleveland Elder Abuse/Domestic Violence Roundtable (<https://eadroundtable.wixsite.com/cleveland>) is a Cuyahoga County group engaged in education and advocacy specific to IPV in later life. The roundtable, which operates under the auspices of the nonprofit Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center, includes service providers and other members of the public.



The National Network of State Elder Justice Coalitions (NNSEJC), created by five social workers, facilitates connections among, and enhances the capacity of, state and Tribal elder justice coalitions.

- The Consortium Against Adult Abuse (C3A Consortium) (www.c3a5county.org), representing five counties in northeast Ohio, promotes awareness of elder abuse, strengthens state-mandated protective services, and advocates for increased state and federal funding for APS.
- The OH Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS) (www.ocapsohio.org) is a statewide coalition with regional affiliates. OCAPS facilitates collaboration, provides education, and advocates to enhance services for people who have experienced elder abuse or are at risk of abuse. Social worker Carol Dayton, whose extensive experience in APS was noted previously, helps lead the coalition's development and membership activities.

Social worker Nita Bring-Mazurek participates in all three coalitions and serves as clinical practice/social policy committee chair for the C3A Consortium (N. Bring-Mazurek, personal communication, April 6, 2021). When Ohio designated first responders as mandated reporters of elder abuse, Bring-Mazurek and other consortium members developed informational cards with tips on identifying and reporting elder abuse. The consortium also hosts annual conferences, which have been paused because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paul Caccamise is a member of the NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse, which Lifespan established and coordinates. The coalition has a membership of more than 1,900 individuals, organizations, and government agencies (NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse, n.d.-b). Funded in part by the NYS Office for the Aging, the coalition focuses on advocacy, education, and research to prevent elder abuse. The coalition was formed in 2004 following the first NYS Elder Abuse Summit and was instrumental in coordinating successive statewide summits in 2010 and 2021. Each of the three summits

was organized by Lifespan to develop statewide plans for elder abuse prevention and intervention; the most recent summit was supported by the NYS Office of Victim Services. The NYS Elder Abuse Summits have been catalytic in multiple ways: (a) forming the NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse; (b) advocating for changes in the state's power-of-attorney law to prevent fraud and financial exploitation of older adults (NY General Obligations Law §§ 5-1501–1514); (c) providing the impetus for the first statewide prevalence and incidence study of elder abuse in the United States (Lifespan et al., 2011); and (d) promoting the development of E-MDTs (NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse, n.d.-a; P. Caccamise, personal communication, April 15, 2021).

Both the NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse and OCAPS are members of the National Network of State Elder Justice Coalitions (NNSEJC), created by five social workers: Georgia Anetzberger, Risa Breckman, Paul Caccamise, Iris Freeman (MEJC), and Lisa Nerenberg (CA Elder Justice Coalition [CEJC]). Launched in the spring of 2019, NNSEJC (www.elderjusticecal.org/nnsejc.html) facilitates connections among, and enhances the capacity of, state and Tribal elder justice coalitions (also known as associations, commissions, councils, networks, partnerships, or task forces).

Social workers who participate in local or regional elder justice coalitions can strengthen those efforts by engaging with state or Tribal coalitions, respectively; likewise, social workers involved in state or Tribal coalitions can augment their reach by engaging with NNSEJC.

Social workers seeking a local, regional, state, or Tribal elder justice coalition can check DOJ's Elder Justice Network Locator Map (www.justice.gov/elderjustice/elder-justice-network-locator-map), launched in late 2019 (Guinn-Shaver, 2020; Office of the Attorney General, 2020). The following resources are available

to social workers interested in starting or strengthening an elder justice coalition:

- *Building a National Elder Justice Movement, State by State*—open-access journal article by the five NNSEJC founders (Anetzberger et al., 2020a)
- *Building an Elder Justice Movement State by State*—Webinar recording and slides featuring the five NNSEJC founders (Nerenberg et al., 2018)
- *Making a Difference: Elder Abuse Networks*—blog (Anetzberger, 2018)
- *State Elder Justice Coalitions: Informing Services and Influencing Public Policy*—DOJ Webinar (Anetzberger et al., 2020b)
- *Tribal/State Elder Justice Collaborations That Work*—DOJ Webinar (LaCounte et al., 2018)

Social workers conduct research on elder abuse in academic, health care, social service, and criminal justice settings.

