

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR ELDER ABUSE VICTIMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

*Strengthening Our Communities &  
Prevent Elder Abuse*

**NCEA**  
National Center on Elder Abuse

**STEAP**  
INITIATIVE  
Supports + Tools for Elder Abuse Prevention

# TODAY'S PRESENTERS

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# WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CENTER ON ELDER ABUSE (NCEA)?

A national resource center dedicated to the prevention of elder mistreatment that engages and empowers older adults so that they feel capable of advocating for themselves and their communities.

Granted a permanent home at AoA/ACL in the 1992 amendments to Title II of the Older Americans Act



# OUR GOAL

To improve the national response to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation by (a) gathering, housing, disseminating current information, (b) stimulating and identifying new approaches, and (c) detecting and addressing gaps in the field.

We will be the entity others look to when they need state-of-the-art information and we will push the field forward



# WHAT WE DO

- Serve as a national authority on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation,
- Make news and resources readily available,
- Share the latest field research,
- Provide trainings to diverse audiences,
- Identify information about promising practices or interventions,
- Operate a listserv,
- Provide subject matter expertise,
- Develop and deploy a communications strategy, and
- Provide information and referrals.

# AUDIENCE POLL

- Tell us a little about what you do. How do you serve and advocate for older people?
- How many of you are hearing people allege elder abuse?
- What scenarios are you hearing about most frequently?

# WHY SHOULD YOU BE INVOLVED?

Elder Abuse is increasing at alarming rates as our population ages and is vastly underreported. We need to **travel together** to stay on track.



only  
**1** in **23**  
cases of elder abuse in the U.S. is reported



# WHO IS AT RISK?

Average age  
**78**

**67%**  
of victims are female



**50%**  
of people with  
dementia are  
victims of some  
kind of abuse

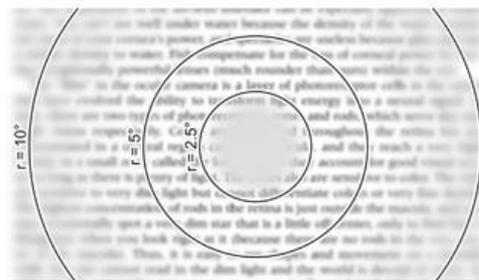
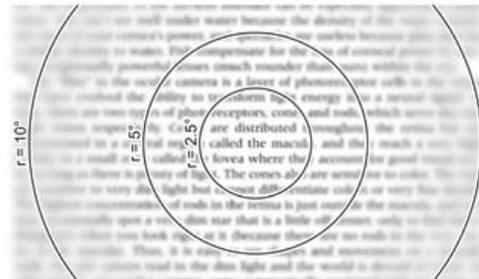
# ISOLATION: A MAJOR FACTOR IN EA

Occurs in many ways:

- Loss of visual cues
  - *Ex-Macular Degeneration*
- Loss of auditory cues
  - *Can you hear me now?*
- Limitations with Mobility
  - *Wheelchairs/walkers*
  - *Loss of drivers license*

... you can't see well under water because the density of the water neutralizes most of your cornea's power. Fish compensate for the loss of corneal power by having exceptionally powerful lenses (much rounder than ours) within the eye.

The "film" in the eye's camera is a layer of photoreceptor cells in the retina. We have evolved the ability to transform light energy into a neural signal. In the retina, there are two types of photoreceptors, cones and rods, which serve day and night vision respectively. Cones are distributed throughout the retina but are concentrated in a small region called the fovea where they reach a very high density in a small area called the fovea where they account for good visual acuity as long as there is plenty of light. The cones also are sensitive to color. The rods are sensitive to very dim light but cannot differentiate colors or very fine detail. The highest concentration of rods in the retina is just outside the macula, and you may occasionally spot a very dim star that is a little off center, only to find that it disappears when you look right at it (because there are no rods in the very center of the macula). Thus, it is easy to see shapes and movement on a moonlit walk, but one cannot read in the dim light and the world is devoid of colors. In other words, our rods come automatically equipped with the sense of



Created by David J. Marmor, MFA and Michael F. Marmor, MD © 2010 Archives of Ophthalmology

# ISOLATION AND COVID19

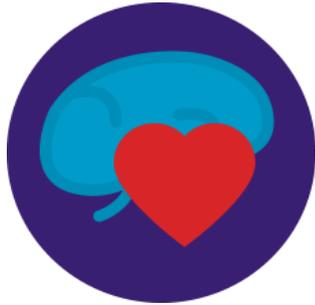
**While social distancing/quarantines/self-isolation is the new normal at the moment, we need to be prepared to assist older adults in many ways.**

- Developing safe communication pathways
  - Elder Care Locator
  - Established Friendly visitor programs
  - Prepare clear concise information for dissemination
- Reaching out to creditable resources
  - We will review helpful resources with you at the end of the presentation.

# TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE



PHYSICAL



PSYCHOLOGICAL



FINANCIAL



SEXUAL



NEGLECT

**Multiple forms of abuse can occur at once.**

# ELDER ABUSE TAKES MANY FORMS

**Elder abuse, the mistreatment or harming of an older person, is an injustice that we all need to prevent and address.**

Elder Abuse occurs in both community and institutional settings and takes many forms, including:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional/Psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Financial exploitation

***Elder Abuse is believed to be widely under-detected and under-reported.***

# HOW DOES ELDER ABUSE HAPPEN?

Elder Abuse can occur when strong social supports are not in place to keep us connected as we age.

## Isolation & Location



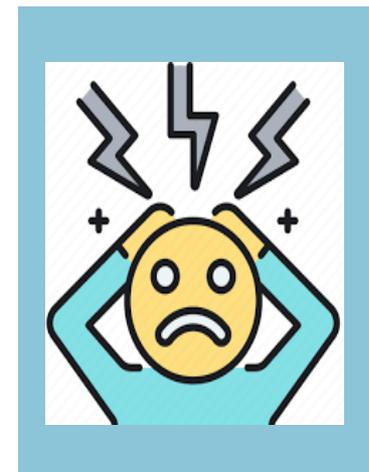
## Communication



## Drug Use



## Anxiety



**Elder Abuse can be prevented if we work together to create a stronger society that values and supports all of us as we age.**

# SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE



## Physical Signs

- Broken bones, bruises, and welts
- Untreated bed sores
- Untreated bed sores
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Sexually transmitted diseases without clear explanations
- Dirtiness, poor nutrition, or dehydration
- Poor living conditions
- Lack of medical aids [glasses, walker, teeth, hearing aid, or medications]
- Over/under medicated

# SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE



## Emotional & Behavioral Signs

- Unusual changes in behavior or sleep
- Fear or anxiety
- Isolation from friends or family
- Withdrawal from normal activities
- Sadness



## Financial Signs

- Unusual changes in a bank account or money management services
- Unusual or sudden changes in a will or other financial documents
- Fraudulent signatures on financial documents
- Unpaid bills

# OUR EXPERTS ON PHYSICAL ABUSE



ncall

**NCEA**  
National Center on Elder Abuse

- Adult Protective Services  
<http://www.napsa-now.org/>
- Domestic Violence personnel  
focused on Abuse in Later Life  
[www.ncall.org](http://www.ncall.org)
- Some trending in the medical field-  
[www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov) –research Dr.  
Laura Mosqueda

# OUR EXPERTS ON FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Federal Trade Commission  
[www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov](http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov)  
1.877.382.4357
- Internet Crime Complaint-[www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov)
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau  
<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/>



Consumer Financial  
Protection Bureau



# FINANCIAL ABUSE DEFINED

- The illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets. Examples include, but are not limited to, cashing an elderly person's checks without authorization or permission; forging an older person's signature; misusing or stealing an older person's money or possessions; coercing or deceiving an older person into signing any document (e.g., contracts or will); & the improper use of conservatorship, guardianship, or power of attorney.



# FINANCIAL ABUSE

## Signs & Symptoms:

- Sudden changes in bank account or banking practice, including an unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money by a person accompanying the elder;
- Inclusion of additional names on an elder's bank signature card;
- Unauthorized withdrawal of the elder's funds using the elder's ATM card;
- Abrupt changes in a will or other financial documents;
- Unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions;
- Substandard care being provided or bills unpaid despite the availability of adequate financial resources;
- Discovery of an elder's signature being forged for financial transactions or for the titles of his/her possessions;
- Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives claiming their rights to an elder's affairs and possessions;
- Unexplained sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family;
- The provision of services that are not necessary; and
- An elder's report of financial exploitation.

# COVID-19 AND SCAMS

- Expect scams to be on the rise
- Scammers will prey on susceptible and isolated older people
- How will they do it?:
  - Incite fear
  - Make something sound urgent
  - Make claims that they have “the answer”
  - Pressure older people into providing access to:
    - Electronic devices
    - Identifying information
    - Banking, credit or investment account information

# COVID-19 CONCERNS

## Scenario #1:

An older person receives emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or experts saying that **they** have information about the virus.



# COVID-19 CONCERNS (CONT'D)

## Pro Tip #1:

For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).



