

NCEA National Center on Elder Abuse

Summary of Unpublished Research

The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

The Older Americans Act requires that the National Center on Elder Abuse, “annually compile, publish and disseminate a summary of recently conducted research on elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.” The University of Delaware completes this task for the Center by annually summarizing *published works* in the field. However, in an effort to expand the availability of useful information, the Center also seeks to identify and share information about works which are not likely to be published in scholarly literature but which, nevertheless, contribute to the knowledge base of the field. The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA) has undertaken the task of compiling information about these unpublished works as one of its Center tasks.

For the purposes of this task the following definition has been developed:

Unpublished research includes documents developed by governments, communities, voluntary organizations, educational institutions or other entities that provide information on the problem of elder abuse or interventions to address it, which may be useful to others working in this field.

These documents are characterized by a usual intent to inform constituent groups. The projects and resultant documents are not principally developed or intended for scholarly publication. This collection would include works such as: needs assessments, program evaluations, and policy analyses, forecasts, planning recommendations, discussion papers and statistical reports.

In developing this summary, NCPEA solicited works of the types noted above and which had commenced no earlier than 2000. The most appropriate works were selected for inclusion in this summary. The following information is provided about each project:

- Author and contact information
- Dates of study
- Project title/name

- Funding source
- Summary description/method
- What was learned/outcomes/findings
- Potential benefit to others
- Plans for future efforts/follow up
- Barriers or potential problems
- Replication advice

Included in this report:

Summaries included in this report address:

- Tracking data on elder crimes in Oregon;
- Forecasting the need for guardians in Cuyahoga, County, Ohio;
- Evaluation of an elder abuse education project in DuPage County, Illinois;
- The impact of a victim counseling program in San Francisco, California.

To Submit Study Descriptions

The Center is interested to learn about additional studies underway that would be appropriate for inclusion in subsequent summaries. For more information, please contact:

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Researcher: Joyce DeMonnin, MPH
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Study Period: Begun in 2000, study is ongoing
Project Title: Elder Safe Program (Research component)

Summary Description:

Elder Safe is a program that provides public awareness, senior safety training, law enforcement and victim assistance training and works with elder abuse multidisciplinary team members to identify policy issues. The program collects and analyzes a great deal of information on elder crimes and elder's interface with the criminal justice system. Data is collected from police reports on each case of elder crime including information about the senior and the accused perpetrator. Elder Safe also tracks data related to follow up with widows/widowers--individuals who are at risk for becoming elder abuse victims; tracking "wanderers," people with dementia who wander away from home; tracking data about seniors who come into contact with the criminal justice system for non-crime related purposes i.e., 'well-being' checks done by law enforcement to promote elder safety; and information on senior suicide.

Research Component

Medicaid Screening/Referral Project

One aspect of the research component relates to work with Washington County Disability, Aging and Veterans Services(DAVS). In March 2003, Elder Safe began referring elder crime victims to Medicaid screeners. Over 300 seniors have been referred to DAVS. This approach is unique in the area and may be the first time a law enforcement agency has collaborated with an Area Agency on Aging to identify potentially Medicaid eligible seniors. This new link between Elder Safe and DAVS will ensure that seniors who are entitled to services, but who had not applied on their own, will not fall through the community's safety net. Pending a review of the data collected on the Elder Safe-DAVS pilot referral system, similar

collaboration may be encouraged among other AAAs and law enforcement partners. One of the surprising outcomes of the pilot survey was the willingness of victims to share information about income and disabilities. Data in this area is lacking and could shed some light on risk factors.

Victim Satisfaction Survey

Another aspect of the Research Component is the regular collection, analysis and sharing of information about conditions and risks within the community in order to continually improve victim services and inform the community at large. Elder Safe piloted a victim satisfaction survey in 2003. Among the interesting findings: the relationship between the victim and his/her law enforcement officer tended to make the biggest difference in the individual's perception of the criminal justice system and the subsequent services that were offered. The area of least satisfaction was victims' not being told about the outcome of their cases. Often, when cases are listed as unfounded or suspended, the officer does not have time to call back each victim and explain the status of the case. Elder Safe offers follow up with all victims of crime, whether or not their cases are prosecuted. About 80% of victims do not go to court or deal with any aspect of the criminal justice system other than law enforcement and their victim advocate.

Barriers or potential problems: Quality of data makes a major difference in the reliability of the results.

Plans for future efforts/follow up: In 2004, the Victim Satisfaction Survey was formalized and amended to include more risk factor information, as well as other information related to the criminal justice system.

Potential benefit to others: The information acquired through the Elder Safe Program about elder crime victims, suspects, and risk factors for abuse was used and compared to provide law enforcement, crime prevention, and lawmakers a better understanding of elder abuse in the criminal context.

