

## World Elder Abuse Awareness Day June 15, 2020

### Statewide Problem

- Elder abuse is a preventable social problem that is impacting many of New York State's most vulnerable individuals.
- 4.2 million New York State residents are over the age of 60; this is 21 percent of the total statewide population of 19.7 million.
- Elder abuse can include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; financial exploitation; and neglect (including self-neglect).
- Elder abuse is found in all communities and is not limited to individuals of any race, ethnic or cultural background, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation.
- Elder abuse is often hidden and unreported; statewide, for every reported case of elder abuse, 23.5 cases go unreported.<sup>1</sup>
- Financial exploitation is the most common form of elder abuse, being almost twice as common as the second most common form of abuse, physical abuse; statewide, for every reported case of financial exploitation, 43.9 cases go unreported.<sup>2</sup>
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other neuro-cognitive impairments are at a greater risk of elder abuse. Informal caregivers and family/friends are most often the perpetrators.
- The statewide impact of financial exploitation has been estimated to range from \$352 million to \$1.5 billion annually; this includes the costs to victims, service agencies, and public benefit programs.<sup>3</sup>
- Older adults who are socially isolated are at increased risk for elder abuse.
  - This risk factor has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crisis, as many adults have socially isolated, reports of elder abuse have increased. Many older adults are forced to isolate with abusers and there has been an increase in financial scams targeting older adults.<sup>4</sup>

### Statewide Solutions

- Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, New York State has taken several actions to combat elder abuse.
- Leadership:
  - In 2017 Governor Cuomo announced in his State of the State address that financial exploitation of seniors is a national issue.
  - He declared that deterring unlawful actions against older New Yorkers and putting an end to senior financial abuse would be a top priority of his administration.

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<sup>1</sup> Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc., Weill Cornell Medical Center of Cornell University, and New York City Department for the Aging. *Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study*. May 2011, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/reports/Under%20the%20Radar%2005%2012%2011%20final%20report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Lifespan, Weill Cornell, and New York City.

<sup>3</sup> Huang Y., Lawitz A., *The New York State Cost of Financial Exploitation Study*. June 16, 2016, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/reports/Cost%20of%20Financial%20Exploitation%20Study%20FINAL%20May%202016.pdf>. The *Cost of Financial Exploitation Study* estimate includes costs to victims, service agencies, and public benefits.

<sup>4</sup> Han S., Mosqueda L. Elder Abuse in the COVID-19 Era. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* April 20, 2020, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.16496>; Makaroun, L., Bachrach R., Rosland A. Elder Abuse in the time of COVID-19 – Increased Risks for Older Adults and Their Caregivers. *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. May 19, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7234937/#bib0004>.

- Education and Outreach:
  - The Elder Abuse Education and Outreach Program (EAEOP) provides education and outreach to the public and professionals, including older persons and their families and caregivers.
  - EAEOP includes grants to establish, maintain, or expand education, training, and outreach programs, funding for the Upstate Elder Abuse Center at Lifespan, and funding for the New York State Coalition on Elder Abuse.
  - The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) administers EAEOP via Monroe County and Lifespan of Greater Rochester.
- Elder Abuse Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams:
  - Elder Abuse Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams (E-MDTs) enable cross-systems collaboration to address the complex needs of older adults who are victims of abuse.
  - E-MDT members include, but are not limited to, Adult Protective Services, aging services, health and human services, and law enforcement. The enhancement comes with access to forensic accountants, geriatric mental health professionals, and community legal services.
  - E-MDTs are operational in 39 counties, serving 85 percent of the older adults in New York State.
  - The E-MDT model was piloted in New York State from 2012 to 2016; in 2017, the Office of Victim Services and NYSOFA partnered to establish, jointly fund, and implement the OVS/VOCA Elder Abuse Interventions and E-MDT Initiative.
  - During the COVID-19 public health crisis, E-MDTs have continued to meet virtually, ensuring continued interventions in elder abuse cases and protections New York's older adults during a time when many other programs have been forced to pause.
  - The E-MDT Initiative is coordinated statewide by Lifespan of Greater Rochester.
- Screenings in Health Care Settings:
  - NYSOFA, the Department of Health, medical experts, and other stakeholders have developed and piloted a tip sheet to assist health care providers in screening for signs of elder abuse.
  - This effort resulted from the Governor's enactment of Chapter Law 328 of the Laws of 2017.

## **WEADD**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) was launched on June 15, 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations (UN). World Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic circumstances affecting elder abuse and neglect.

## **Future Directions**

NYSOFA will continue to use a collaborative approach to problem solving to overcome obstacles and plan for the future. We will continue to seek mechanisms to improve care for elder abuse victims and for funding the wrap-around supports to organizations who provide elder abuse technical assistance, innovative best practices, multidisciplinary training, and policy development, both locally and nationally.