# COVID-19 CONCERNS (CONT'D)

## Scenario #2:

A person on the line claims to be calling from the local health department or hospital and exclaim that they have a miracle cure that they received special access to that hasn't been shared with the public yet. They mention it just shipped to the United States from a French Pharmaceutical Company.



# COVID-19 CONCERNS (CONT'D)

## Pro Tip #2

Ignore online offers for vaccinations. There currently are no vaccines, pills, potions, lotions, lozenges or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to treat or cure Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) — online or in stores.



**According to recent global news it is expected that vaccines may take upwards of a year to be made (in a method that they can mass produce).**

# COVID-19 CONCERNS (CONT'D)

## Scenario #3:

Volunteers send brochures in the mail and follow up with telephone calls hoping to get your attention about poverty stricken countries who are currently reporting a large volume of COVID-19+ cases.

They mention the cities are so poor that certain community members are unable to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, water, etc.



# COVID-19 CONCERNS (CONT'D)

## Pro Tip #3:

Do your homework when it comes to donations, whether through charities or crowdfunding sites. Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.



# MORE PRO TIPS TO STAYING SAFELY CONNECTED

- Do not leave the news in the background all day
  - Limit yourself to 10 minutes daily
  - Try to gather the high level key points
- Screen your calls and emails
- Get out, get the essentials, and return home
- Contact local resources:
  - Elder Care locator: 1-800-677-1116
- Don't be afraid to ask trusted loved ones and neighbors for help if it is needed
- Follow health and wellness guidelines issued by the CDC:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

# REPORTING ABUSE

Report suspected abuse in the community to the local **Adult Protective Services** agency, and report suspected abuse in a nursing home or long-term care facility to the local **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**. For serious and immediate emergencies, call 9-1-1.

**Report suspicions of abuse as soon as possible.**



**Adult Protective Services**

**<https://www.napsa-now.org/>**



**Local Law Enforcement**

**<https://www.usacops.com/>**



**Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

**<https://ltcombudsman.org/about>**

To connect to a local or state reporting number, contact the **[Eldercare Locator](http://eldercare.acl.gov)** at **[eldercare.acl.gov](http://eldercare.acl.gov)** or at 1-800-677-1116 M-F 9AM – 8PM ET.

# WHAT APS CAN DO

- Call the Police
  - Request a psychiatric hold
  - File a report of a crime
- Suggest, persuade, and bargain with the victim to get help
- Arrange for case management
- Assess needs and link to services and assist
- Victims and their families in developing individual care plans
- Recommend guardianship/conservatorship



# WHAT APS MAY NOT DO

- Enter the victim's home without permission
- Remove a person from their residence against their will
- Force a client to accept services



# WHAT LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN DO

- Respond to emergency calls
- Work with other first responders
  - paramedics
  - firefighters
- Observe, survey, and interview
- Recognize tell-tale signs of abusers
- Collect evidence to substantiate allegations
- Provide referrals to community resources





# The Elder Abuse Guide for Law Enforcement

(EAGLE)

EAGLE provides up to date elder abuse alerts, roll call videos, and webinars developed by the Department of Justice and the International Association of Chief of Police

## ACTION ITEM:

Sign up for the EAGLE newsletter and receive alerts when new information is posted to the website



[eaglehelp@usc.edu](mailto:eaglehelp@usc.edu)

[EAGLE.trea.usc.edu](http://EAGLE.trea.usc.edu)

The screenshot shows the EAGLE website interface. At the top right, there is a USC University of Southern California logo and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there are three main sections: 'First Responder Checklist' with an 'OPEN CHECKLIST' button, 'Evidence Collection Checklist' with an 'OPEN CHECKLIST' button, and 'Community Resources' with a 'SUBMIT' button. A 'Senior Scam Alerts from DOJ' section includes a 'READ MORE' button. A 'Roll Call Video Headline' section features a video player and a 'VIEW ALL' button. The footer contains logos for NCEA, Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative, USC Leonard Davis, and UC Irvine Health.

# RIGHT TO SELF- DETERMINATION

- Our clients are, by definition, independent.
- They have the right to self-determination even if their choices do not serve their best interest.



# ROLE OF THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN

As mandated by state and federal law, Ombudsmen will:

- Regularly make unannounced visits to long-term care facilities,
- Mediate and attempt to resolve resident's concerns or problems in facilities, and
- Provide unbiased placement information and referrals to long-term care facilities.



# LTC OMBUDSMAN WILL ALSO:

- Investigate allegations of abuse and neglect,
- Witness the signing of Advanced Health Care Directives in Skilled Nursing Facilities,
- Report serious facility violations to state licensing agencies, and
- Keep all complaints, communications, and investigations confidential unless resident gives permission to release.



