

Communities United in Faith: Effective Outreach for Elder Justice

Introduction

Welcome! Thank you for considering an Elder Justice presentation in your community! This outreach guide accompanies the “Communities United in Faith and Serving Neighbors” curriculum. It is meant to help identify possible audiences for an Elder Justice presentation both within and external to your faith community. It also may help you to recognize other variables to consider as you are reaching out to your audience. Once you have identified your audience, you may find additional helpful information and resources to guide you in planning here:

http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/Training/Curricula/docs/NCEA_TM01_PlanningYourPresentation2014.pdf.

Identifying an Audience

Who is your audience? This may be the first question you ask as you begin to prepare your presentation. You may have an audience in mind already; if so, terrific! In that case, you may choose to reach out directly to a specific contact person to arrange your presentation. If the group comprising your audience is well-known to you, then you’ll understand any special interests they might have or accommodations they might need.

If you don’t have a particular audience in mind; there are many possibilities directly within or connected to your faith community! There are also many ways to connect with audiences; you could even consider presenting this material to more than one group.

- Consider your **place of worship**: what are the different opportunities for adult education meeting in or hosted by your congregation or community?
- How about **fraternal organizations** in your area? Is there an Elks Lodge, an Eagles Club, a Lions Club or a Knights of Columbus group?
- What about other **service groups** such as Jaycees, Kiwanis Club, or Rotary International?
- How about **veterans’ groups** like the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion?
- Consider **civic development groups** such as the local Chamber of Commerce;
- Or groups that come together over **particular interests** like book clubs or other discussion groups, craft clubs, or gaming;

- Or **cultural organizations** like the NAACP, La Raza, or the Finnish American Society?
- Consider groups that gather based on **shared residence**, as well. There are many adult education opportunities in congregate living environments such as assisted living facilities;
- Or consider adult day programs, who may have members interested in learning more about Elder Justice;
- Your **workplace** may support a “lunch and learn” opportunity for employees to participate in adult education;
- Or **educational partners** such as local high schools, community or private colleges, or University Extension Services may represent possible audiences.
- What other audiences can you think of?

Contacting an Audience

Once you’ve identified an audience (or audiences) for your presentation, consider who might be the best contact person to engage for assistance in coordinating your presentation. This could be:

- a clergy person or congregational president at a place of worship;
- an outreach coordinator at a civic or cultural organization;
- a friend or neighbor in fraternal or social clubs;
- a local entrepreneur or business leader;
- or a longtime resident.

Sometimes people with the greatest influence (who can be helpful when gathering an audience) are not necessarily in traditional leadership positions. Look around your community: who is engaging to and with other community members? Could this person help you gather your audience?

Once you’ve identified a contact person and are preparing to reach out to her or him, be prepared to discuss some details of the presentation. The slide set within the curriculum is designed for presentations between 40 minutes to an hour in length (depending upon how much time is devoted to discussion and questions). The slides rely on case studies contained within a handout; ideally, this handout would need to be printed ahead-of-time. The size of your audience will determine the type of space and setting you’ll need to provide.

Articulating the Need

The contact person you identify may appreciate hearing why you think a presentation on the topic of Elder Justice is important. While the slides themselves contain a discussion of that very point, here are some possible ways to respond to that question:

- Demographic changes make this emerging issue increasingly significant in our communities;
- 1 in 10 people will experience elder abuse, and prevalence increases when a person experiences cognitive impairment, such as a dementia or Alzheimer's;
- Many of our communities face specific challenges in responding to elder abuse, for example:
 - Geographic and social isolation of community members;
 - Privacy issues in tight-knit communities;
 - Economic challenges on a regional scale mean services are limited;
 - Economic stressors on a personal scale create risk factors for abuse;
 - There is a perception that “these things don’t happen here,” that “we look out for each other in this faith community;”
- There is confusion about the nature of abuse – it’s not a “family matter,” rather it is a crime;
- There are many responses to elder abuse, and resources available to victims and families. If community members have information about how to prevent and respond to abuse, our community will be safer, healthier and happier!

