WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY **OUTREACH GUIDE**

Monday, June 15, 2015

How your organization can generate awareness and foster action to end elder abuse – one person at a time.

INTRODUCTION

Every year an estimated 5 million, or 1 in 10, older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. And that's only part of the picture: Experts believe that for every case of elder abuse or neglect reported, as many as 23.5 cases go unreported.

The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations (UN) launched the first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) on June 15, 2006 in an effort to unite communities around the world in raising awareness about elder abuse. WEAAD is in support of the UN's International Plan of Action acknowledging the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue. WEAAD serves as a call-to-action for individuals, organizations, and communities to raise awareness about abuse, neglect, and exploitation of elders.

The Administration on Aging (AoA), an agency of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), is sponsoring the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Tool Kit to encourage national, state, and local organizations to raise awareness about elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation and to empower individuals in your community to get involved and take action.

Community organizations, places of worship, and small businesses including banks, pharmacies, and grocery stores, as well as senior centers and community centers, are on the frontline when it comes to elder abuse prevention. Your staff and members of your organization encounter older adults on a daily basis and are in a position to recognize and intervene in instances of elder abuse, as well as educate the community about this problem. Everyone can act to protect seniors.

Keep in mind that other organizations in your community may also be participating in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, so reach out to your community partners to see if there are opportunities to work together to raise awareness about elder abuse.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Your organization is in a position to protect elders by raising awareness about abuse and empowering individuals to take action. No matter what format you choose, this guide will help you plan and implement a successful World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event. This guide is part of a larger **Tool Kit** that can be found at **www.acl.gov/weaad**.

STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

Define the goal of your event. The first step in planning a successful event is determining the goal. As someone who works on elder issues or provides direct service to elders in your community, you probably have a wealth of experience that you can draw on to inform your goal and shape your event. Use your direct experience as inspiration this World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Some examples of event goals are listed below—but please don't let these examples limit you.

- Recognize adult protective services professionals and law enforcement officers who are working to protect seniors in your community
- Educate your community about the role everyone can play in preventing elder abuse
- Promote respect and dignity for older adults
- Provide a night of respite to caregivers
- Explain legislative and programmatic changes that were authorized under the Elder Justice Act
- Brainstorm with policymakers in your community about policies and programs you would like to implement to help prevent elder abuse

Define your audience. Deciding on the event's goal will help you to define and reach the right audience who will contribute to, and benefit from, and participate in the event.

Develop your theme. We encourage you to use the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day theme, "Stop Elder Abuse: Take The Roadmap Challenge." The color is purple and we encourage you to wear and distribute purple awareness ribbons.

Decide on a format. We've included many examples of types of events to help you commemorate WEAAD. See the next section, "Picking a Format" for details.

Scheduling. When is the best time to hold your event? Consider the potential audience members' schedules and the overall community calendar before setting a date for your event. There are several things to keep in mind.

- Are the sites you prefer available?
- If it is an outdoor event, can you rely on good weather?
- Will your audience be able to attend? In general, avoid planning events during business hours unless your event is a brainstorming session or meeting. Avoid conflicting with major holiday or community athletics events, dances, or festivals unless you are developing a joint event.
- Do you have enough time to publicize the event, plan the agenda, and obtain an event permit if necessary? Events held outdoors and on public lands may require a permit from the local parks or police department, which can take up to four weeks to approve.

Choose the venue. Select a site that is easily accessible to your audience: located near your main audiences' homes, convenient to public transit, with ample parking, and in an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant facility.

Make sure the site is large enough to accommodate everyone, and consult with the facility's administrator to be sure it is equipped with everything that you need. The administrator should be able to help you obtain amenities such as a public-address system or seating.

Consider the goals and tone of your event and make sure it is aligned with the venue. For example, if you hope to have a highly interactive event with a lot of movement and noise, you probably should not host it at a community library. However, if you hope to have a quiet discussion about how to limit risk factors for elder abuse or make services more accessible to older adults in your community, a conference room in your local library may be ideal.

Set the agenda. Decide on the planned sequence of activities that will help you accomplish your event goals. In what order should events occur? When can your audience expect to hear a special speaker or participate in a special activity? Having a well-defined roadmap for the day with built in flexibility for the unexpected will serve you well.

What Will You Need? Consider the goal and format of your event to determine what you will need to pull off a successful event. Communicate with the venue administrator to make sure you have what you need. Here are some items that are often overlooked:

- Purple awareness ribbons
- AV equipment including a computer, speakers, and projector
- Refreshments
- Public-address system, such as a podium microphone and sound equipment
- Adequate seating
- Writing implements
- Featured speakers or entertainers
- Decorations
- Candles (for candlelight vigil)
- Transportation for event participants
- Event insurance in case of an injury at the event
- A rain plan (if you intend to hold your event outdoors)

Develop an outreach plan. Identify potential partners and platforms to help raise awareness about your event.

