



Disrespect: Research on Elder Abuse in Indian Country

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative

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“Restoring respect and dignity by honoring Indigenous elders”



NIEJI

—Vision:

“Restore respect and dignity by honoring indigenous elders.”



Types of Abuse

- ❖ Physical
- ❖ Sexual
- ❖ Emotional/Psychological
- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Self-Neglect
- ❖ Abandonment
- ❖ Spiritual



Types of Abuse

- ❖ Spiritual Abuse (Doble 2006)
 - Anything that interferes with spiritual growth including the corruption of another person's value system.
 - Examples include but are not limited to denial of an elder to attend spiritual activities or ceremonies, taking of an elder's ceremonial items for sale or use without permission, comments or activities which are damaging to the elder's spirit.
 - Soul Wounding (Duran & Duran, 1996)



Spiritual Abuse

- ❖ **Examples**
 - Elder not taken to ceremonies and spiritual events
 - Family not allowed to conduct ceremonies in hospital as elder is dying.
 - Ceremonial items taken from the elder's home by visitors (family, friends, others) for use or sale.
 - Elders not raised within the community wanting to have ceremonies at end of life and no connections to provide the ceremonies.
 - Others?



Research in Indian Country

- ❖ 567 Federally Recognized Tribes/Alaska Villages
- ❖ Over 400 state recognized and unrecognized
- ❖ No large-scale, population-based studies of elder abuse in Indian Country
- ❖ National study not focused on elder abuse, but Native elders.
- ❖ Other studies small, focused regional or local areas.



Acierno, Hernandez-Tejado, Muzzy, 2009

- ❖ National Elder Mistreatment Study
- ❖ 5,777 older adults; 2.3% AI/AN (n=132)
- ❖ 11.4% of total reported experiencing at least one type of maltreatment in past year
- ❖ No specific data on AI/AN



Brown, 1989

- ❖ Southwestern “very traditional” older adults
- ❖ 110 AI surveyed and random sample of participants (n=27) were interviewed
- ❖ 16% endorsed physical abuse items
- ❖ 32.4% endorsed neglect items
- ❖ 21.6% endorsed financial exploitation items



Buchwald, Tomita, Hartman, Furman, Dudden, & Manson, 2000

- ❖ Northwestern urban sample of AI/AN 50 years and older.
- ❖ Medical chart review for physical abuse of 550
- ❖ 10% definitely/probably abused in the past year.
- ❖ Abused were more likely younger females who were depressed and dependent upon others for food.
- ❖ Of those abused, only 31% were reported.



Baker-Demaray, 2009

- ❖ 470 Participants age 55 and over
- ❖ Residence
 - 54% reservation or Native village
 - 23% Urban
- ❖ Greatest concerns in their community
 - ❖ Neglect
 - ❖ Emotional abuse
 - ❖ Financial Exploitation
- ❖ Men more concerned than women



Baker-Demaray, 2009

Most Important

- ❖ AI/AN elders describe abuse as ***disrespect***
- ❖ AI/AN elders describe sexual abuse as ***bothering***



Jervis, Fickenscher, Beals, & SAIEP Team, 2014

- ❖ Survey of 100 from south-central urban and mountain west reservation 60 years and over
- ❖ Financial exploitation was major issue
- ❖ Physical abuse discussed in very few cases


Walker, Carter, Gray,
Baker Demaray, & Davis, 2014

- ❖ National Resource Center on Native American Aging, Identifying our Needs a Survey of Elders
- ❖ 18,062 AI/AN elders 55 years and older
- ❖ 240 tribes, Alaskan Villages, Hawaiian homesteads
- ❖ 0.5% currently used elder abuse prevention services (EAP)
- ❖ 13.4% would use EAP services if they were available


Walker, Carter, Gray,
Baker Demaray, & Davis, 2014

- ❖ Falls in past year: 32% (1-4X); 5.5% (>4X)
- ❖ Eat < 2 meals/day: 15.8%
- ❖ No help with chores: 11.8%
- ❖ No money for food, etc.: 12.8%
- ❖ Unable to cook or feed self: 11.6%
- ❖ Eat alone most of the time: 23%
- ❖ Lack of companionship: 19%
- ❖ No help with chores and bills: 22-49%



Practice Based Evidence

Programs developed in Indian Country from a Restorative Justice approach are more successful than Western legal based programs. Some examples are:

- ❖ Multidisciplinary Elder Protection Teams
- ❖ Elder Council
- ❖ Family Restoration Programs
- ❖ Operation Golden Shield



Multidisciplinary Elder Protection Teams

- ❖ Elder is the center of the team
- ❖ Resources and services for the elder are represented
- ❖ Best plan to meet the elder's needs and preferences is developed
- ❖ Review is established to make sure the plan is working



Elder Councils

- ❖ People who are disrespectful of elders are brought before the Elder Council
- ❖ The Elder Council addresses the issue and sets the requirements and the consequences
 - Instruction in proper behavior
 - Restitution
 - Banishment



Family Restoration Programs

- ❖ Before prosecution attempts are made to address the problems that result in the abuse
- ❖ Mediation and discussion with all parties to identify the family/elder needs
- ❖ Plan is developed with the mediator/social worker and implemented with the family
- ❖ Follow-up sessions make sure the plan is working, each person is doing their part, and if any revision is needed
- ❖ If it doesn't work or there is not compliance it can move to prosecution



Operation Golden Shield

- ❖ Community Policing with At-Risk Elders
 - Coffee with an elder
 - Visiting an elder between calls
 - Changing a lightbulb
 - Checking the smoke alarm
- ❖ Special events
 - Thanksgiving meal
 - Christmas Gift
 - Elder Sweetheart for Valentine's Day
- ❖ Increase likelihood of elders asking for help



NIEJI

- ❖ Interactive Map of State & Tribal reporting numbers
- ❖ Tribal Elder Abuse Model Civil & Criminal Codes
- ❖ Training Modules for Social Services, Caregivers, Financial and commercial providers
- ❖ Technical Assistance
- ❖ Coming soon:
 - Training Modules for Legal, Policy, Healthcare
 - Tribal Elder Abuse Survey with Title VI Programs
 - Tribal Mini-Grants to develop Tribal Elder Abuse Resources



Needed Research

- ❖ Comprehensive assessment of elder abuse in Indian Country
 - This is planned with the Title VI programs to start (260 federally recognized programs throughout the U.S.)
- ❖ Determination of what services are available in tribal communities
 - Domestic Violence Programs for shelter
 - Housing, nutrition, transportation, home health, homemakers, financial supports, etc.
- ❖ Assessment of Tribally developed programs to determine evidence of efficacy



Screening for Abuse

- ❖ Best practice: Everyone should be screened
- ❖ Normalize talking about a difficult topics
- ❖ Native Elders talk about disrespect and bothering not abuse
- ❖ Discussions create a potential to catch abuse in its early stage and prevent it from escalating



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For More Information

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Thank You!
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