Office on Violence Against Women
Abuse in Later Life Program

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As a Result of This Training, Participants Will Be Better Able to:

- Identify the dynamics of power & control and/or entitlement in abuse in later life relationships
- Explore additional scenarios where harm may occur in relationships
- Clarify the relationship between caregiver stress and abuse

Theories on Why Abuse Happens

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End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Abuse in Later Life Power & Control Wheel

Wheel adapted with permission from Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN in 2006.

Abuse in Later Life Wheel Components

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
Tactic: Targets Vulnerabilities & Neglects

- Takes or moves walker, wheelchair, hearing aids, glasses
- Takes advantage of confusion

Tactic: Threatens

- Threats to kill or harm
- Threats to commit suicide
- Threats to leave and never see elder again
- Threats to institutionalize
Tactic: Exploits Financially

- Takes over accounts and bills, spending without permission
- Steals money, titles, and/or possessions
- Abuses a power of attorney

Tactic: Uses Privilege

- Manipulates ageist assumptions of professionals in the community
**Tactic: Isolates**

- Controls what victim does, whom they see, and where they go
- Limits time with friends and family
- Denies access to phone and computer
- Fails to visit or make contact

**Tactic: Uses Family Members**

- Magnifying family disagreements
- Denying access to grandchildren
- Misleads family members about extent and nature of illnesses/conditions
- Leaves grandchildren without honoring grandparents wants or needs
- Forces victim to keep secrets
Module 8
Abuse in Later Life Education Series for Advocates:
Power and Control Tactics & the Role of Caregiver Stress

Tactic: Ridicules Personal & Cultural Values

- Ridiculing religious, personal and cultural values
- Use victims religious or personal belief and values to keep victim trapped in relationship

Tactic: Denies Access to Spiritual Traditions/Events

- Prevents victim from attending important spiritual, cultural, or religious events
- Prevents victim from practicing important spiritual, cultural, or religious traditions
Emotional and Psychological Abuse

- Emotional Abuse
  - Name calling
  - Verbal attacks and abuse
  - Yelling
- Psychological Abuse
  - Crazy-making behavior to make victim doubt own judgement or thinking
  - Withholds affection

Additional Scenarios of Harm

- Unintentional injuries
- Well-intended caregivers
- By persons who can’t control their behavior due to medical conditions
Emotions associated with the stress or perceived stress of providing care, but...

Several studies and articles have debunked the popular notion that elder abuse is primarily caused by caregiver stress (Acierno et al., 2010; Fischer and Regan, 2006).
Caregiver Stress and Abuse Case Example

Why It Is Important

- Victim safety is not addressed
- May be only opportunity to talk with victim
- Victim may not reach out for help again
- The abuser may not be held accountable
- Remedies to reduce stress, anger, or substance abuse do not deal with power and control dynamics
Summary

- Power and control, entitlement, or greed are often contributing factors in elder abuse.
- Harm may happen in situations that are not abusive and will require different remedies.
- Misidentifying a situation as “caregiver stress” rather than abuse can jeopardize victim safety.

Video Presenters

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Thank You

☐ Special thanks to Terra Nova Films for the ongoing working partnership with NCALL and the beautiful video production

☐ www.terranova.org

Staying Connected to NCALL and Other Advocates

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