

# The Enhanced Training and Services to End Violence Against and Abuse of Women Later in Life Program

While sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking can affect victims in any age group, individuals who are 50 years of age or older who experience elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation can face unique barriers to receiving assistance.

**RECOGNIZING THIS, THE ENHANCED TRAINING AND SERVICES TO END Violence Against and Abuse of Women Later in Life Program (Abuse in Later Life or ALL Program) supports a comprehensive coordinated community response (CCR) to address and prevent elder abuse.**

## 50 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019, 50 unique grantees reported activities funded by the ALL Program.

## 766 Victims Served

On average, grantees served or partially served 766 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

## 5,741 People Trained

Grantees trained a total of 5,741 people.

Age or disability may increase isolation for victims of elder abuse, and professionals may mistakenly perceive age or disability, rather than abuse, as the reason for a victim's injuries. Victims may depend on their abusers for care or housing, and abusers may intimidate them using threats of placing the victim in a nursing home. The victim may also experience shame or embarrassment in addition to the fear of losing the support their abuser provides. It is particularly critical for criminal justice professionals and victim service providers to recognize indicators that an older individual is being abused.

*Sexual violence against older women is rarely talked about. Ageism contributes to the mistaken notion that older people are asexual, which fosters the dangerous assumption that they cannot be targets of sexual violence. Older women may be reliant on their perpetrators to provide their care, which makes victims especially vulnerable to continued violence (Fileborn, 2017).*





*The population of Americans aged 65 and older grew by more than a third (34.2%) between 2010 and 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). By 2030, one in five Americans, or 73 million people, are expected to be over 65; approximately 40 million of them will be women (Vespa et al., 2018).*



#### GA • Grantee Perspective

With this funding, the End Abuse in Later Life (EALL) program has been able to assist family members in helping their loved ones by assisting with guardianship paperwork and fees, and covering transportation costs for family members to provide complete care for their loved one. We have also been able to assist with living expenses, if it has been determined that the victim can continue to live independently, or enroll them into a senior living facility, if they are unable to care for themselves. With the funding from the Elder Grants Program, advocates have been able to widen their area of service by meeting clients who have mobility challenges. The EALL advocates have been able to provide food and other basic necessities that many of the senior survivors have lived without during their abuse. Prior to receiving Elder Grant Program funds, we were unable to provide these services to our clientele. With the support of this funding, each elder client is able to be identified and serviced in a means that best suits them.

GEORGIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL



#### UT • Grantee Perspective

We had the opportunity to give an Elder Abuse DV services overview presentation to the Interfaith Council, with representatives from four different faiths and attended by seven clergy/faith leaders. We were very excited for that opportunity as most of the elders in our community are very connected to their religious community and close with clergy and faith leaders. We were all motivated by the great dialogue, questions, and creative processes that arose during that particular training.

UTAH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COALITION

The Abuse in Later Life Program enhances the safety of victims by supporting projects uniquely designed to address and prevent elder abuse. Purpose areas include:

- Train programs to assist criminal justice system personnel in recognizing, addressing, investigating, and prosecuting instances of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- Provide or enhance services for victims of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- Create or support multidisciplinary collaborative community responses to victims of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- Conduct cross-training for victim service organizations, governmental agencies, courts, law enforcement, and nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations serving victims of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- Provide training programs to assist attorneys, healthcare providers, faith-based leaders, or other community-based organizations in recognizing and addressing instances of abuse in later life; and
- Conduct outreach activities and awareness campaigns to ensure that victims of abuse in later life receive appropriate assistance.

## General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **50** individual grantees for the July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019 progress reporting period.

- **7** (14%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.
- Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose area:
  - Create or support multidisciplinary collaborative community responses to victims.

## Staff

Grant-funded staff provide services to victims and training for criminal justice professionals to help ensure a CCR to victims of elder abuse. **Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.**


- **48** (96%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **42** full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds for program coordinators and victim advocates.

**Table 1** | Staff supported with Abuse in Later Life grant funds, July 2017–June 2019: Selected groups

| Staff funded                  | 6-month average |     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| <b>Total FTE staff funded</b> | <b>42</b>       |     |
| Program coordinators          | 19              | 45% |
| Victim advocates              | 16              | 38% |
| Trainers                      | 2               | 5%  |

NOTE: Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).

