



An Introduction to Elder Abuse for Professionals:

Overview



Understanding Elder Abuse

Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Define and distinguish elder abuse and related phenomena (e.g., self-neglect and abuse in later life)
- Describe older victims, their abusers and the impact of elder abuse
- Identify strategies to respond to possible elder abuse situations

Case Example

- Bernard (age 68) lives at home. He is retired and enjoys golf and travel. His 42 year old son, David, moved in with him after losing his job and being unable to find work.
- Bernard discovered that his son had used his debit card to take \$22,000 without Bernard's knowledge.
- Bernard confronted David and demanded repayment. David threatened to kill him, knocked Bernard into a wall, and threatened to tell the rest of the family that Bernard had abused him as a child.

Case Example

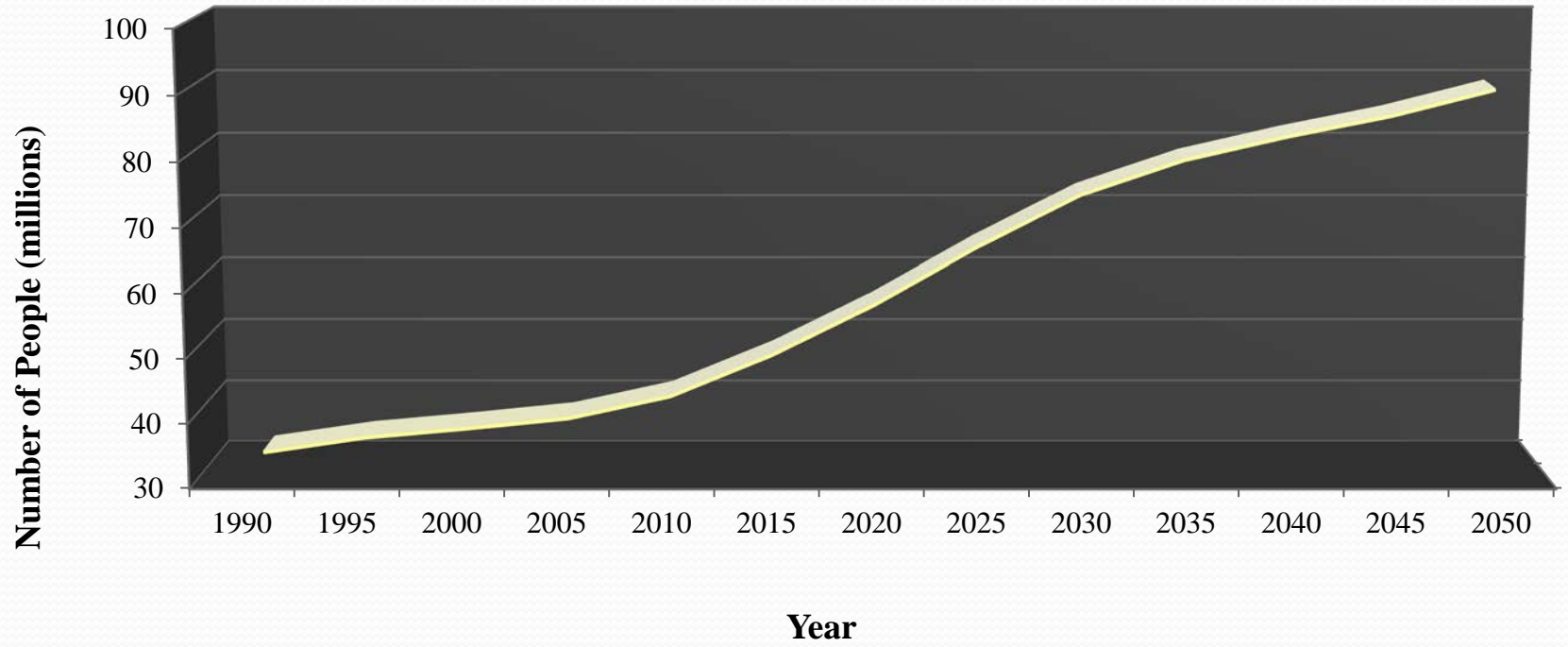
- Anna (age 75) has diabetes and moderate dementia. She lives in a skilled nursing facility.
- Staff considers her “difficult” and “demanding” so they routinely ignore her when she rings her call button.
- In the last week she has soiled herself 3 times waiting more than 20 minutes for staff to come to her room.
- Staff have called her derogatory names, hit her, and thrown her on the floor. She has pressure ulcers from being left in her own waste.

Case Example(Cont.)

- Mr. and Mrs. Khan are a devoted couple in their 80s. Mr. Khan had a stroke, uses a walker, and is easily confused. Mrs. Khan accompanies him to the bank to get cash for the week.
- Two young adults followed the Khans from the bank to their apartment building. As the Khans used their key to enter the building, the two men attacked them, knocked them down and robbed them.



U.S. POPULATION AGE 65 AND OLDER IS ON THE RISE 1990-2050



Source:
U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

Elder Abuse: Under the Radar

**For every one case of
elder abuse that comes
to the attention of a
responsible entity. . .**

1

**Another twenty three
cases never come to
light.**

23

- Source: NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study; Weill Cornell Medical College, NYC Department for the Aging; Lifespan; (2011) Slide courtesy of Life Long Justice




Elder Abuse

- Physical, sexual or psychological 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.