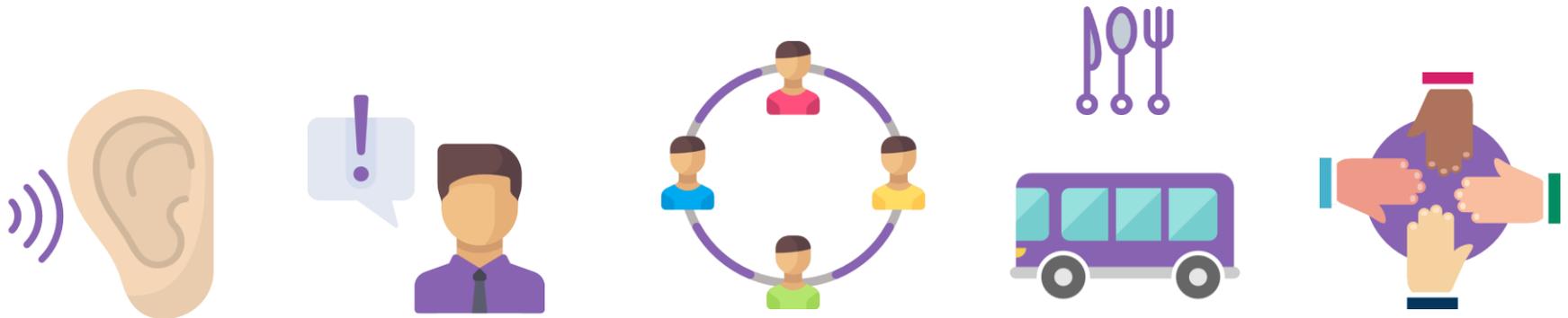
# WHY IT TAKES A TEAM?

- Cases are complex
- Multi-layered
- Require multiple experts
- Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) brings together experts in monthly meeting to discuss cases brought from APS and the LTC Ombudsman
- Not an investigatory agency



# PREVENTING ELDER ABUSE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Elder abuse is **preventable** – and everyone has a role to play. It is up to all of us to build strong supports for one another and prevent abuse before it happens.



It is up to all of us to know the signs of elder abuse so we can immediately report any suspicions of abuse occurring in the community or long-term care setting.

# WHAT IS NEEDED FOR CHANGE?

- Common definitions
- Common reporting standards
- Consistent tracking
- Recognition of the problem
  - Requires champions and leadership
- Improved training
  - Identification
  - Documentation
  - Reporting
- Funding for research



# A GLOBAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION



**WORLD ELDER ABUSE  
AWARENESS DAY**

Building Strong Support for Elders

Lifting Up Voices

# LIFTING UP THE VOICES OF OLDER SURVIVORS

The *Lifting Up the Voices* video series features older survivors.



These videos and guides elevate the resiliency of older survivors of abuse and exploitation while combating ageist assumptions about victims.



<https://www.liftingupvoices.net/>

**WE ARE ALL  
IN THIS  
TOGETHER**



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
CARRY  
ON**

# ANY QUESTIONS?



# OUR WEBSITES

- National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA):  
<https://ncea.acl.gov>
- USC Center on Elder Mistreatment (USC CEM):  
<https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/>
- Training Resources on Elder Abuse (TREA):  
<https://trea.usc.edu/>
- Elder Abuse Guide for Law Enforcement (EAGLE):  
<http://eagle.trea.usc.edu/>

# KEEP THESE RESOURCES HANDY

- Consumer Protection Resources
  - [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\)](#) - Submit a complaint of a financial product or service [online](#) or call (855)411-2372
  - [Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker](#) - Report a business or offer that sounds like an illegal scheme or fraud to warn others and help investigate
  - [Internet Crime Complaint Center \(IC3\)](#)- Accepts [online](#) Internet crime complaints
  - [Federal Trade Commission Do Not Call Registry](#) - Register to stop receiving and report unwanted calls [online](#) or call 1-888-383-1222
  - [U.S. Postal Inspection Service](#)
    - [Data & Marketing Association Registry](#) - Register to reduce unsolicited commercial
    - [Report Mail Fraud to U.S. Postal Inspection Service](#)
  - [National Elder Fraud Hotline](#)- For those who have experienced elder fraud call (833) 732-8311

# CONTACT THE NCEA

Call Us on our Information and Referral line:  
1-855-500-3537 (ELDR)

Email Us:  
[NCEA@med.usc.edu](mailto:NCEA@med.usc.edu)

