

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Nebraska Toolkit



See more at: <https://www.dhhs.ne.gov/WEAAD>

To observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), we encourage your organization to hold activities on and around June 15th to spotlight the mistreatment of older adults, and to communicate with the public how individuals, organizations and communities can take action **NOW**. The need is obvious! Below are some statistics pulled together to illustrate the changing demographics and necessity of educating ourselves and our communities about elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation:

- **All countries will see substantial growth in the number of older persons between 2015 and 2030.** (United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development Ageing, 2017)
- **Seniors are living longer, but not necessarily better. Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and declining cognitive and physical functioning make elders more vulnerable to victimization.**
- **One in 10 Americans over age 60—an estimated 5 million elders—is a victim of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation.** (National Council on Aging, 2017)
- **By 2030, almost 20 percent of our population will be 65 or older—nearly twice as many as in 2007.**
- **The 85-plus population is projected to triple (a 208% increase) between 2015 and 2050.** (*Across the States Profiles of Long-Term Services and Supports*, AARP 2018)

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- **As of 2018 there were 52.4 million adults aged 65 and over in the United States.** (*May 2019 Profile of Older Americans*, Administration on Aging, 2020)
- **By 2040, the number of older Americans is expected to climb to 80 million (Urban Institute, 2015). Declining rates of fertility and the aging of the baby boom generation are believed to contribute to the increasing ranks of older adults nationwide.** (NCEA, 2021)
- **Only one in every 23.5 cases of elder abuse is reported to any agency** (*Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study Final Report*, Lachs, Mark, Et al., 2011)
- **As few as 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of authorities, making elder abuse significantly under-identified and under-reported.** (*Elder Abuse Statistics and Facts*, 2017)
- **Studies have recognized that projections of abuse likely underestimate the actual population prevalence.** [Pillemer, K., Burnes, D., Riffin, C., & Lachs, M. S. (2016). *Elder abuse: global situation, risk factors, and prevention strategies*. *The Gerontologist*, 56(Suppl_2), S194-S205.]
- **For every incident of abuse reported to authorities, nearly 24 additional cases remain undetected.** [*Risk factors for elder abuse and neglect: A review of the literature*. Storey, J. E., 2020, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 50, 101339.]
- **Underreports may be caused by a number of factors including an older person's fear of retaliation by the offender, reluctance to disclose the incident because of shame or embarrassment, concern they will be institutionalized, dependency on the offender, and an inability to report because of physical limitations or cognitive impairments.** [Baker, P. R., Francis, D. P., Hairi, N. N., Othman, S., & Choo, W. Y. (2016). *Interventions for preventing abuse in the elderly*. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (8).] (NCEA, 2021)
- **Up to five million older Americans are abused every year.** (National Council on Aging, 2021)
- **Financial exploitation is self-reported more than all other forms of abuse.** (NCOA, 2017)
- **37% of seniors report that they are currently being pitched by people calling or mailing them asking for money.** (Investor Protection Trust Elder Fraud Survey, 2010)

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- **One out of every five people over the age of 65 has been victimized by financial fraud.** (Investor Protection Trust Elder Fraud Survey, 2010)
- **Elders who have been abused have a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated. While likely under-reported, estimates of elder financial abuse and fraud costs to older Americans range from \$2.6 billion to \$36.5 billion annually. Yet, financial exploitation is self-reported at rates higher than emotional, physical, and sexual abuse or neglect.** (NCOA, 2021)
- **Elders will lose a minimum of \$2.9 billion annually due to financial abuse and exploitation.** (*The MetLife Study of Elder Financial Abuse*, 2011)
- **5 million older Americans are financially exploited every year.** (*How Criminals Steal \$37 Billion a Year from America's Elderly*, Bloomberg, May 3, 2018)
- **Elder financial abuse and fraud costs older Americans as much as \$36.5 billion per year.** (NCOA, 2017)

For these reasons, it is imperative that your office, organization or agency become involved in the statewide effort to get the word out. Included in this **toolkit** are ideas to assist you in planning effective activities to catch the attention of residents in your community, build a greater awareness of elder abuse and inform the public of what we can all do.