*A growing body of research has shown that training, education, risk assessment tools, policy-level interventions, and coordination amongst various service providers are all necessary measures to prevent and respond to elder abuse (Daly, 2018).*



## Training

Grantees train professionals to effectively respond to older victims of domestic/sexual violence and elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. **This training improves the professional response to victims and increases offender accountability.**

- **40** (80%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **144** training events.

### SC • Grantee Perspective



These grant funds have allowed the Mayor’s Office on Aging to respond to a training need identified by the police and fire department to ensure that all first responders are trained to identify signs of elder abuse. When first responders are dispatched, the Fire Department/EMS often arrives before law enforcement and depending on the type of call (i.e. elderly falls), law enforcement may not be dispatched at all. Having well-trained first responders who identify signs, document suspected abuse, and request law enforcement assistance can create opportunities for early intervention.

**CITY OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA**

### Tribal • Grantee Perspective



Prior to receiving this funding, there were no funds reserved specifically to meet the needs of older victims. With the Elder Grants Program funding, we are now able to assist older victims with transitional housing/rental assistance, money for moving expenses, emergency gas cards, emergency food and clothing, and bus tickets.

**MEMONIEE INDIAN TRIBE OF WISCONSIN**



## Victim Services

Grantees provide an array of services to victims. Victims may receive victim advocacy, crisis intervention, financial counseling, legal advocacy, transportation, safety planning, or other services as needed. **These comprehensive support services address a wide variety of needs to help victims become and remain safe from violence.**

- **37** (74%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **766** victims during each 6-month period.
- **99%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.



### CA • Grantee Perspective

Elder Grant Program funding has allowed Tulare County to have a more collaborative, victim-centered approach to elder abuse. Prior to funding, Tulare County service providers and law enforcement had been unable to attend out-of-town training opportunities and receiving this funding was able to bring those much needed opportunities to our area. Each training has brought agencies closer together as they become more educated on the complex needs of elder abuse victims. As a community, we have learned that one agency alone is rarely able to identify and meet every need of victims in elder abuse cases. Elder Grant Program funding has allowed us to see the importance and benefit of collaboration within intervening agencies.

With this understanding, the Abuse in Later Life Victim Advocate has begun to reach out to agencies within our community that serve marginalized populations in hopes to educate them on elder abuse community resources. The Source, a local agency within our community that supports LGBTQ+ people, provides space and hosts a senior support group once a week called “Silver Foxes.”

#### FAMILY SERVICES OF TULARE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



*A nationally representative study showed that one in ten adults aged 60 or older experienced emotional, physical, or sexual mistreatment or potential neglect in the past year (Acierno et al., 2010). Another study of women aged 55 and older found that nearly half of the sample experienced some type of physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, and/or financial abuse since turning 55 (Fisher et al., 2011). Further, 14% of women over 65 report having been physically or sexually assaulted, or both, by intimate partners during their lifetime, and many of them exhibit symptoms of PTSD, depression, and anxiety even decades after the trauma (Cook et al., 2013; Eaton et al., 2016).*

### During each 6-month period, on average, grantees provided:

- Victim advocacy services to **502** victims;
- Crisis intervention services to **251** victims;
- Support group/counseling services to **299** victims;
- Civil legal advocacy services to **211** victims;
- Financial counseling services to **109** victims;
- Transportation services to **88** victims; and
- Criminal justice advocacy services to **75** victims.

### Hotline calls:

- Grantees received a total of **5,472** hotline calls.

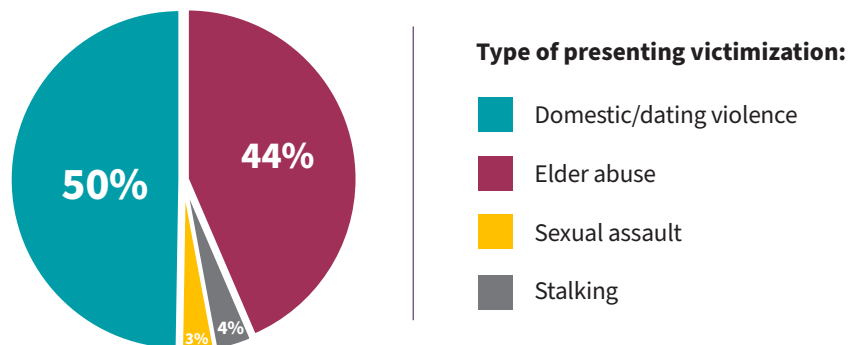
## Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence and elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- Most victims served or partially served were victims of **domestic/dating violence** (50%).