Cite: DOJ/HSS Elder Justice Roadmap Project

Related Phenomena

- **Abuse in Later Life** (term often used by domestic violence and sexual assault advocates – 50+)
- **Abuse of vulnerable adults** (some statutes/APS – adults aged 18+)
- **All crimes against persons age 60 and older** (criminal justice)
- **Self-neglect**



Consider adding state, tribal, or territorial statutes relating to elder abuse. These may be found in criminal law, protective services, or other, statutes.

Consider inserting elder abuse reporting laws in the Response section. The placeholder slide is *.



***Multiple forms
of elder abuse often
occur at the same time***

Indicators of Elder Abuse

If you want to add indicators for various forms of elder abuse to this slide set, please refer to the other NCEA specific slide sets for indicators for each form of abuse and related phenomenon (e.g., financial exploitation, self-neglect)

Older Victims

- **Diverse:** All races, religions, ethnicities, cultures and socio-economic groups
- **Gender:** Female and male
- **Social status:** Often socially isolated

Older Victims(Cont.)

- **Health status:** Range from active and healthy to needing 24-hour care
- **Living Arrangements:** in private homes, congregate living arrangements, and facilities, etc.
- **Cognitive status:** Some victims have some cognitive and memory impairment

Abusers

Most older victims are abused by someone they know and trust or would expect to trust.

- Family members
- Spouses or partners
- Caregivers (family, paid staff or volunteers)
- Persons in positions of trust/authority

Some target older adults for their age and perceived or real frailty

- Strangers



Victims Living in Facilities are Abused By:

- Caregivers and other facility staff and volunteers
- Other residents
- Spouses and partners
- Family members
- Strangers

Effects of Elder Abuse on Victims

- **Mortality:** Rates than non-abused older people, up to 300% higher (Lachs, et al, 1998; National Academies, 2010)
- **Distress:** Significantly higher levels of psychological distress and lower perceived self-efficacy than other older adults (Comijs, et al, 1999; Dong 2005)
- **Health:** Bone or joint problems, digestive problems, depression or anxiety, chronic pain, high blood pressure, and heart problems (Dyer, et al, 2000; Stein & Barret-Connor, 2000)

Complex Dynamics

- No single dynamic explains elder abuse
- “Depending on the victim-offender relationship and the type of elder abuse, elder abuse may resemble domestic violence, child abuse, or fraud or the phenomenon can stand on its own with the complexity of the relationships, individual vulnerabilities, and contexts in which it occurs.”
(Amendola, et al, 2010)

Victims Want the Abuse to End

But often maintain a relationship with or protect the abuser because:

- Fear (of retaliation, death, facility placement)
- Love/care about the abuser (especially an adult child)
- Economic reasons
- Health concerns

Response to Elder Abuse



Victim Safety

All responses and interventions must consider and prioritize victim safety.



What You Can Do

- **Recognize the Signs of Elder Abuse**
- **Ask**
- **Report or Refer**

What You Can Do(Cont.)

- Listen to older adults and others who may tell you about suspicions of abuse
- Do not discount an older adult's claim simply because of a cognitive impairment
- Look for elder abuse indicators and behavior changes
- Ask questions even if you do not suspect abuse to encourage disclosures



If The Older Adult Can Answer Questions, Consider Asking(Cont.)

- Do you feel safe? Is anyone hurting you or scaring you?
- Is anyone asking you to do things that you do not understand or that make you uncomfortable?
- Has anyone taken things that belong to you without asking or without your approval?
- Do you rely on anyone else for help? What kind of help? Does that person ever fail to help you meet your needs?

*Ask privately in an area where you will not be overheard



If The Older Adult Can Answer Questions, Consider Asking

- Do you regularly see friends and family? When is the last time you saw them?
- Do friends and family visit you? How long has it been since they visited?
- Are you concerned about your finances?
- Are you afraid of anyone in your life?

*Ask privately in an area where you will not be overheard




Report - Refer

REPORT


- 911 or law enforcement (life threatening or possible crime)
- Adult Protective Services
- Licensing board (if abuse occurs in a facility)

REFER

- Domestic violence or sexual assault organization
- Aging network agency
- Ombudsman (if abuse is in a facility)



Consider Inserting Slides
Describing the Local
Jurisdiction's Elder Abuse/
Vulnerable Adult Reporting Law



Consider adding local resources and programs. (See “*A Guide to Planning Your Elder Abuse Presentation*” for more information.)



Additional Resources

National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)

www.ncea.aoa.gov

**National Adult Protective Services Resource Center
(NAPSRC)**

www.apsnetwork.org

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-term Care

www.theconsumervoic.org

National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center

<http://www.ltcombudsman.org/>



Additional Resources(Cont.)

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life

www.ncall.us

American Bar Association, Commission on Law and Aging

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/law_aging/publications.html

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE

National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-HOPE



Stand for Dignity and Respect

- **Speak** out for justice
- **Collaborate** with other agencies and disciplines
- **Educate** the public, other professionals and policy makers
- **Initiate** changes in policy and protocols
- **Promote** resources for victim services

For more information, visit us!

ncea.aoa.gov

Also on Facebook, Twitter,
YouTube

centeronelderabuse.org

Also on Facebook, YouTube



For additional resources, visit www.ncea.aoa.gov



This slide set was created for the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life for the National Center on Elder Abuse and is supported in part by a grant (No. 90AB0002/01) from the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Grantees carrying out projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Therefore, points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official Administration on Aging or DHHS policy.”