Every year, we shine a spotlight on elder abuse when we observe **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** (“WEAAD”). This **Toolkit** provides ideas to help you plan effective events in your area. Included here are materials, resources, a news release, proclamation and social media messages, as well as information on other sources of support. Copies of these materials can be found at: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/World-Elder-Abuse-Awareness.aspx>.

We invite you to use the **toolkit** to achieve year-round awareness of elder abuse and to focus on what the public can do. No effort is too small to be counted in an awareness campaign, and the more often we put this critical message in front of the public, the greater the impact.

Activity Ideas – In 2021, some of these events may be VIRTUAL

Reach Out to a New Audience

During the week preceding **WEAAD**, June 15th, hold an event in key communities each day for widespread awareness and impact. Visit the USC Center for Elder Justice web site at: <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/> for additional resources and ideas.

Sponsor Presentations or Discussions about Elder Abuse

Host a presentation on elder abuse and neglect and how to prevent, recognize and report. **Contact local civic organizations - Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions, Sertoma,**

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etc. - several weeks in advance and ask to present to them. Consider using the PowerPoint and the talking points in this **toolkit**. Outreach can be made to other targeted groups using the following resources:

- **Women:**
 - Churches, beauty salons, widowed persons' services
 - Every Woman Matters Program, 1-800-532-2227, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Every-Woman-Matters.aspx>

- **Residents in long-term care facilities:**
 - Nebraska Health Care Association, www.nehca.org
 - Nebraska's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Ombudsman.aspx>

- **Caregivers:**
 - Caregiver support groups, local grandparent resource centers, caregiver fairs and Retreats.
 - Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA) 402-444-6536, <http://enoa.org>.

- **People with Developmental Disabilities**
 - The Division of Developmental Disabilities, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Developmental-Disabilities.aspx>

- **Low-Income Individuals:**
 - Social Security offices
 - Rural and urban health clinics
 - Nebraska Telephone Assistance Program for low-income individuals (800) 526-0017
 - Seniors in Congregate Meal sites
Nebraska's 9 Community Action Agencies, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Commodity-Supplemental-Food-Program.aspx>
 - Rural housing program, www.rd.usda.gov/ne
 - Senior transportation program, <https://www.nebraskatransit.com/>
 - NDOT transit manager, 1400 Highway 2, Lincoln, NE 68509; phone: 402-479-4694
 - Weatherization program, <http://www.neo.ne.gov/wx/wxindex.htm>

- **Homebound Persons:**
 - Meals on Wheels programs through Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)
 - Visiting nurses
 - Mail carriers
 - Home companions (senior companion programs through AAAs).

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- **People with Limited English Proficiency:**
 - Centers: Asian, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Intercultural Senior Center
 - Radio and television programs
 - Nebraska Appleseed, www.neappleseed.com

- **Individuals with physical and mental disabilities:**
 - ARC, www.arc-nebraska.org
 - Easter Seals, <http://www.easterseals.com/ne/our-programs/senior-services/>
 - Behavioral Health Regions, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Behavioral-Health.aspx>
 - Vocational Rehabilitation offices, <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/>

- **Native Americans:**
 - Native American Senior Centers, Urban Indian Centers and **Native American Tribes:**
 - *Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition* Elder Program “Tired Moccasins,” 402-346-0902, *Omaha Tribe of Nebraska*, PO BOX 368, Macy, Nebraska, Phone: 402-837-5391
 - *Ponca Tribe of Nebraska*, <https://www.poncatribes-ne.org/>
 - *Santee Sioux Nation*, 425 Frazier Ave N. Suite 2, Niobrara, Nebraska, 68760, Phone: 402-857-2302, FAX 402-857-2307, www.santeedakota.org/santee_sioux_tribe_of_nebraska.htm
 - Winnebago Tribe Elder Abuse Prevention Program, P.O. Box C, Winnebago, NE 68071, Phone: 402-878-2231, Ext. 1315