RESEARCH

Social workers conduct research on elder abuse in a variety of settings. Adria Navarro has provided direct services in health care settings alongside her extensive academic experience. Currently on the social work faculty of Azusa Pacific University, Navarro has conducted research related to adult protection, undue influence, elder abuse forensic centers, and elder financial exploitation, among other topics (A. Navarro, personal communication, March 31, 2021). She also maintains a consulting practice providing evaluation, training, and clinical supervision; in one countywide project, she surveyed interprofessional providers on behalf of the district attorney's office to aid in prioritizing needed elder justice interventions.

NASW NYS Chapter member Carmen Morano's research has bridged the academic and nonprofit sectors. Morano, a professor and associate dean for research in the University at Albany's School of Social Welfare, conducted an evaluation of the NYC Elder Abuse Hotline in 2019 (Morano, 2020). The following year, he served as principal investigator for an evaluation of the Elder Abuse Interventions and E-MDT Initiative in New York State (Morano & Berical, 2020).

Joy Swanson Ernst, whose work on elder abuse curriculum modules was referenced previously, has conducted, presented, and published extensive research on elder abuse and APS. She has also served as a consultant to the NAPSA for the project *Self-Neglect Knowledge, Policy, Practice, and Research: Realities and Needs* (J. S. Ernst, personal communication, March 31, 2021). This project, which will enhance knowledge regarding how APS and other programs respond to elder self-neglect, is supported by an Elder Justice Innovation Grant from ACL (ACL, 2018a).

NASW NJ Chapter member Tina Maschi, a professor in the Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service, conducted a survey on elder abuse within the prison system, calling attention to the need for elder justice and human rights for older adults in prison (Maschi, 2013). She elaborated on this theme in a recently published book coauthored with psychologist Keith Morgen (Maschi & Morgen, 2020). The need for a caring justice approach is central to their book and to a journal article on aging in prison written by Maschi, Morgen, and NASW North Carolina Chapter member Karen Bullock, among others (Maschi et al., 2021).

Pat Brownell has devoted decades to elder abuse research, including research with an international scope that incorporates a human rights perspective. She served as consultant to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in drafting a paper on neglect, abuse, and violence against older women (UN DESA, 2013) and has written extensively on this issue (see, for example, Brownell, 2014, 2016, 2019; Choi et al., 2017). Other topics addressed in Brownell's research include elder abuse

by family members as a criminal justice issue (Brownell, 1998) and the intersection of ageism and abuse in the workplace (Brownell & Kelly, 2013; Brownell & Powell, 2013). The National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) honored Brownell with the Sol Gothard Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014 for her outstanding research, educational, practice, and policy contributions (NOFSW, n.d.).

Georgia Anetzberger's vast research on elder abuse has also had international dimensions. She is one of five researchers who undertook the first *WorldView Environmental Scan on Elder Abuse* (Podnieks et al., 2010) and, with two of her colleagues, conducted a follow-up study; the results will be published in a forthcoming book (Teaster et al., 2022). In 2016 the USC Judith D. Tamkin Symposium on Elder Abuse named an award in Anetzberger's honor (Siciliano, 2017), which has been given biannually to individuals chosen "based on their outstanding service to the field of elder abuse and their ability to exemplify the tenets of the award's namesake" (USC, 2018, p. 2; Keck School of Medicine, 2020, p. 4). Within the United States, Anetzberger was also an investigator (Acierno et al., 2017; Acierno et al., 2018) or consultant (Acierno, 2018) in follow-up studies

to the National Elder Mistreatment Study. Her extensive list of publications includes the books *Clinical Management of Elder Abuse* (2005) and *The Etiology of Elder Abuse by Adult Offspring* (1987), more than two dozen empirical studies, and articles on a wide range of elder justice topics, including elder abuse policy (Anetzberger, 2021).

Farida Kassim Ejaz, whose training work was mentioned previously, has been involved in elder justice research for more than three decades and is the recipient of the 2021 Researcher of the Year Award from the OH Association of Gerontology and Education (Benjamin Rose, 2021). As senior research scientist at Benjamin Rose in Cleveland, Ohio, Ejaz has collaborated on three ACL-funded projects. In the *Elder Abuse Prevention Initiative* (2012–2016), two APS social workers were embedded in a large health care system in Texas to train primary care personnel (in order of participation, medical assistants, patient service representatives, physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, health coaches, social workers, and case managers) to identify abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Ejaz et al., 2020). The project *Understanding Self-Neglect in Adult Healthcare Patients and Evaluating a New Intervention to Prevent It*, for which Ejaz serves as



Social workers help prevent and address elder abuse across the service continuum, including in health, housing, mental health, and substance use programs.

principal investigator, studies the effectiveness of a social work intervention for elder self-neglect in Texas (ACL, 2018a; Benjamin Rose, n.d.). (The two Texas projects are a partnership of Benjamin Rose, the Texas APS system, and the WellMed Charitable Foundation; the partners received the 2018 National Adult Protective Services Collaboration Award for this work.) Furthermore, Ejaz is the principal investigator of the subcontract on the *Oklahoma APS Self-Neglect Practice Enhancement and Improved NAMRS Compliance Project* (ACL, 2018c; Benjamin Rose, n.d.).