Addressing Resistance

What if, during the course of your initial outreach, you encounter resistance on behalf a contact person or potential audience? There are always obstacles to overcome when attempting to raise public awareness; here are some ways to respond to concerns your contact person or audience participants may have:

- Concern: Everyone is busy; people won’t have time to attend a presentation.
 - The presentation will provide very useful information in a concentrated amount of time (one hour or less).
 - Attendance is voluntary, if the information presented is not what participants are looking for, they’re under no obligation to stay.
 - The information provided in the presentation will help participants save time later by answering common questions and providing concise information about available resources.
 - Though all are busy, if the community shares an understanding of the significance of this issue, intervention for safety and health will happen more efficiently.
- Concern: Some faith communities are in low-density areas; our audience members will have to travel significant distances to attend a presentation.
 - Does your faith community offer a geographically “central” location for hosting, equalizing the time people would have to travel to attend?

- Is there a location that would allow people to accomplish other tasks, errands or objectives during a visit (for example a county seat or commercial center)?
- Is there a location that would accommodate the greatest number of participants with ease?
- Is there a way to determine who plans to attend so the location of the presentation can be responsive to the actual audience (for example the use of technology such as an online poll for dates; or a traditional telephone or mail-in R.S.V.P.)?
- Could technology facilitate broader attendance (for example slides could be distributed via e-mail with a teleconference option to provide the presentation audio; or the presentation could be given on a webinar platform)?
- Concern: People don't care about elder abuse.
 - People do care about elder abuse – there is great demand for additional information from many audiences!
 - Elder abuse affects all community members; and is massively under-reported. Just because we may not have personal knowledge or experience with abuse certainly does not mean abuse is not happening. And many community members do have personal knowledge and experience with abuse; their experience (if they choose to share it) should be acknowledged as significant.
 - Elder abuse has major impacts on the health, economic security and longevity of victims. These impacts are costly to address; and extend to communities that support victims – the costs of elder abuse are far-reaching.
 - Faith communities have unique strengths and an opportunity to develop and demonstrate innovative responses to elder abuse.
- Concern: Faith communities are increasingly diverse; how can we address multicultural audiences or culturally specific audiences with sensitivity and respect?
 - Remember that elder abuse affects people regardless of race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, language spoken, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status, and status with regard to public assistance.
 - Elder abuse has intergenerational implications; members of younger generations may find themselves in a position to intervene on behalf of a victim, or to provide support to a neighbor or community member.
 - Though these presentation materials have initially been prepared in English, a multilingual presentation could reach a broader audience. There are

additional multilingual materials available here:
http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/get_involved/awareness/materials/index.aspx

- Different cultural perspectives among audience members can bring breadth and depth to a conversation. The more diverse the audience, the more variety in possible responses!

Sharing Objectives and Creating Incentives

It can be helpful for participants to understand what goal or goals you hope to achieve in making a presentation about elder abuse. This information could also help you demonstrate the need for such a presentation. Following this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Define elder abuse and identify examples of abuse;
- Identify risk factors that may make individuals more vulnerable to victimizations;
- Identify how they can help in their own communities.

Although these materials are meant to be presented to interested and welcoming audiences, it can also be helpful to incentivize participation in some way. This can be as simple as making a presentation alongside a meal or offering food or beverage to inspire a welcoming atmosphere; or as (relatively) complex as allowing this presentation to fulfill a community education or service requirement. You can explore those possibilities with your audience contact person; she or he may have thoughts about how to entice more participation.

Evaluation

It is helpful to understand how both the presentation itself and the information provided was received by audiences. Included with the curriculum is a simple evaluation form that could be provided to participants. Consider distributing this to participants prior to the presentation (or during a break); ask them to take a moment to complete it and return it. Evaluation information can be helpful to you as a presenter, particularly if you plan to present the material more than once.

Conclusion

Thank you for your willingness to present this important material! The *Elder Justice Roadmap*¹ characterizes elder abuse as a “problem with solutions.” We know that these solutions require much broader public awareness and collaboration. By presenting this information to others, you are participating in the solution! For additional resources and information, please visit:

- The National Center on Elder Abuse: www.ncea.aoa.gov
- The Minnesota Elder Justice Center: www.elderjusticemn.org

¹ Connolly, Marie-Therese, Bonnie Brandl and Risa Breckman. *The Elder Justice Roadmap: A Stakeholder Initiative to Respond to an Emerging Health, Justice, Financial and Social Crisis*. U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015. Page 6.



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