- **Veterans:**
 - Veterans’ Homes (Bellevue, Grand Island, Norfolk, Scottsbluff),
 - Veterans Service Centers <https://veterans.nebraska.gov/>
 - American Legion <http://www.nebraskalegion.net/>

- **Victims of Domestic Violence:**
 - Domestic Violence Program, APS service offices, http://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_help/

- **Visually Impaired Individuals:**
 - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, <https://ncbvi.nebraska.gov/>
 - Library Commission talking books and Braille services, <http://www.nlc.nebraska.gov/>

- **Hearing Impaired Persons:**
 - Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov

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- **General Population:**
 - Banks, doctors' offices, medical societies, ministries

In this **toolkit** are **talking points** for a presentation. You may use all the information or segments of it depending on the length of your presentation. It provides background information on elder abuse; screening, response and safety planning; services and community partners; as well as federal legislation and programs.

Resources for speakers include:

- Nebraska Department of Banking and Finance (Investment and Securities Fraud)
 - Claire McHenry, Deputy Director, Securities Bureau, 402-471-2171, claire.mchenry@nebraska.gov
- Adult Protective Services Program Specialist (mandatory reporting and red flags for abuse, neglect or exploitation)
 - Local APS Supervisors
 - Toni Bonsera, DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, APS - 402-219-2515, antonia.bonsera@nebraska.gov
- Legal Aid of Nebraska
 - Go to <http://www.legalaidofnebraska.org/> for the office in your area
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman (residents' rights)
 - Go to <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Ombudsman.aspx>
 - Penny Clark, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman - 402-471-9345
- Area Agencies on Aging
 - <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Medicaid%20SUA/Senior%20Center%20List%20FY%202021.pdf>
- AARP
 - <https://states.aarp.org/nebraska/>
 - 866-389-5651
- Office of Public Guardian
 - Michelle Chaffee - 402-471-8885
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) <https://nebraska.arounja.org>
 - 1-844-843-6364

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- Local Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Service providers (abuse in later life, resources for victims) Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
 - Go to http://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_help/ to locate your local domestic violence sexual assault provider
- **WEAAD** partners to help you reach out to target groups and minorities:
 - DHHS Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity - Phone: 402-471-0152
<https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Health-Disparities-and-Equity.aspx>
Email: dhhs.minorityhealth@nebraska.gov

Host an Open House

... At your facility and/or the local senior center...

- Provide information about elder abuse and neglect, such as the information in this **toolkit**.
- Make a presentation during the open house about elder abuse and neglect.
- Invite the public to the local senior center for an hour-long lunch and presentation or discussion.
- Invite the public to your facility or the local senior center for an ice cream social and presentation or discussion.

Write a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed

- Newspapers accept feedback from the community on topics of concern to their readers. Describe the importance of respect, dignity and caring throughout people's lives, or illustrate an incident where the rights of older adults were not protected and their needs were not being met.
- Following are two approaches:
 - Newspaper policies regarding letters to the editor may vary, but providing a well-written, succinct letter that contains useful information could be accepted for printing.
 - Newspapers also consider op-eds from the community, which are longer and usually placed in a position of greater prominence on the editorial page. You may need to contact local editors for their agreement to run your op-ed piece.
- Sample letters to the editor, op-eds and other resources to enhance awareness of your agency's observation of **WEAAD** are available at <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips/>

Public Service Announcements

DHHS makes a public service announcement ("PSA") available for radio stations across the state. Radio stations run PSAs as a public service and at no cost. Call your local radio stations and ask them

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to consider running the PSA. A video version is also available at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/weaad>. In addition, you may request a 30-second PSA for non-profit organizations about **WEAAD...** with a mention of your agency.

