

ELDER CAREGIVING IN INDIAN COUNTRY

This resource is to provide information for caregivers in Indian Country to recognize, prevent, and intervene in elder abuse and neglect cases.

Recognizing Warnings

Types of elder abuse and neglect include:

- Physical
- Emotional or psychological
- Sexual
- Financial or material exploitation
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Abandonment¹
- Spiritual Abuse²

Warning signs for caregivers:

- Pain that is “different”
- Sudden change in function or mobility
- Unusual weight loss
- Unexplainable or hidden bruising or injuries
- Unusual bleeding of any kind
- Change in overall mood or demeanor
- Bills not paid or utilities turned off
- Significant changes in elder’s finances¹

***IMPORTANT NOTE:**

When Native American older adults are asked if they have been abused or neglected, they indicate that they have not. When the term “disrespect” was used instead of abuse or neglect, they reported incidents that would be classified as abuse or neglect. When Native American women were asked about sexual abuse, no abuse was admitted, but when the term “bothered” was used, descriptions of rape and sexual exploitation were detailed.³

Why elders are at a greater risk?

- The projected increase of elder population, limited caregiving services, and supports creates an increased risk of elder abuse and neglect.
- It is estimated that by 2030 persons age 65 and older will make up 19% of the population.
- There is extremely limited long-term services and supports in place for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian older adults to age in place within their own homes.
- The projected increase of the elder population and limited caregiving services and supports creates the potential for increased risk for elder abuse and neglect.⁴

Supporting Elders In “Day-to-Day” Activities

- Caregivers make it possible for elders to age in place and are the eyes, ears, and voice for helping elders (NRCNAA, 2015).
 - Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) are skills that elders have to do things like eat, walk, dress, wash, toilet, get out of bed, etc.
 - Instrumental ADLs are tasks elders need to live in a community such as praying or smudging, cooking, shopping, etc.
 - If anyone inflicts pain upon an elder while performing any of these activities or purposely denies access to these activities, this is elder abuse.⁴

Caregivers: Self-Care Check

- It is essential to implement self-care measures when feeling stressed or burnt out.
- Ways to manage stress include asking for support, deep breathing, self-talk, mindfulness, join a caregiver support group, etc.
- Prioritizing important needs such as social, financial, spiritual, etc., are also important when practicing self-care.

PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ELDERS AND CAREGIVERS

Title VI Program of the Older Americans Act

- Title VI provides federal funding for elderly nutrition, supportive, and caregiving supportive services.
- Title VI grantees are given the opportunity to plan, develop and implement family caregiver support for non-paid family members caring for the elderly.

Community Health Representatives Program

- Provides quality outreach health care and public health services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives.
- Community Health Representatives (CHR) educate family members about this elder care, safety issues in the home, transportation, health education for elders and family members, and re-assessing and evaluating outcomes of elder referrals.⁴

Tribal Elder Protection Teams or Multidisciplinary Team

- A Tribal Elder Protect Team (EPT) is a group of professionals, the elder, family members, and community workers from many disciplines that provides comprehensive assessment and consultation in addressing elder abuse concerns.
- EPTs were created as a way of preventing and intervening in elder abuse in Indian Country.

Native Elder Caregiving Curriculum

- Elders prefer to remain in their own home and community settings, that is, they prefer to age in place.
- For caregivers wanting information and resources about best practices of Native elder caregiving, refer to the Native Elder Caregiving Curriculum www.nrcnaa.org/native-elder-caregiver-curriculum

Reporting Elder Abuse and Neglect

- Some tribes have adopted an elder abuse code or ordinance to protect tribal elders from abuse and neglect. Tribal elder abuse programs are limited, and little incidence data exists.
 - If you suspect elder abuse or neglect, report it to your state or tribal APS office or local police department.
 - If you need help locating a number to call to report elder abuse please visit: <https://www.nijii.org/hotlines>.
- Reasons elders hesitate to report
 - Fear of retaliation by abuser or abuser's family
 - Fear that no one else will take care of them
 - Shame of being abused
 - Self-blame
- Mandatory Reporters are required by law to report suspected elder abuse and neglect.
- Common mandatory reporters include (but not limited to):
 - Health Practitioners
 - County Welfare Departments
 - Employees of Law Enforcement Agencies
 - Employees of Fire Departments
 - Teachers
 - Clergy Members
 - Bankers
 - Tribal Council Members

REFERENCES

1. National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA). Frequently asked questions. What is Elder abuse? Retrieved from <https://ncea.acl.gov/FAQ.aspx>
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3. Baker-Demaray, T. B. (2005). Perceptions of Eder Abuse Among Native American Seniors. (Masters Thesis, University of North Dakota)
4. National Resource Center for Native American Aging (NRCNAA). (2015). Native Elder Caregiver Curriculum (NECC), 2nd Edition. Center for Rural Health, School of Medicine & Health Sciences, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

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The NIEJI project has been retired, but they have granted NIJII permission to share materials.
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