Other social workers also engage in elder justice research and dissemination outside of the academic sector. For example, Carol Dayton cochairs NAPSA's Research to Practice Interest Group, which coordinates the organization's previously described journal club, Webinars, and research briefs (NAPSA, 2022). She also serves as a subject matter expert for APS-focused research projects (C. Dayton, personal communication, March 31, 2021). Risa Breckman and Paul Caccamise (2016a, 2016b) recently designed, piloted, and conducted a survey to assess the adequacy of elder abuse prevention and intervention services in New York City and throughout the state. Moreover, Breckman is a lead author on a paper that describes survey research conducted on an underserved population, "concerned persons" (such as family, friends, and neighbors) in the lives of people who have experienced elder abuse (Breckman et al., 2018). This research inspired NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine to launch the *Helpline for Concerned Persons*, the first known dedicated service addressing the emotional stress and informational needs of this group (Mantrone & Breckman, 2019). Staffed by social workers, the helpline is a nonemergency phone and e-mail-based service that provides supportive counseling, information, and timely referrals to concerned persons (<https://nyceac.org/helpline-for-concerned-persons/>).

ELDER JUSTICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL SOCIAL WORKERS

WORK IN DIVERSE ROLES & SETTINGS

Elder justice work is not restricted to the roles and settings described in this publication. Social workers help prevent and address elder abuse across the service continuum, including in health, housing, mental health, and substance use programs. Every social worker, regardless of setting, specialty area, or type of practice, can work for elder justice in a variety of ways:

- educating oneself and one's colleagues about warning signs for elder abuse (such as by using NCEA's succinct *Red Flags of Abuse* tip sheet [2018], available in eight languages), mandatory reporting responsibilities, and how to report suspected abuse
- developing or strengthening relationships with individuals and organizations that have expertise in elder abuse prevention and response
- underscoring the link between social isolation and elder abuse in programmatic efforts and policy advocacy
- establishing or enhancing WEAAD (June 15) observances, using STEAP (NCEA, n.d.-d) and the WEAAD microsite (USC Center for Elder Justice, n.d.-b).

Social workers can also promote elder justice by incorporating the Reframing Elder Abuse and Reframing Aging strategies in communications within and beyond their practice settings. As noted previously (and in the resources section), FrameWorks, NCEA, and GSA offer numerous materials to support such efforts.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Many of the roles described in this publication pertain to paid employment, and NASW advocates strongly for social work jobs. Yet, the association also recognizes and respects that some social workers contribute to the elder justice movement on a voluntary basis. These volunteers

include retired social workers, social work students, social workers who are not in the paid workforce because of caregiving responsibilities or health concerns, and social workers who want to advance elder justice outside of their employment sites. Two federally funded volunteer programs focus on elder abuse prevention and response:

- AmeriCorps Seniors (formerly Senior Corps), a network of national service programs for Americans 55 years and older (<https://americorps.gov/serve/americorps-seniors>), collaborates with DOJ's Elder Justice Initiative to prevent elder abuse (AmeriCorps, 2016). For example, some AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers have conducted trainings to help older adults avoid financial exploitation (Corporation for National and Community Service [CNCS], 2018). Other volunteers have provided companionship to older adults identified by APS as being at risk for elder abuse; these volunteers have been trained in elder abuse prevention and to report suspected incidents of elder abuse (CNCS, 2019). Other elder justice roles for AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers include LTC ombudsman work and public presentations related to elder abuse (Cox-Roush, 2020).
- The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), administered by ACL (2020b), recruits and trains retired professionals and other volunteers to identify and report incidents or patterns of health care fraud, errors, and abuse, thereby enhancing the well-being of Medicare beneficiaries. At a national level, SMP has created beneficiary-oriented videos (www.smpresource.org/Video/Default.aspx), tip sheets (www.smpresource.org/Content/Medicare-Fraud/Fraud-Schemes.aspx), and consumer alerts (www.smpresource.org/Content/Medicare-Fraud/SMP-Consumer-Fraud-Alerts.aspx) about various types of Medicare fraud. These activities are complemented by the work of SMP grantees in every state,