- Nebraska PSA: Did you know that there is a silent crisis from east to west and north to south in Nebraska? Elderly Nebraskans may fear retribution, lack of care, or embarrassment! June 15th is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**, an opportunity to consider the financial exploitation, neglect and physical abuse of vulnerable or senior adults living in silent fear. For more information, visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/WEAAD. To report elder or vulnerable adult abuse, neglect or exploitation, call **1-800-652-1999**. Brought to you by your Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.
- **WEAAD** organization PSA: Every day, seniors are victims of financial exploitation, neglect and physical or emotional abuse. Your elderly neighbors could be suffering out of fear of retribution, because of a lack of care, from embarrassment, or concern about institutionalization. They may be afraid to speak out because the abuser is a member of their own family, a caregiver on whom they depend, or someone they know. If you suspect someone is a victim of elder abuse, call **1-800-652-1999**. It can be done anonymously. On behalf of (*your agency*) thank you for caring. Again, call **1-800-652-1999**.
- Several PSAs, flyers, sample press releases and other resources to help make your agency's observation of **WEAAD** are available at <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips/>.

Hold a Dedication or Announcement

If you have moved into a new building, added to your building, launched a new program or have other noteworthy changes, consider holding a dedication or announcement and **CELEBRATE**. This provides an opportunity to bring attention to all your activities as well as to elder abuse and neglect issues.

Use the Internet and Social Media

- Post information on the front page of your **website** leading up to and following **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** with a link to further information, such as DHHS' Adult Protective Services site: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Adult-Protective-Services.aspx>, the State Unit on Aging <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging.aspx> and the nation-wide Administration for Community Living <https://www.acl.gov/>.
- Also post information on your social media sites, such as **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Social networking is an excellent way to engage your community around this important and timely subject. Following are guidelines for social media postings:

Keep the **WEAAD** theme in mind: **"Building Strong Support for Elders"**

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- **Twitter** is a fast-paced social network where users share brief posts that usually accompany photos, links, and/or hashtags. What are **hashtags**? Using the # symbol, or “hashtag,” makes the word or phrase that comes afterward searchable. It is a great way to enter or create a larger conversation. Remember that Twitter posts may contain a maximum of 280 characters.
- **Hashtag Ideas:**
 - **#WEAAD**
 - **#WEAAD2021**
 - **#ElderAbuse**
 - **#Eldercare**
- **Some tips for composing effective Facebook and Twitter posts**
 - Have a clear and concise message.
Make your posts a call to action.
Turn your followers into effective advocates by giving them a clear action to take.
 - On Twitter, spell out the word “retweet” if you want others to share your post; this practice has been found to be more effective than typing “RT.”
 - When retweeting or reposting, add value to the post by adding your own commentary or add a link to additional media on the subject.
 - Use popular hashtags, but use them in moderation. Using more than two hashtags can muddle your message and is not recommended.
 - Add something visual to your post to increase interest. A photo or a link with a thumbnail or video can generate significantly more attention. Check out the logos from our **toolkit**.
 - If you are planning a **WEAAD** event, post about it!
- **Twitter Post ideas**
 - Below are some sample posts that you can customize and use. Use the **WEAAD** theme and hashtag when posting: **#WEAAD** or **#WEAAD2021**:

Be a part of a nation united to stop elder abuse! Retweet to raise awareness. #WEAAD

What can one person do? One person can change the world. #WEAAD

Share a picture of an older adult you admire. Write about what you respect about them? Abuse cannot thrive where respect resides! #WEAAD2021

Building strong support for elders! #WEAAD

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Protecting our elders begins at home. Check on the older adults in your life today! #WEAAD

I'm rocking my purple ribbon! What are you doing to raise awareness about elder abuse today? #WEAAD2021