**Figure 1** Provision of victim services by Abuse in Later Life Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

**Victims served and partially served by type of victimization** (6-month average)





Emerging research is illuminating the ways in which multiple forms of violence against older adults often occur in tandem, or alternatively, one form of violence can trigger a cascade of other abuses (Teaster, 2017). In addition, practitioners and scholars are recognizing the need for more specific knowledge on the ways elder abuse plays out in underserved populations, calling for investigations that go beyond culture and consider geography, socioeconomic status, and access to resources (Dong, 2017; Jervis et al., 2016).

**Table 2** | Victims seeking services with Abuse in Later Life grant funds, July 2017–June 2019

| Victims seeking services              | 6-month average |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| <b>Total victims seeking services</b> | <b>778</b>      |     |
| Victims served                        | 742             | 95% |
| Victims partially served              | 24              | 3%  |
| Victims not served                    | 12              | 1%  |

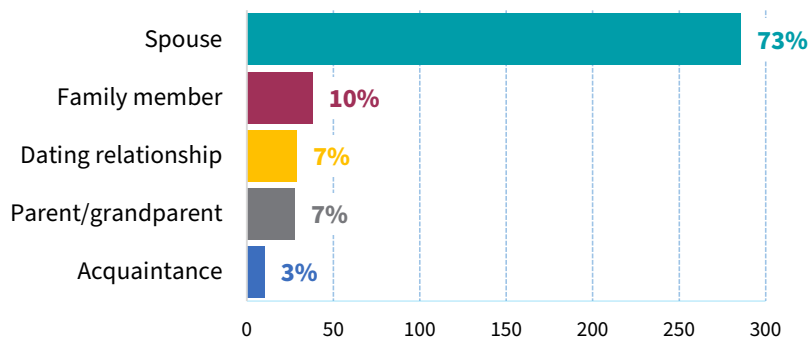
**NOTE:** “Partially served” represents victims who received some but not all of the service(s) they requested, provided those services were funded under the Abuse in Later Life Program grant. “Not served” represents victims who sought services and did not receive the service(s) they were seeking, provided those services were funded under the Abuse in Later Life Program grant.

### Victims’ Relationships to Offenders

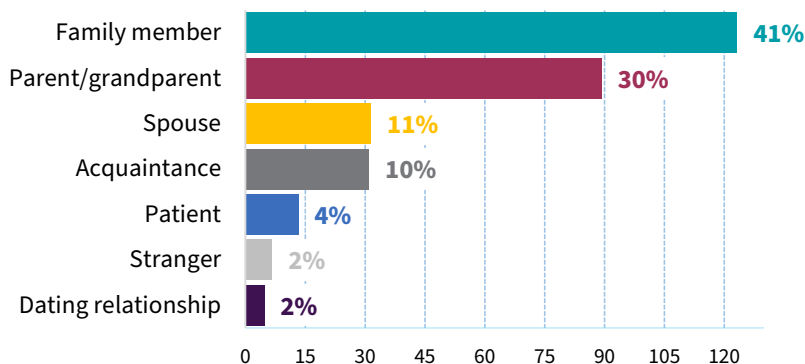
Grantees serve older victims of domestic/sexual violence and victims of elder abuse. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The victims most frequently served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner** (44%).
- The remaining victims were most commonly victimized by a **family or household member** (23%) or a **child/grandchild** (16%).

