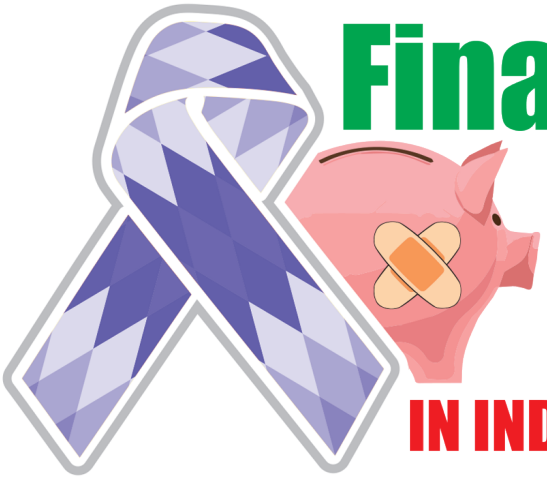

Financial ABUSE & EXPLOITATION OF ELDERS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

RISK FACTORS

Researchers have identified risk factors for Elder financial exploitation:

- Poor health, mental decline, physical illness or disability
- Need assistance with daily living activities such as shopping, preparing meals, managing money, and fiscal affairs
- Lack of social support [2]
- Feel obligated to share their resources with family[3]

INDICATORS OF FINANCIAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Professionals must be aware of potential indicators of financial abuse and exploitation.

FINANCIAL INDICATORS:

- Significant or unexplainable account withdrawals
- Attempts to wire large sums of money
- Frequent transfers between accounts
- Opening or closing accounts
- Newly authorized signers
- Insufficient funds
- Unpaid bills

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS:

- Elder is anxious or confused about financial status, transactions, or arrangements
- Sudden reluctance to discuss financial matters
- Developing new or unfamiliar relationships
- Fear of caregiver
- Changes in demeanor caused by fear, shame, or humiliation

IMPACT OF FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION ON ELDERS

Financial abuse can have significant adverse impacts.

- It can lead to financial ruin, loss of assets accumulated over a lifetime of hard work, less time due to age to recoup losses.
- In some cases, the financial loss can lead to loss of independence, a decline in quality of life, and becoming dependent on others or social welfare agencies.
- Financial loss can lead to psychological distress, loss of self-confidence, stress, isolation, and depression.[4]

FINANCIAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION:

- According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, financial abuse and exploitation is the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds property or assets.
- Financial abuse and exploitation involve the wrongful theft of money or property through fraud, scams, predatory caretakers, family members, or others they trust.
  - An estimated $2.9 billion is stolen annually from elders in the U.S.[1]
- Older adults are likely to be targeted for financial abuse and exploitation because they often have a steady income stream from social security or other sources.
- Caregivers, family members, and others may find a way to take advantage of these funds.
- Elders in Indian Country may be targets as recipients lump-sum payments such as per capita checks, land lease payments, or lawsuit settlements.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION:

- Theft of money or property is when a person takes an Elders money or property without consent.
- Identity theft is the illegal use of personal information to receive money or credit.
- Confidence crimes are the use of deception to gain an elder's confidence to acquire assets through a series of false representations.
- Scams are a dishonest scheme to make money through deceiving.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1 PLANNING

- Asking adults under what conditions would they want someone to manage their finances.
- What conditions would the older adult want to be placed in long-term care.
- Spread information to elders about preventing financial abuse and exploitation.

2 AWARENESS

- Be aware of the elder's absence from regular events.
- Encourage them to have a buddy system.
- Reach out to community members for support.
- Explain to adults about potential coercion.

3 ASSISTANCE

- Assist elders in establishing a checks and balances system.
- Encourage elders to keep valuables in a safe place.
- Inform elders not to share social security numbers or personal identification numbers.
- Assist older adults in canceling unused credit cards.

4 REPORT

- If you suspect an elder is financially abused or exploited, report to your local or tribal:
  - Adult Protective Services
  - Elder Outreach Programs
  - Senior Programs
- Report identity theft to the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging Fraud Hotline at: 1-855-303-9470.

CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS WHILE WORKING WITH ELDERS

- Ways to ask Native American Elders about abuse and neglect include:
  - Are you being disrespected? If so, in what ways?
  - Has anybody hurt you?
  - Are you afraid of anybody?
  - Is anyone taking or using your money without your permission?
  - Is anyone taking your things without your permission?
  - Are you being bothered? If so, in what ways?[3]

REPORTING ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- If you suspect elder abuse or neglect, report it to your state or tribal APS office or local police department. If you need help locating a number to call to report elder abuse, please visit: https://www.nieji.org/hotlines

NIEJI
Honor ~ Respect ~ Dignity
National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative

Keck School of Medicine of USC

NCEA
National Center on Elder Abuse

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