Abuse cannot survive where respect resides! Act to protect elders!
#WEAAD

- **Facebook Posts** – Facebook has expanded its features over the years to include the ability to follow organizations, and public figures, but it still maintains a more personal, somewhat slower-paced user environment.
 - Host a Facebook challenge inviting people to share pictures of elders they admire and share why they respect them. *Abuse cannot survive where respect resides.* We invite you to share our challenge post below along with our other sample posts.
- **Facebook Campaign – Sample post**

June 15th is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**. Join our challenge! Share a picture of your parents, grandparents, or other older adult in your life and tell us something that you admire or respect about them. *Abuse cannot survive where respect resides!* Add our hashtag: #WEAAD or #WEAAD2021. Share to your own Facebook page, or the [National Center on Elder Abuse](#) page and stand united against elder abuse.

Other Sample Posts

Did you know that an estimated 1 in 10 American elders are being abused, neglected or exploited every year? It is a secret national shame. Want to be part of the solution? June 15th is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**. Take action to raise awareness. Invite a friend to like the **WEAAD** Facebook page: www.facebook.com/NationalCenteronElderAbuse #WEAAD

Showing off my **ROYAL PURPLE** bracelet showing **Strong Support for Elders** and to remember **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**! Everybody join in and wear **PURPLE** – the color of respect and honor – for our elders and raise awareness of elder neglect, abuse and exploitation! #WEAAD2021



Post: *Today I am wearing a purple ribbon to honor survivors of elder abuse and taking to Facebook to raise awareness. Won't you join me? What are you doing*

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to commemorate **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**? **Building Strong Support for Elders**. *United against elder abuse.* #WEAAD.

Do you know someone who has been the victim of elder abuse? It happens more often than you think. In fact, approximately 1 in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse. One study estimated that only 1 in 14 cases of abuse are reported to authorities. Do you have a story? Share it to help raise awareness about abuse and help prevent abuse from happening to others. #WEAAD.

Did you know that neglect is the most common form of elder abuse?

*Every year 5 million elders are abused in the United States alone. It doesn't have to be this way. There are many ways to make a difference. **Check on the older adults in your family and community.** Call the **Adult Protective Services Hotline at 1-800-652-1999** if you suspect abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult.*

*Curious to know what people are doing to commemorate **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**?*

- **Give a caregiver a couple of hours off.**
 - **Talk to your friends about elder abuse.**
 - *One person can make a difference.*
 - **Be an advocate for one day and help protect vulnerable adults.**
- #WEAAD.

Honor Advocates with Awards

In most years, we suggest organizing an awards ceremony or awards dinner for **WEAAD**. We believe that **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** is the perfect time for a social gathering. HOWEVER, we all need to stay SAFE during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the award ceremony may have to wait until **WEAAD 2022**. Of course, you can still seek out individuals or groups of people who have worked to raise awareness of abuse that occurs in later life and present them with accolades or have a ZOOM celebration to honor them. Honorees should be people who have worked to ensure fair treatment of older people in your community or at your workplace. Some examples are people who:

- Build bridges between individuals and organizations so they have a better understanding of abuse and neglect in later life;
- Work with an ethnic group on abuse issues affecting older adults in the community;
- Work to meet cultural food needs of ethnic seniors in a congregate setting;
- Reduce the use of physical or chemical restraints in nursing homes;
- Bridge the generation gap between older adults and young people;

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- Educate the community about elder abuse.
- Make your award a tradition every year on June 15th, **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**. The individuals who receive this award should be given a certificate acknowledging their contribution to the community.
- When COVID restrictions are lifted... Present the award at a special meal or ceremony that the community is invited to attend that will afford the presenter an opportunity to elaborate on preventing abuse and neglect in later life and how to recognize and report elder abuse.

Have the Civil Authority Make a Proclamation

Request that the mayors and/or county commissioners in your area sign a proclamation declaring June 15th **Elder Abuse Awareness Day** and urge citizens to participate in your event, socially distancing, as needed.