**Figure 2** | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Domestic/dating violence** (6-month average)



**Figure 3** | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Elder abuse** (6-month average)



### NC • Grantee Perspective



The Abuse In Later Life grant funding has allowed our Elder Justice Project to provide consistent, high-quality training to officers working in seven different municipal law enforcement agencies within our county. This training has been critical in ensuring that trained officers have the information to help them identify and appropriately respond to cases involving abuse in later life. The county DSS Adult Protective Services program has reported a significant increase in the number of elder abuse reports by law enforcement as a result of this training. Officers were encouraged to work together with APS workers throughout the life of cases when feasible and appropriate, to avoid retraumatizing victims and to enhance prosecution. Officers were also encouraged to make referrals to local victim services agencies for immediate and ongoing victims’ assistance. In addition, this grant funding allowed our Elder Justice Project to provide consistent, high-quality training to victim services providers and direct services providers within the senior services network, many of whom had not traditionally worked together.

ALAMANCE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



When reported, elder abuse is primarily the responsibility of Adult Protective Services agencies, which investigate, prosecute, and protect against abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable adults (Kilbane & Spira, 2018). Domestic violence and sexual assault services, by comparison, specifically address domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking. Because of their issue-specific orientation, these organizations may struggle to respond to the particular needs of older adults who may be victimized by a relative or caregiver. It is thus critical that domestic violence and sexual assault agencies respond to older victims' specific needs and circumstances, and develop effective collaborations with adult protective services and others supporting older adults (Bows, 2017, 2018; Brossoie & Roberto, 2015; James et al., 2015).

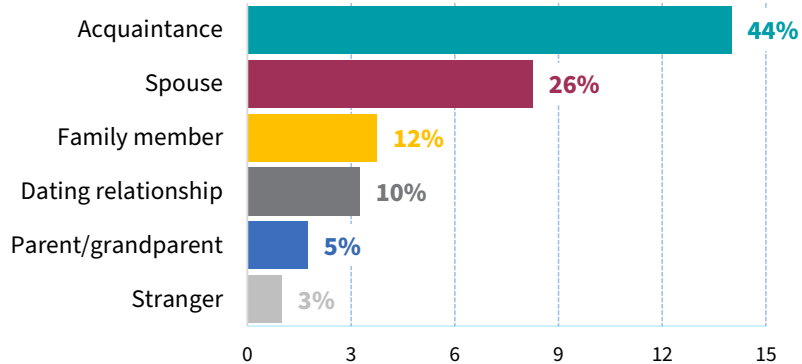


**NY • Grantee Perspective**

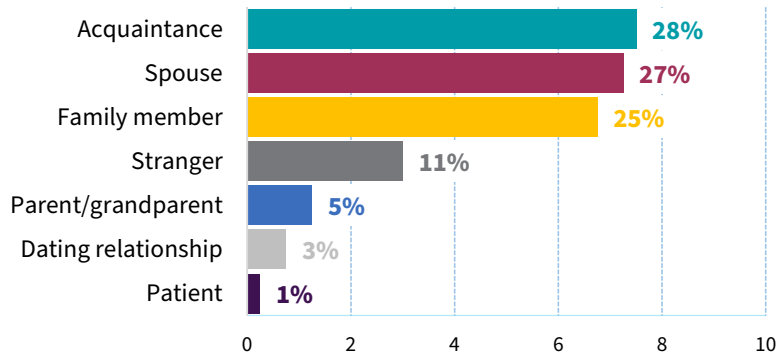
The Elder Grants Program funding has allowed us to offer training to nearly 250 law enforcement officers and 129 victim and aging service professionals across disciplines, which has been met with a very positive response. We have learned that there has been a significant increase in call volume to Adult Protective Services from law enforcement, which we can only assume is directly related to the heightened awareness among law enforcement and other service professionals about the services and resources available to them in elder abuse cases. In addition, we have also learned that the local Police Training Academy will be incorporating the Abuse in Later Life Law Enforcement Training into their ongoing recruit training curriculum. Going forward, this training will be given to all law enforcement recruits at the onset of their careers when it can most influence the way law enforcement approaches and handles potential elder abuse cases.

