



SOCIAL SERVICES

for Elders in Indian Country

THE GENERAL POPULATION AND TRIBAL-SPECIFIC SOCIAL SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, FOR-PROFIT OR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

- The goal of social services is to prevent and alleviate elder abuse and neglect.
- Indigenous communities have developed tribally operated elder services and programs to meet their older or disabled adults' needs.
- In 1965, the United States Congress passed a federal bill, the Older American Act (OAA) to address the lack of community social services for older persons.
- The OAA provides federal funding for aging services, resulting in expanded services all over the country.¹

OAA TITLE VI

- In 1978 the OAA was amended to include Title VI, which established federal funding for elderly nutrition and supportive services for Native Americans (American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians).
- The program has expanded to include caregiver support services.

TITLE VI PROGRAMS PROVIDE FUNDING FOR THE FOLLOWING SERVICES IN INDIAN COUNTRY:

Nutritional Services:

- Congregate meals
- Home delivery meals
- Guest meals
- Voluntary contribution for meals

Supportive Services:

- Transportation
- Outreach
- Health promotion and wellness
- Elder abuse education and prevention

Caregiving Supportive Services:

- Information and assistance
- Counseling and training
- Support groups
- Respite services

TITLE VI PROGRAM AND ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION

All social services outlines in the Title VI Program can be used to prevent elder abuse and neglect by:

- Encouraging participation by seniors in communal services
- Helping older and disable adult access financial help
- Balancing family support with older and disabled adult's independence¹

Screening for Abuse and Neglect

- Screening for elder abuse and neglect is the first step in detection, management, and prevention.
- Best practice is to screen all older adults, especially those considered at risk.
- There are several established elder abuse and neglect screening tools that social service providers may use.
- The best screening tool adapted for Native Americans is the Native Elder Life Scale.
 - o It is used with the Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Screening Abuse Test.
- Some factors that make an older adult vulnerable to abuse and neglect include:
 - o Social isolation
 - o Frailty, functional disability, or cognitive impairment
 - o Pathology of the abuser
 - o Caregiver stress or anger
 - o Dependence of the older adults on the abuser
 - o Dependence of the abuser on the older adult
 - o History of violence in the family²

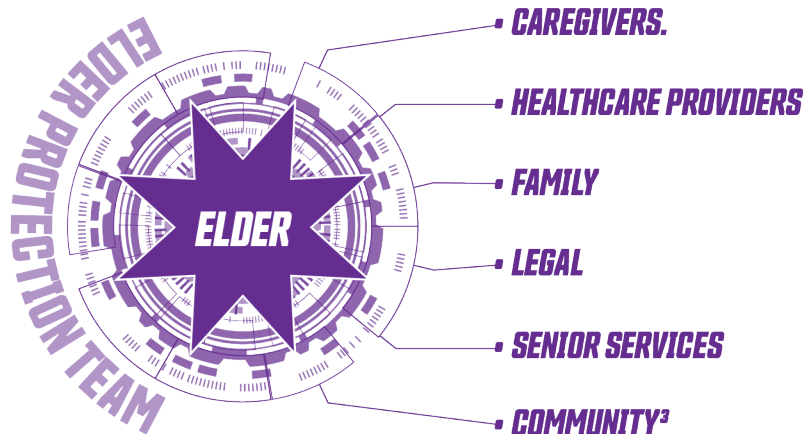
ELDER PROTECTION TEAM

- An Elder Protection Team is a practical approach to addressing elder abuse and neglect in Indian Country.
- The Elder Protection Team addresses the issues of elder abuse and is dependent upon each specific tribe's resources.
- Possible responsibilities of an Elder Protection Team may include:
 - Educating the community and conducting prevention activities
 - Building collaboration and trust
 - Maintaining confidentiality while responding to elder abuse
 - Reporting suspected abuse and intervening when necessary
 - Restoring respect of older adults

MANDATORY REPORTING

- 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.nieji.org/hotlines>

MEMBERS OF AN ELDER PROTECTION TEAM: It always includes the Elder. Due to the complexity of elder abuse, the team's makeup is individualized and may include:



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The terms disrespecting and bothering are commonly used by Elders when referring to abusive acts.
- Elders often consider emotional abuse equally as hurtful as physical abuse.
- Some Elders may believe they are deserving of abuse or neglect because they feel they are not meeting their role or expectations as an Elder.
- Becoming an Elder in many Native American communities is not typically a set age, but a distinct status is earned from wisdom, knowledge, and responsibility to others, to name a few traits and qualities.
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities and aspects of practice that differ from other ethnicities.
- Respect and allow spiritual practices like smudging, singing, and other forms of prayer.
- The older adult may prefer to communicate in their Indigenous language.

CALL THE POLICE OR 911 IMMEDIATELY IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN IMMEDIATE, LIFE THREATENING DANGER.

If the danger is not immediate, but you suspect that abuse has occurred or is occurring, please tell someone. Relay your concerns to the local/tribal adult protective services, long-term care ombudsman, or the tribal police.

For more information on social services in Indian Country please watch the online module at:
<https://www.nieji.org/training/social-services/>

REFERENCES

1. Administration for Community Living. (2020). Services for Native Americans (OAA Title VI). Retrieved on August 6, 2020 from <https://acl.gov/programs/services-native-americans-0aa-title-vi>
2. Jervis, L.L., Fickenscher, A., and Beals, J., and the Shielding American Indian Elders Project Team. (2014). Assessment of elder mistreatment in two American Indian samples: psychometric characteristics of the HS-EAST and the Native Elder Life Financial Exploitation and Neglect Measures. *Journal of applied gerontology: the official journal of the Southern Gerontological Society*, 33(3), 336-356.
3. Wewa, W. (2014). Multidisciplinary Team Approach on Elder Abuse. Presented at the Tribal Law and Policy Institute Pre-Conference in Addressing Elder Abuse in Indian Country, Palm Springs, CA.



Keck School of
Medicine of USC

NCEA
National Center on Elder Abuse

**NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ELDER JUSTICE INITIATIVE • CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA • SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES**

1301 North Columbia Road Suite E231 • Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037 • Phone: (701) 777-6084 • Fax: (701) 777-6779 • Email: info@nieji.org