the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (www.smpresource.org/Contact/Default.aspx). For instance, the CA Health Advocates SMP—which has a partnership with CEJC (CEJC, n.d.)—has created flyers in nine languages about scams related not only to COVID-19 vaccines and contact tracing, but also to inaccurate information about Medicare benefits (such as braces, hospice, genetic testing, and cancer screening) (<https://cahealthadvocates.org/fraud-abuse/medicare-fraud-alerts/>). The CA SMP has also created a public service announcement in Spanish about COVID-19 scams (CA SMP, 2020). Moreover, each jurisdiction’s SMP program conveys beneficiary reports of suspected fraud to the appropriate federal agencies, such as the HHS OIG (HHS, 2021; SMP National Resource Center, 2021a, 2021b).

Some communities have developed creative programs to promote elder justice. For example,

the nonprofit organization Greater Cleveland Volunteers (GCV), which hosts a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) chapter (GCV, 2020), used the arts to educate the community about elder abuse. GCV used a grant to support the RSVP Players, older adult volunteers who created and performed skits at senior centers and other locales. One of the topics addressed in the skits was financial exploitation of older adults (G. Anetzberger, personal communication, February 21, 2020). Social workers can help develop and implement such programs.

Social workers at all stages of their careers (including retirement) also volunteer at IPV-related organizations that serve older adults. Roles in these settings include staffing crisis hotlines and facilitating support groups.

Some social workers prefer to engage in volunteer work that promotes elder justice at the local, county, or state level. Opportunities include serving on a commission on aging

or a stakeholder advisory committee, such as described in the preceding section on policy. Providing elder justice input on state-level initiatives, such as occurred during the development of the CA Master Plan for Aging (CA Department of Aging, n.d.), is another way social workers can contribute on a voluntary basis.

Social workers can also organize one-time or time-limited volunteer opportunities, such as letter writing, to promote elder justice (R. Breckman, personal communication, February 5, 2020). For example, social workers can organize volunteers to write personalized letters advocating for OAA funding or for elder justice legislation.

Furthermore, some volunteer activities do not focus directly on elder abuse but can help prevent the problem by bolstering social supports for older adults. NCEA provides ideas and links to such activities (<https://ncea.acl.gov/Make-a-Difference/Volunteer.aspx>).

CONCLUSION

All of us deserve to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation at every age. Elder abuse is a pressing social problem that requires concerted effort to prevent and mitigate. The participation of all disciplines, organizations, and sectors is critical to the success of the elder justice movement. Social workers fill numerous roles—and are recognized leaders within—elder abuse education, policy, research, and direct service provision. Elder justice work can be incorporated in any professional role or setting. By working together, we can prevent elder abuse—and we can respond more quickly and effectively when it occurs.



All of us deserve to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation at every age. Social workers can incorporate elder justice work in any professional role or setting. By working together, we can prevent elder abuse—and we can respond more quickly and effectively when it occurs.