- Take your agency's officials with you when the proclamation is signed and **invite the news media** to cover the event to raise awareness. Be prepared to speak to the abuse of vulnerable adults and provide the toll-free Nebraska Abuse and Neglect Hotline phone number: **800-652-1999**. Following is a sample proclamation:

WHEREAS: (Community)'s seniors are valued members of society and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they live safely and with dignity.

WHEREAS: Abuse of older people is a tragedy inflicted on vulnerable seniors and an ever-increasing problem in society that crosses all socio-economic boundaries.

WHEREAS: Combating abuse of older people will improve the quality of life for all seniors across this state and country, and will allow seniors to continue to live as independently as possible and contribute to the life and vibrancy of (Community).

WHEREAS: (Community)'s seniors are guaranteed they will be treated with respect and dignity to enable them to continue to serve as leaders, mentors, volunteers and important and active members of this community.

WHEREAS: We are all responsible for building safer communities for (Community)'s seniors.

WHEREAS: The well-being of (Community)'s seniors is in the interest of all and further adds to the well-being of Nebraska communities.

*WHEREAS: (Agency name) will hold (event) on (date, time & location) in observance of **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** and the citizens of (Community) are invited to attend.*

*I, Mayor of (Community), do hereby proclaim June 15th, (year), as **Elder Abuse Awareness Day** and encourage all (Community) residents to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of (Community)'s seniors.*

Dated on this (date) day of (month), (year).

Signed: (Space to sign), Mayor

Hold Other Promotional Efforts

- DHHS will post resources on the document library found at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/weaad
- Prepare your own materials:
 - Provide a list of local resources and information about elder abuse and neglect.
 - Develop an informational brochure listing available services in your area for anyone affected by abuse and neglect.
 - Ask a group to make purple ribbons to distribute to people to wear on the days approaching June 15th and encourage everyone to wear purple in recognition of **WEAAD**.
- Post information about your event on community bulletin boards and kiosks, in stores, on your local cable TV community channel, local commercial TV station, public radio station, time and temperature signs, community websites, etc.
- Send invitations to your events via email and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.
- Contact local law enforcement to distribute information during Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Request other organizations, especially those serving seniors, to distribute information about your event, information about preventing abuse and neglect in later life and how to recognize and report elder abuse. Plan to submit information so it can be used for the June edition of their newsletter or other communications. (Groups to contact include: domestic violence advocates, health care and assisted living associations, AARP, etc.)
- Distribute materials to places where seniors gather; for example: Meals on Wheels, doctors' offices, banks, beauty salons, rural health centers, housing authorities, and others.
- If possible in your community, request that civic buildings be illuminated in **PURPLE** for **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!**

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Talking Points for Community Presentations

Target audiences:

- Veterans groups such as the American Legion and VFW, including their auxiliary members
- Ministerial associations
- Civic groups, such as, Sertoma, Optimist, Rotary, or Kiwanis

Elder Abuse

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In Nebraska last year, **Adult Protective Services investigated 2,468 allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation** of vulnerable adults. Eighty-one persons aged 60 and older were found to have been abused, neglected and exploited in 2020. Another 174 individuals over the age of 60 were confirmed as victims of self-neglect. **Self-neglect** means that due to physical or mental impairments or diminished capacity, an adult is unable to care for him or herself or obtain essential services such as appropriate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or lacks proper supervision. Self-neglect may result in physical injury, imminent danger of physical injury or even death.

The number of APS investigations decreased by 97 intakes since 2019, but we know that elder abuse goes largely unreported. One study of elder mistreatment, by the National Research Council Panel to Review Risk and Prevalence of Elder Abuse and Neglect in 2003, estimated that as few as one in 14 cases of elder abuse are ever reported to authorities. In 2016 the Administration for Community Living stated the following: “For every reported case, experts believe that as many as 23.5 cases go unreported.”