Replication advice: The survey results informed several program practices. For example, every victim receives information about Elder Safe, who their victim advocate will be and Oregon's Crime Victim's Rights. Telephone follow-up is provided to offer whatever services may be appropriate. Law enforcement explains the disposition of the case to the victim. This is particularly important for cases that are "suspended." In these cases, an officer will not be in contact with the victim unless more information, evidence or a suspect is identified. Assuring that victims are aware of this procedure helps to close the loop.

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Funding Source: The Woodruff Foundation

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Study Period: January - June 2004

Project Titles:

- Projection of the Need for Indigent Guardianships in Cuyahoga County, 2004-2008
- Study of Select Best Practices in Guardianship Services

Summary Description/Methods:

Between 1993 and 2003, Adult Guardianship Services (AGS), a program of Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries, served a total of 792 unduplicated wards in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, (Cleveland is the central city) with 711 of them new guardianships and 479, deaths, resignations, or terminations. Using AGS' data from this eleven year period, a time series analysis was conducted to forecast the number of guardians for the period 2004-2008.

In addition a study was conducted to explore guardianship programming nationwide with respect to best practices in the following areas: revenue sources, advocacy for funding, caseload size, supplemental services, and general operations. The focus of investigation was on those programs which: (1) target indigent persons as clients, and (2) operate as either nonprofit organizations or components of nonprofit organizations. Where appropriate, other programs were considered as well. In addition, some attempt was made to insure geographic diversity among the programs examined. Two techniques were used: a literature search and key informant telephone interviews.

Outcomes/Findings:

The time series analysis projected an increase from an average of 287 wards per day in 2003; a range from 319 to 403 (mid-point: 361) in 2004; and a range from 602 to 1,059 (mid-point: 830) in 2008. Based on the projections, the number of guardians needed will triple by 2008 (from 8 up to 24) if the same caseload ratio of 1:35 staff is used; and increase to 28 if the caseload ratio is lowered to 1:30. The cost of staff/volunteer guardians is projected to increase from \$410,360 in 2003 to \$1.4 million in 2008 at the 1:35 caseload ratio, and to \$1.7 million at the 1:30 caseload ratio. In addition to the issues with increased expenses, there are major revenue implications. Assuming no increases in revenues, there is a projected deficit of \$116,418 in 2004 that grows to \$1.3 million in 2008.

With respect to best practices study:

Revenue Sources: While programs across the country use many sources of revenue, the best practice research findings were mixed: Some believed that public dollars represented the best revenue sources because they tended to be larger and more stable. Others emphasized the importance of diversification of revenue sources.

Advocacy: National experts and agency representatives interviewed contend that there are only two ways to obtain state revenues for guardianship services: lobbying and public interest law litigation.

Caseload size: no larger than 1:30 and preferably 1:20.

Supplemental services: The literature and most national experts were reluctant to suggest any supplemental services for guardianship programs for fear of diluting the efforts required to fulfill the guardianship service and the potential of coming to regard guardianship as simply another social service instead of substitute decision-making.

Barriers or potential problems:

Quality of data makes a major difference in the reliability of the results.

Plans for future efforts/follow up:

Adult Guardianship Services has already used the study to raise funds for the service. There may be other studies in the future.

Potential benefit to others:

The methodology for projecting need may be helpful to other agencies that provide guardianship services to indigent adults who want to plan for the future

in terms of number of guardians and the amount of funding that will be needed. This information can be the basis of fund raising efforts. While other studies are forthcoming, lacking is information that would help agencies that operate indigent guardianship services determine their future directions. Also lacking is information on promising practices. Typically services have not been evaluated. Compiled practices, which are rare, have not been subjected to systematic review. There are even major gaps in knowledge about guardianship services among prominent scholars in the field. Given these limitations and building on what is available, this study may be useful to other service providers.

Replication advice:

Ensure that there is a solid data information system about wards for projecting need.

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Funding Source: Administration on Aging

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Study Period: April 2004 – November 2004

Project Title: Elder Abuse Education Project Evaluation Plan

Summary Description/Methods:

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Elder Abuse Education Project. The study plan consisted of four elements: the assessment of the effort/outputs, quality, outcomes, and impact of the Elder Abuse Education Project.

Quantitative data was collected on the number of trainings conducted and number of participants. Satisfaction data was collected from participants through pre- and post-training session surveys of all participants. A three- month follow

up-survey was mailed to training participants and a survey of Protective Services staff was administered. Additionally, comparative data were gathered on the number of abuse cases reported during this grant period compared to that of the previous year. Overall, 37 training sessions were conducted from February 25, 2003 to February 4, 2004. A total of 744 persons attended these training sessions. 52% of those trained (n = 384) responded to a survey question inquiring about their professional background. Quality was measured by asking respondents how satisfied they were with the training, the resource packet, and whether the training met their needs.

Outcomes/Findings:

The outcome of this project was to increase the knowledge of providers with regard to elder abuse. Specifically, increases were anticipated in trainees' knowledge about the most frequent type of abuse, primary cause, signs and symptoms, the role of protective services, the role of the reporter, and where to report elder abuse. According to this study, 97% of respondents were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the training; 94% of respondents were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the resource packet; and 94% also said the session affirmatively met their training needs.