- *Connect with others.* If you have not already done so, get in touch with the program director at your local Area Agency on Aging and county Adult Protective Services and ask them to partner with you, participate in, or help publicize your event.

  Connect with your local elder justice coalition or multidisciplinary team. These teams can provide a great networking opportunity and allow you to connect with like-minded individuals who serve elders. It is a great place to outreach for your event as well as finding partners and participants.

  Network with senior service providers. Are they also planning a WEAAD event? Can you pool resources and co-sponsor an event?

- *Posters.* Hang the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day poster in as many locations around your community as possible. Pharmacies, grocery stores, banks, senior centers, libraries, bus stops, places of worship and doctors' offices are all good places to post information about guarding against elder abuse. 8x11 inch posters can be downloaded at **www.acl.gov/weaad**.

- *Mailing.* Snail mail can still be very useful. Send flyers to your mailing lists or ask your community partners to mail flyers on your behalf. You may want to ask local banks or utility companies or others to include small WEAAD event inserts with their mailings as well. Use the tools such as fliers, fact sheets, and presentation templates available at **www.acl.gov/weaad**.

- *Social Media.* Engage with the community through social media. Make Facebook ads, or share WEAAD posts on sites like Twitter and Instagram. Promote your event and start a discussion of elder rights issues by encouraging people to share their thoughts and insights. We encourage you to join our 10 Week Coundown to WEAAD with expert blogs, resources, Twitter chats, and more using the hashtag #WEAADweekly. Sample posts and more information on social media outreach are available at **www.acl.gov/weaad.**

- *News Outlets.* Publications big and small may be of great assistance to you as you begin to publicize your event. Are there local newsletters where you can place blurbs about your event? What about community bulletin boards or small print publications? Don't forget about the big guys too. Your local newspaper or TV news broadcast may donate advertising space or offer discounts to non-profits or other community programs. See what they have to offer.

- *Share your event on the WEAAD website.* Once you've planed your event, connect with others around the country and share your event details with a national audience. Add your event to our calendar at **www.acl.gov/weaad** and sign up as a National WEAAD Partner.

PICKING A FORMAT. WHAT WILL YOUR EVENT LOOK LIKE?

A variety of formats are possible for your World Elder Abuse Awareness Day activities. The best format for your event will depend mainly on your goals. Here are a few event styles you may wish to consider. You can use these ideas as conversation starters with other organizers as you begin to plan your event.

Panel discussion. Panel discussions are an excellent way to get people to think deeply about a particular subject. They are ideal for complicated and multidimensional subjects, including elder abuse prevention. Panels usually include three or four people with distinct areas of expertise or experience in a particular subject. These discussions generally start with a short presentation by each panelist, followed by a period of facilitated discussion and questions and answers.

This type of event allows community members to hear from and talk with local service providers and adult protective services workers, as well as financial and legal experts, to learn more about preventing elder abuse. Participants can not only voice their questions, comments, and concerns, but also hear expert tailored responses. Be sure to find a diverse group of panelists that will add interest and draw wide audiences to the event.

Speech. Events structured around a presentation by a well-known or expert keynote speaker tend to attract both audiences who care about the subject as well as people interested in that speaker's ideas, position, or background. Thus, expert speakers may attract a varied audience of people who are knowledgeable about elder abuse prevention as well as people who may know very little.

When choosing a speaker, think of a community member with a strong reputation and good oratory skills who would have an interest in speaking about the importance of protecting seniors. Possibilities to consider include local government officials, social services experts, professors from a local university, or journalists.

Candlelight vigil. A candlelight vigil is a good way to raise awareness of this serious and pervasive problem and show support for people who have been affected by elder abuse. A vigil will also allow participants to make connections with others concerned about the issue. A vigil in solidarity with victims of elder abuse can help encourage other community groups to participate in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Safety is critical; with so many candles burning, it is a good idea to alert your local fire department about the event.

Health fair. Elder Abuse is a public health issue. Health fairs are an interactive way to educate the public and generate community engagement in health-related issues including elder abuse prevention. In general, health fairs provide activities, materials, demonstrations, and other educational information. They also aim to motivate participants to make positive health behavior changes and identify opportunities for future health programs.

Coordinating a health fair requires arranging speakers, entertainment, and refreshments, as well as asking local organizations to sponsor and operate booths, exhibits, and demonstrations about programs and services. A health fair focused on preventing elder abuse might also include exhibitors such as bank managers talking about prevention of financial exploitation, or estate planners discussing the importance of planning for long-term care and preparing a living will.

Town hall meeting. Public meetings that allow community members to share their opinions are an excellent way to start a community conversation about elder abuse. Often, town hall meetings include an address from an elected official or other community leader. Many community members welcome the opportunity to have their voices heard, and influence leaders as they make decisions about policies and priorities.