Why does elder abuse remain such an “invisible” problem? Many victims are isolated, ashamed, or embarrassed, particularly if a family member is the abuser, which is often the case. Of 132 unique perpetrators, 62 were determined to be relatives of the victim of vulnerable adult abuse, neglect or exploitation in Nebraska in 2020. Elders are often afraid to report for fear that the abuse will get worse or that they will have no one to care for them.

Many victims are people who are older, frail, and vulnerable, and cannot help themselves. They depend on others to meet their most basic needs. Abusers of older adults are both women and men. They are family members, friends, or “trusted others.”

In Nebraska in 2020, Neglect was the most common reason an APS report was made to the Abuse and Neglect Hotline and resulted in 1,177 investigations. Self-neglect (1,164 investigations) and exploitation (675 investigations) were the second and third most common allegations that Adult Protective Services workers investigated.

Elder abuse tends to take place where the senior lives: frequently in the home where abusers are often adult children, other family members such as grandchildren, or the spouses and partners of elders. Elder abuse can also occur in institutional settings, especially in long-term care facilities.

In Nebraska: Statistics from the 2010 United States Census indicated that the population of older Nebraskans (65 years old plus) was 247,518 (13.5 percent of the total Nebraska population). The 2019 population of Nebraska according to the website <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NE> is estimated to be 1,934,408, with 313,374 aged 65 or older, or 16.2% of the total population. By 2030, Nebraska’s total population is projected to be 1,820,247 and the projected population of Nebraskans age 65 and over will be 375,811 (20.6 percent). By that year, as many as 1 in 5 Nebraskans will likely be elderly.

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The "oldest old" -- those aged 85 and over -- are the most rapidly growing elderly age group. With these statistics and projections, it is clear that the U.S. should be preparing for the many changes that will accompany this explosion in the older population.

Financial exploitation is a growing concern. According to the results of the study *Old Age and Decline in Financial Literacy*, completed by the Texas Tech University, financial literacy declines by about 1% each year after age 60. However, an individual's confidence in financial decision-making abilities does **not** decline with age.

Cognitive Impairments: No one is immune to Alzheimer's, and there is no known preventive measure. The cause is still not known, but risk increases dramatically with age. Alzheimer's is almost unheard of in people aged 20-39. It is very uncommon (about 1 in 2,500) for people aged 40-59. In the 60s, the odds become more worrisome.

An estimated 1% of 65-year-olds have Alzheimer's or a closely related dementia. The percentages increase with age:

- 2% of 68-year-olds
- 3% of 70-year-olds
- 6% of 73-year-olds
- 9% of 75-year-olds
- 13% of 77-year-olds

The risk continues to accelerate with age, to the point where dementia affects nearly half of those 85 and over. But for elders without dementia, mild cognitive impairment affects approximately 22% of those aged 71 and older.

Risk Factors

Although there is never an excuse for mistreatment of an elderly person, several factors appear to influence whether elders are at an increased risk for abuse:

- Social isolation: the elder and caregiver are alone together almost all the time
- The intensity of an elderly person's illness or dementia
- The elder's role at an earlier time as an abusive parent or spouse
- A history of domestic violence in the home
- The elder's own tendency toward verbal or physical aggression

Preventing elder abuse and neglect

How to prevent elder abuse:

- Listen to seniors and their caregivers.
- Intervene when you suspect elder abuse. Call the **APS hotline at 1-800-652-1999**.
- Watch for warning signs that might indicate elder abuse.
- If you suspect abuse, **report it**.

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- Take a look at the elder's medications. Does the amount in the vial jive with the date of the prescription?
- Watch for possible financial abuse. Ask the elder if you may look over bank accounts and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions.
- Call and visit as often as you can. Help the elder consider you a trusted confidante.
- Offer to stay with the elder so the caregiver can have a break — on a regular basis, if possible.