NOTES

1. The Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965—most recently reauthorized by the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-131)—established the Aging Network to promote the well-being of people 60 years and older and to help older adults live independently in their homes and communities. The Aging Network is a national network of federal, state, local, and Tribal agencies. Please refer to the 2021 NASW Practice Perspective, *Federal Funding for and Administration of Elder Justice Programs* (<https://bit.ly/NASW-fed-funding-EJ-2021>), for additional information.
2. Nicole Gray Davis, assistant inspector-in-charge of the Criminal Investigations Group for the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, presented information about the victim specialist program during the December 2018 meeting of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council and during a follow-up phone call with Chris Herman in March 2021.
3. Supervisory Leaders in Aging (SLA) (www.socialworkers.org/sla) is a professional development program offered by NASW with support from the John A. Hartford Foundation. SLA enhances the skills of social work supervisors based in health care and social service settings serving older adults. NASW conducted SLA as an in-person, 30-hour pilot program in four NASW chapters between 2015 and 2018, modeling the initiative on four pilot programs conducted in New York City between 2010 and 2014 under the auspices of the Helen Rehr Center for Social Work Practice. Since 2019, the NASW Online CE Institute has offered a live streamed version of the program, SLA Principles, to all service providers. Participants may earn a certificate worth 17.5 continuing education credits or may take individual courses in their areas of interest.
4. The Reframing Elder Abuse Project is based on qualitative and quantitative research conducted by the FrameWorks Institute in Washington, DC. The FrameWorks research and resources on reframing elder abuse were supported by grants from Archstone Foundation, the John A. Hartford Foundation, and Grantmakers in Aging and were created in partnership with the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA). NCEA (<https://ncea.acl.gov/>) is funded by the Administration of Community Living and is currently based at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. As a member of the Reframing Elder Abuse Committee, NASW provided input to NCEA and FrameWorks during the development process, and continues to assist with dissemination and implementation, of the Reframing Elder Abuse strategy.
5. Reframing Aging is an initiative of the Leaders of Aging Organizations (LAO), a group of eight national aging-focused organizations. Current LAO members are AARP, the American Federation for Aging Research, the American Geriatrics Society, the American Society on Aging, the Gerontological Society of America, Grantmakers in Aging, LeadingAge, the National Council on Aging, the National Hispanic Council on Aging, and USAging. Funding for the first phase of the initiative was provided by AARP, Archstone Foundation, the Atlantic Philanthropies, Endowment for Health, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, the John A. Hartford Foundation, the Retirement Research Foundation (now RRF Foundation for Aging), Rose Community Foundation, and the SCAN Foundation. Current funders are the John A. Hartford Foundation, Archstone Foundation, RRF Foundation for Aging, and the Scan Foundation, with additional support from Endowment for Health, Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., Next 50[®] Initiative, Rose Community Foundation, San Antonio Area Foundation, and Tufts Health Plan Foundation.

RESOURCES

KNOWING YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

[Association of Social Work Boards](#)—database of licensing boards, statutes, & regulations for each state or jurisdiction

Elder justice laws for states & other jurisdictions

- [American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging](#)—information for all 50 states, DC, Guam (GU), Puerto Rico (PR), & U.S. Virgin Islands (VI)
 - ◇ [ABA chart summarizing Adult Protective Services \(APS\) reporting laws](#) (2022)—indicates who must report, when, & how
 - ◇ [ABA list of citations for state laws that authorize or create APS, long-term care \(LTC\) ombudsman, or institutional abuse programs](#) (2020)

[Stetson University Center for Excellence in Elder Law statutory updates](#)—information for 50 states, DC, GU, PR, VI, American Samoa (AS), & Northern Mariana Islands (MP); includes APS statutes (n.d.), consumer protection statutes (n.d.), & mandatory reporting statutes (2016)

IDENTIFYING & REPORTING POTENTIAL ABUSE

[Red Flags of Abuse](#) tip sheet

[Frequently asked questions](#)

[What is Adult Protective Services?](#)

[APS program list & LTC ombudsman program map](#)—links to programs in 50 states, DC, GU, & PR

[Elder abuse hotlines in Tribal communities](#)

FINDING SERVICES & SUPPORTS FOR OLDER ADULTS

[Eldercare Locator](#)—provides information and referrals to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) & other services & supports for older adults & family caregivers

[Center for Independent Living \(CIL\) directory](#)—links to organizations in 50 states, DC, AS, GU, MP, PR, & VI; CILs provide information, referrals, services, supports, & advocacy for people of all ages who live with disabilities

[State Protection & Advocacy System \(P&A\) & Client Assistance Program \(CAP\) directory](#)—links to organizations in 50 states, DC, Indian Country, AS, GU, MP, PR, & VI; P&As and CAPs advocate with & for people with disabilities

NASW ELDER JUSTICE RESOURCES

[Elder Abuse & COVID-19](#)—NASW Practice Perspective (2021)

[Elder Justice & Racial Justice](#)—NASW Practice Perspective (2021)

[Federal Funding for and Administration of Elder Justice Programs](#)—NASW Practice Perspective (2021)

[Social Work and Elder Justice: A Mutually Essential Relationship](#)—blog written for the National Center on Elder Abuse (2021)

[The Reframing Initiative in the Context of Social Work](#)—blog written for the University of Southern California's World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) 2018 series

[Elder Abuse and Elder Justice](#)—Social Work Advocates feature story (2021)

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

[2021 Blueprint of Federal Social Policy Priorities: Recommendations to the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress](#)—includes sections on advancing long & productive lives, eradicating social isolation, & building healthy relationships to end violence

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

[Code of Ethics](#)—guides the professional conduct of social workers

[Standards, guidelines, & indicators](#)—describe the services that social workers should provide, employers should support, & consumers should expect