SENIOR SERVICE CENTER OF THE ALBANY AREA,  
NEW YORK

**Figure 4** | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Stalking** (6-month average)



**Figure 5** | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault** (6-month average)



### Reasons Victims Were Not Served or Were Partially Served

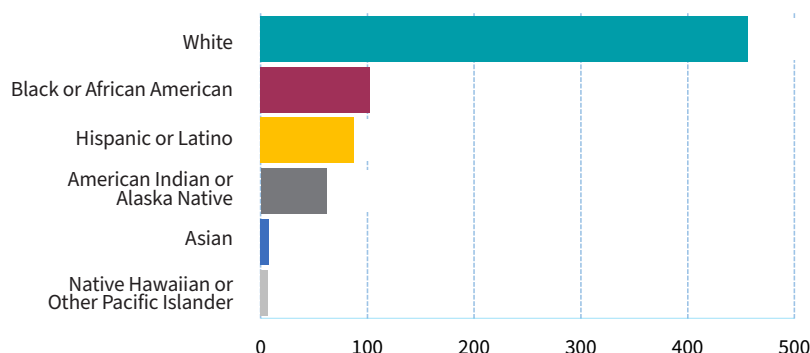
During each reporting period, grantees most frequently noted the following barriers as reasons why victims were not served or were only partially served:

- Victim did not meet statutory requirements;
- Program unable to provide service due to limited resources;
- Services inadequate/inappropriate for victims with mental health issues;
- Services were not appropriate for victim; or
- Program rules not acceptable to victim.

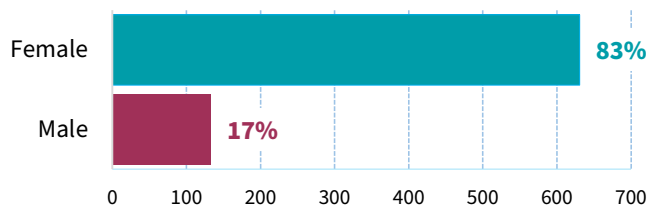
### Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **766** victims during each 6-month reporting period. The victims most frequently served or partially served were **white** (63%), **female** (83%), and between the ages of **60 and 75** (44%).

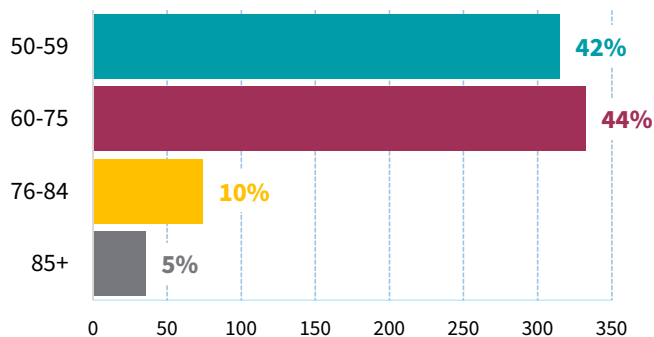
**Figure 6** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Race/ethnicity** (6-month average)



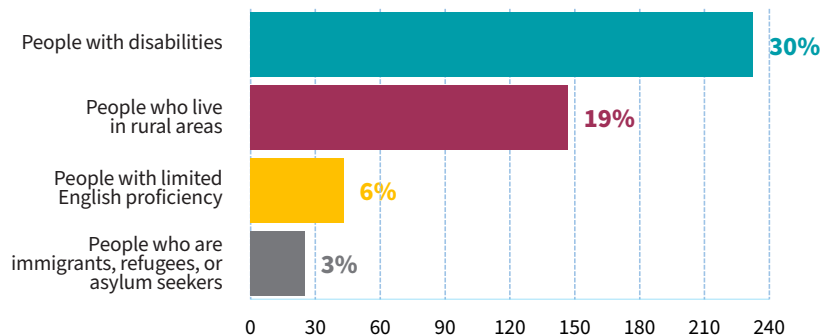
**Figure 7** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)