Barriers or potential problems: The evaluation of data was impeded by the fact that pre- and post- surveys were not conducted at 5 of the 37 training sessions either because the training sessions were too short and not enough time was allotted for evaluation; or because of the size of the training sessions.

Plans for future efforts/follow up: Long term impact of the training program was measured in several ways. At the completion of each training session, respondents were asked if they planned to make an immediate referral to protective services as a result of the training they received. Data on the number and type of elder abuse reports made to DuPage County Senior Services was also collected. Three-month follow-up surveys were mailed to those training participants who agreed to be contacted. Surveys were also given to 21 key staff at DuPage County Senior Services to determine if they observed increased collaboration, communication, and cooperation with providers.

Potential benefit to others: It was beyond the scope of this study and, at the time of this summary, unclear as to whether the training program had an impact on the numbers of elder abuse reports. It may be that the long-term impact of the training effort has not been fully realized yet. Continued tracking of elder abuse

reports, and comparisons with previous years and other geographic areas may provide a better analysis of the long term impact of training on either the prevention, or the reporting of elder abuse.

Replication advice: Longer training sessions allowed time to include the use of additional audio-visual aids, as well as an interactive experience with the assessment tools. Not surprisingly, the longer training session received the highest scores in the “very satisfied” categories for both the training and resource packet.

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Funding Source: Office of Criminal Justice Planning and the National Center on Elder Abuse

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Study Period: 1998 – Present. The evaluation is ongoing

Project Title: Evaluation of Institute on Aging’s Elder Abuse Counseling Program

Summary Description/Methods:

The purpose of this study is the collection of basic demographic data to characterize the client population and also to examine the impact of the Institute’s counseling program. The following variables are examined: mental health status (e.g., symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder); behavior (e.g., self-isolating behavior, alcohol consumption); o-morbidities (e.g., hypertension, poor nutritional status); risk status (e.g., can abuser access the home? Is a restraining order in place?); and client’s satisfaction with the counseling program.

This study is comprised of a two-phase process. In Phase 1, counseling program staff worked with the Institute on Aging's Research Center to design a survey instrument that was then mailed to all past and current clients (n=49). This self-report instrument explored clients' satisfaction with the counseling services, assessed current health and psychological status and the impact of the counseling program on the four above-mentioned variables (i.e., mental health status, behavior, co-morbidities, and risk status). In Phase 2, a chart review of all past and current case files (n=49) was undertaken to assess the counselor's perception of the client's status on the variables. The evaluation protocol and survey were approved by the University of California, San Francisco Committee on Human Research prior to the collection of any data or chart reviews. Client anonymity and confidentiality were maintained at all times by ensuring that responses to the survey were numerically coded and not associated with any identifying information. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed to characterize the client population and evaluate the impact of the counseling program on the key variables.

Outcomes/Findings:

Of the 49 surveys mailed to clients, 18 were returned completed and 5 were returned because of incorrect mailing addresses. This produced a valid return rate of 44%.

In this evaluation, both the clients who participated in the Elder Abuse Counseling Program and the counselor were asked to assess the impact of program participation on mental health status, behavior, co-morbidities, and risk status. Data analyses revealed significant improvements in all areas that were assessed. In addition, client satisfaction was high for both individual and group counseling sessions. These results suggest that an intervention program involving counseling for elder abuse victims can bring about positive results.

Barriers or potential problems: While this evaluation has a number of limitations, including small sample size and retrospective data analysis, the results are striking. In addition, the sample was extraordinarily ethnically diverse with over half being non-Caucasian.

Plans for future efforts/follow up: The Institute on Aging's Elder Abuse Counseling Program received many referrals and maintains a waiting list.

Potential benefit to others: Adult Protective Services, and other agencies working with elder abuse victims, had identified a need for psychotherapy in this population. Elder Abuse victims are almost always emotionally devastated by abuse, especially since the abuser is typically someone they believed they could trust. They feel ashamed, embarrassed, depressed, and anxious and may even manifest symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder. Individual and/or group therapy helps clients deal with these feelings, grieve the loss of a trusted relationship, and create boundaries and safe behaviors for the future.

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) serves as a national resource for elder rights advocates, law enforcement and legal professionals, health care professionals, public policy leaders, researchers, educators, and concerned citizens. It is the mission of NCEA to promote understanding, knowledge sharing, and action on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The NCEA is administered under the auspices of the National Association of State Units on Aging.

NCEA Partners

- National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA), Lead Partner
- American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Law and Aging
- Clearinghouse on Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly (CANE) at the University of Delaware
- National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)
- National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA)

Major funding support for the National Center on Elder Abuse comes from the U.S. Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services.
Grant No. 90-AM-2792

The ideas and opinions expressed in this document are solely of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Administration on Aging

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March, 2005