[National-level continuing education \(CE\)](#)—available in live & on-demand formats, in person or virtually

[Chapters](#)—offer CE & opportunities to network, learn, advocate, & serve on local, regional, & state levels

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

OTHER NONGOVERNMENTAL NATIONAL RESOURCES FOR ELDER JUSTICE

[American Bar Association \(ABA\) Commission on Law & Aging](#)—elder abuse microsite

Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR)/Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC) Elder Justice Initiative on Eldercaring Coordination—[finding or launching a program](#); [obtaining training](#)

[Elder Justice Coalition](#)—membership includes NASW

[National Adult Protective Services Association \(NAPSA\)](#)

[National Association of Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\) Assistance Administrators](#)

[National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care](#)—provides information & advocacy for, & on behalf of, people who use long-term services & supports

[National Guardianship Association \(NGA\)](#)

[National Network of State Elder Justice Coalitions](#)

[SPRING Alliance](#)—network of elder abuse shelters

[WEAAD Global Summit](#)—free virtual event, convened by NAPSA

NATIONAL CENTER ON ELDER ABUSE (NCEA) & REFRAMING RESOURCES

Resources from NCEA at Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California (USC)

- [NCEA home page](#)
- [Complete list of NCEA fact sheets](#)
- [Support + Tools for Elder Abuse Prevention \(STEAP\)](#)—NCEA & USAging (formerly National Association of Area Agencies on Aging)
- [NCEA WEAAD microsite](#)

Related USC resources

- [USC Center for Elder Justice](#)
- [USC Elder Abuse MDT Project](#)—includes a list of MDTs, particularly those based on the elder abuse forensic center model
- [USC Judith D. Tamkin International Symposium on Elder Abuse](#)—videos, slides, & posters from the February 2022 event

Reframing Elder Abuse Project—NCEA at USC & the FrameWorks Institute

- [NCEA project page](#)
- [Talking Elder Abuse](#) tool kit—FrameWorks
- [Reframing the Conversation on Elder Abuse](#) video e-course—free access through June 2022 with code WEAAD2021 and with code WEAAD for three years thereafter

Reframing Aging Initiative—Gerontological Society of America (GSA) & FrameWorks

- [Reframing Aging Web site](#)—GSA
- [Gaining Momentum tool kit](#)—FrameWorks
- [Reframing Aging free video lecture series](#)—FrameWorks

OTHER FEDERAL OR FEDERALLY SUPPORTED RESOURCES

[Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#)—includes Administration on Aging (AoA)

- [Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center \(APS TARC\)](#)
- [Elder Justice Coordinating Council \(EJCC\)](#)—federal interagency council convened by ACL
- [National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System \(NAMRS\)](#)
- [National Center on Law and Elder Rights \(NCLER\)](#)
- [National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative \(NIEJI\)](#)
- [National Ombudsman Resource Center \(NORC\)](#)

- [National Resource Center on LGBT Aging](#)—includes resources specific to elder abuse
- [National Resource Center on Women & Retirement](#)—includes information on fraud & other forms of financial exploitation

[Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)—fraud prevention information for beneficiaries

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

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) & CFPB—[Money Smart for Older Adults program](#)

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)—[Pass It On campaign](#) & [consumer.gov](#) (information about scams & identity theft)

Social Security Administration (SSA)—[fraud prevention & reporting](#); [scam awareness](#)

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)

- [Elder Abuse Peer Support Community](#)
- [Elder Justice Initiative \(EJI\)](#)
- [Elder Justice Network Locator Map](#)
- [Elder Justice Roadmap](#)—developed with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) & stakeholders nationwide
- [Multidisciplinary Team Technical Assistance Center \(MDT TAC\)](#)
- [Office for Victims of Crime \(OVC\)](#)
- [National Elder Abuse MDT Training & Technical Assistance Center](#)—funded by OVC; led by NYC Elder Abuse Center at Weill Cornell Medicine in partnership with Lifespan of Greater Rochester, NCALL, NCEA, Red Wind Consulting, & USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology
- [Office on Violence Against Women \(OVW\)](#)
- [National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life \(NCALL\)](#)—partially funded by OVW; provides technical assistance to OVW Abuse in Later Life grantees & houses Abuse in Later Life National Resource Center

[U.S. Postal Inspection Service](#)—mail scam awareness for older adults

[U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission \(SEC\)](#)—investment fraud information for older adults

[U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging](#)—hearings & resources on elder abuse, especially financial exploitation

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