

FACTS



Elder Justice Coordinating Council

On June 14, 2012, at a White House event commemorating the 7th annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the Secretary of Health and Human Services announced that, in accordance with the Elder Justice Act of 2009, she was convening the Elder Justice Coordinating Council.

BACKGROUND

The Elder Justice Act of 2009 is dedicated to the prevention, detection, treatment, intervention and prosecution of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, recognizing and advocating for individual's right to a life free of any form of these experiences. The population of older persons in America is rapidly increasing, with the oldest of the Baby Boomer's age turning 65 in 2011. The substantial increase in the number of individuals over the age of 65, anticipated to double by 2050, beckons a deeper understanding of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation and increased efforts to identify and reduce its incidence.

The Administration on Aging (AoA) has long been engaged in efforts to protect older individuals from the many forms of elder abuse to which they could be subjected. The passage of the Elder Justice Act of 2009 and the establishment of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council are the latest activities undertaken by the Federal government as they endeavor to preserve the rights of older people and protect those who may not be able to protect themselves.

AoA has a rich history, spanning forty years, of working to prevent and address the issues surrounding elder abuse. Since 1972, the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has provided consumer advocacy and complaint resolution for residents of long-term care facilities. The 1988 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act provided for state formula grants to address elder abuse, as well as established the National Center on Elder Abuse, a national resource center that, for over 20 years, has provided information and technical assistance relative to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation issues and programs.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Elder Justice Act of 2009 established the Elder Justice Coordinating Council, within the office of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), appointing the Secretary as Chair and permanent member. The statute also names the U.S. Attorney General as a permanent member of the Council. The heads of Federal departments and other government entities identified as having responsibilities, or administering programs, relating to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation are also included as council members. The Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of the Department of Labor, the Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and the Chief Postal Inspector of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service have received invitations to join the council and participate in its inaugural meeting.

With the support of core staff members from member agencies that participate in an informal elder justice working group, the Council will meet a minimum of two times each year. The Council will work to develop recommendations to the DHHS Secretary for the coordination of activities relating to elder abuse, neglect and exploitation and other crimes against elders. In addition to the report to the Secretary, Congress will receive a report not later than two years after the Council convenes. The Congressional Report will describe Council activities, accomplishments, and challenges, as well as provide recommendations for legislation and other actions that are determined to be appropriate.