**Figure 8** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Age** (6-month average)



**Figure 9** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Other** (6-month average)



**WA • Grantee Perspective**



This funding has allowed us to develop a Coordinated Community Response Team focused on systems change and multi-agency collaboration to improve our response to elder abuse in our community. Prior to this funding, we did not have a concentrated effort dedicated to this cause. As a result of this funding, we now have the opportunity to provide direct victim services to older adult victims of abuse, which was previously not possible as there are no similar programs specific to this population in our community. While there are several domestic violence, sexual violence victim advocacy programs and various aging network providers that serve older adults, there had not been an Elder Abuse Victim Advocate who focuses specifically on assisting older victims of abuse through victim advocacy services, crisis intervention, and civil legal advocacy until we received funding which allowed for the development of this position. Most of the domestic violence victim advocacy programs in our county are specific to intimate partner violence, which prevented older adults with abusers of a different relationship (e.g., children, grandchildren, caregivers, etc.) from receiving much-needed help and services. This funding has allowed us to fill this gap and serve the needs of the older community. Specifically, the Elder Abuse Specialist/Victim Advocate has been able to assist older adults in filing for domestic violence and vulnerable adult protection orders, which had not been possible prior to funding, leaving older adult victims to navigate this process alone.

**PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

*Recent studies have pointed toward the need to adapt lethality screenings by age since older perpetrators of intimate partner homicide are more likely to express suicidality, less likely to be estranged, and less likely to have known histories of partner violence (Salari & Maxwell, 2016; Salari & Sillito, 2016). Emerging research indicates that murder-suicide rates may be on the rise in elderly populations. Like in the general population, the vast majority of murder-suicide victims in this age category are women killed by intimate partners (Langley, 2015).*





### ME • Grantee Perspective

The biggest obstacles that seniors face here in Maine are the lack of affordable, low-cost housing and the lack of public transportation.

Through These Doors (TTD) has continued to experience difficulty assisting older individuals with safe and affordable low-cost housing that is in an area that is populated and on a public transportation line. TTD serves Cumberland

County, which is one of the more urban counties in Maine; however, the county is large and there are sections of it that remain very remote and isolating for seniors who need access to the local public transportation system. Unlike larger cities, we do not have a subway system and our overall public transportation system is very spotty and difficult to navigate, making more rural locations for seniors inaccessible.

THROUGH THESE DOORS, MAINE



### MA • Grantee Perspective

The most significant area of remaining need with regard to obstacles faced by older individuals is their ability and/or willingness to talk about elder abuse and to discuss their concerns about their own safety. We try to normalize these conversations; however, there is great shame and guilt about being abused by family members whom society expects to be loving and caring. There is even greater fear on the part of older victims/survivors about outcomes if those people are removed from the older person's life by the criminal justice system.

REACH BEYOND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,  
MASSACHUSETTS



### MT • Grantee Perspective

There are several areas of need and obstacles faced by older individuals seeking safety. One of the most significant obstacles faced by individuals is still the lack of services for older adults who experience abuse, in conjunction with limited community resources and transportation. There is still a significant lack of communication among service providers, law enforcement, and aging services professionals. The gap is slowly closing due to Elder Grants funding through local trainings and the coordinated community response in Broadwater and Yellowstone counties.

MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL

## Remaining Areas of Need

Grantees noted that **victim service providers and law enforcement agencies need better training in order to enhance services to victims of elder abuse**, especially around issues of:

- Trauma-informed practice;
- Recognizing, investigating, and prosecuting cases of elder abuse;
- Cross-training of elder advocates and domestic and sexual violence advocates; and
- Adherence to mandatory reporting requirements.

They emphasized the need to **increase public education and victim outreach efforts** in order to encourage victims to come forward.

Grantees noted that the **failure to report abuse** constituted a significant barrier to serving victims of abuse in later life. They cited a number of reasons for the lack of reporting, including:

- Shame and embarrassment on the part of the victim;
- Manipulation by family members and caretakers;
- Physical isolation due to lack of access to transportation;
- Little knowledge about available services; and
- Lack of community education about the dynamics of elder abuse.

Grantees also cited **access to emergency and long-term affordable housing** as a challenge facing victims of abuse in later life. In addition to a shortage of adequate housing, service providers also cited a number of unique challenges of working with older clients, including:

- The limited mobility of many of their clients;
- The need for enhanced mental health care; and
- The unique financial circumstances of older victims.

Grantees felt that **enhanced coordination and collaboration between service providers and improved case management** would allow victims of elder abuse to better access services.

Finally, grantees cited the need to reach out to and **provide culturally specific services for underserved populations**, including:

- Victims in rural areas;
- Victims with limited English proficiency; and
- Immigrant victims.