A town hall meeting could be a great way to break the silence surrounding elder abuse and elder rights. However, it is important to frame the topic in a way that will generate interest and enthusiasm to attract your audience. Participants need to know that their investment of time will contribute to results that will benefit the community.

Chore store. Chore stores—community members regularly helping older neighbors with daily tasks—can generate awareness about elder abuse on an ongoing basis while also helping vulnerable older adults to safely remain in their homes and communities. Elders who still live in their own homes may find it difficult to maintain their houses, or need help running errands. Work with a community group, senior center, neighborhood association, or faith-based organization to develop a directory of members willing to share time or resources at no cost or greatly reduced fees (for example, lawn work and small repairs). Circulate the directory to elders who may need these services. Host small events to show appreciation of the volunteers.

Art for Awareness. The arts are a great way to generate public awareness about complicated issues, including elder abuse, and to capture and sustain public attention. Consider incorporating arts and crafts into your World Elder Abuse Awareness Day activities. Here are some suggestions:

- *Quilt show.* Organize an Elder Abuse Awareness Quilt Show and Competition featuring themes related to elder rights. Entries may be solicited from senior centers, quilting groups, sewing circles, educational institutions, Scout troops, individual artists, and others. Mount the entries in a local mall and ask shoppers to vote on their favorites. Quilts are larger than life and eye-catching, they can attract a great deal of attention.
- *Clothesline contest.* Sponsor a T-shirt design contest or activity with a youth group or Scouts troop. Ask contestants to depict the themes related to elder rights. Display the shirts on a clothesline at a senior center, health fair, or other event.
- *Student arts or essay competition.* Young people are dedicating themselves to a host of social causes, and elder abuse prevention can capitalize on this enthusiasm. Work with your state's attorney general's office, division of aging, and department of education, as well as local newspapers, school districts, or other organizations to sponsor a contest. Use winning entries in local campaigns, and display artwork in community libraries and public buildings.

Launch a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). Alliances among local entities who have regular contact with older adults, such as aging services providers, health professionals, long-term care and nursing home staff, law enforcement officers, and others, can help improve the health, safety, and financial security of older adults. Consider starting an elder justice coalition or MDT in your community as a way to launch World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. This type of multidisciplinary effort can contribute richly to your community efforts to prevent and intervene in cases of elder abuse for years to come. Contact the National Center on Elder Abuse for more information about starting or reinvigorating your own local elder justice community coalition. **http://www.ncea.aoa.gov**

Commemorating WEAAD is a great way to bring your community together to work on elder abuse issues, but there are many opportunities throughout the year to continue this work. Here are a few:

APRIL

- **National Crime Victims' Rights Week** – Remind your community about elder rights by displaying a poster about elder abuse prevention, or find more resources here **http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2014/index.html**. Start an elder abuse awareness group on a social networking site and encourage people in your networks to join the group. Refer to the social media guide at **www.acl.gov/weaad** for sample posts.
- **National Sexual Violence Awareness Month** – Host a candlelight vigil in a community park or gathering spot.
- **National Financial Literacy Month** – Ask banks in your community to include in their monthly bank statements a fact sheet about financial exploitation.

MAY

- **Older Americans Month** – Join the national celebration of older Americans and all they contribute to our society. Find out more at **http://acl.gov/NewsRoom/Observances/Index.aspx.**

JUNE

- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15)** – Sponsor a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event such as a senior expo, rally, or other public forum. Wear purple on June 15 in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

SEPTEMBER

- **National Grandparents Day** – Promote intergenerational connections. Work with your local high school to encourage teens to visit a homebound older adult, or partner with a local nursing home to host a barbecue or picnic.

OCTOBER

- **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** – Host a candlelight vigil in a community park or gathering spot.
- **National Residents' Rights Month** – Include an article about elder abuse and the importance of elder rights in your organization's newsletter, or host a community yard sale with the proceeds going to an elder abuse support group or community efforts to help older adults in crisis.

NOVEMBER

- **National Family Caregivers Month** – Sponsor a day of respite for caregivers in your community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit our website for additional Tool Kit items and more information at **www.acl.gov/weaad**.
- Check out the **Community Guide to Raise World Awareness on Adult Abuse**, developed by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, for more ideas on how to become involved. To access the toolkit, visit the WEAAD Resources (World Elder Abuse Awareness Day) page at **www.inpea.net/weaad.html**.
- For a wealth of suggestions on raising awareness of crime victims and their rights, download the **2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide**, online at **http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw**.
- Contact **The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)**:
  ONLINE: **www.ncea.aoa.gov**, EMAIL: ncea@med.usc.edu, PHONE: 1-855-500-3537

DISCLAIMER: Some material in this document was prepared for the National Center on Elder Abuse by the University of Delaware and was supported in part by a grant from the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (90-AM-3146-02). Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Therefore, points of view or opinions within this document do not necessarily represent official Administration on Aging or DHHS policy.