Indicators of the various types of mistreatment:

Physical abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury, such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically, i.e. on both sides of the body
- Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations
- Report of drug overdose or apparent failure to take medication regularly (for example, the elder's prescription has more medicine remaining than it should)
- Broken eyeglasses or frames
- Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists, ankles or chest area
- Caregiver's refusal to allow you to see the elder alone

Sexual abuse

- Bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained sexually transmitted disease or genital infections
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing

Neglect by caregivers or self-neglect

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
- Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores
- Unsanitary living conditions: dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes
- Being left dirty or unbathed
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather
- Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, or other fire hazards)
- Deserting the elder at a public place

Financial exploitation

- Significant withdrawals from the elder's accounts
- Sudden changes in the elder's financial condition

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- Items or cash missing from the senior’s household
- Suspicious changes in wills, powers of attorney, titles, and policies
- Addition of names to the senior’s bank account signature card
- Unpaid bills or lack of medical care, although the elder has enough money to pay for them
- Financial activity the senior could not have done, such as an ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden or does not leave the house
- Unnecessary services, goods or subscriptions

Healthcare fraud and abuse

- Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device
- Evidence of over-medication or under-medication
- Evidence of inadequate care even though the elder’s bills are paid in full
- Problems with the care facility: poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff; crowding; inadequate responses to questions about the elder’s care

**Nebraska Attorney General's Office
2020 Top 10 Consumer Complaints**

1. Imposter Scams
2. Identity Theft
3. Home Repair, Improvement & Products
4. Health Care
5. Auto Related Complaints
6. Internet Services
7. Shop-at-Home and Catalog Sales
8. Banks & Lenders
9. Debt Collection
10. Telephone and Mobile Services

What you can do when someone shares that they are a victim:

Response: Compassion and Referral

- Listen with empathy and without judgment.
- Affirm the victim’s right to safety. Affirm that **safety is your first concern.**
- Reassure the victim that the **abuse is NOT their fault.**

2020 Top Frauds
Federal Trade Commission
Imposter
Online Shopping and
Negative Reviews
Telephone and Text Message Scams

- If your conversation is confidential or privileged, remind your client of that fact and that you will not act without their permission.
- Help the victim connect to a domestic violence, sexual assault or elder abuse advocate or to Adult Protective Services.

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Addressing elder abuse takes coordination of many entities such as:

- Religious Leaders
- Advocates
- Police
- Adult Protective Services
- Health Professionals
- Friends
- Policy Makers
- Judges and Legal Professionals
- Educators
- Financial Institutions
- Community Members

Types of Interventions and Resources for Elders:

Domestic & Sexual Violence Programs

- 24-hour crisis lines
- Emergency housing
- Individual, peer and group counseling
- Legal advocacy
- Community education
- Safety planning
- An individualized set of strategies designed to maximize the safety of a person who may be in danger of further harm from a perpetrator.
 - Includes physical, emotional and financial safety
 - Does not require a victim to leave
 - Should be constantly evolving

Adult Protective Services 1-800-652-1999

- Investigates reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable adults, including older adults and/or persons who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Arranges services to make adults safe and to allow the most personal freedom possible
- Seeks guardianship and/or conservatorship of adults who have been abused, neglected, or exploited and who are unable to make decisions for themselves and have no family or friends to help them
- Offers safety planning

Nebraska has a mandatory reporting law for persons who are in the medical, mental health, developmental disabilities fields as well as for any other human services provider.

Ageing Network to Support Elders in their Communities

- Transportation
- Meals
- Home health
- Social programs

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- Assistance with benefits

Legal

Any civil legal services organization can assist an eligible victim regardless of age

- However, many communities also have elder-specific legal services programs
- Elder law expertise may or may not be necessary

Some civil remedies:

- Civil protection order
- Divorce
- Power of Attorney

Some criminal charges:

- Assault
- Fraud
- Confinement

Find out about the resources in your area!