

VICTIM SERVICES

Responding to Elder Abuse: A Self-Assessment Tool
for **Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Victim Services**



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Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Victim Services**



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Introduction and Process

The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) designed this Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Victim Services self-assessment tool to help organizations evaluate strengths and areas of improvement in services for older victims of abuse. The goal of the self-assessment tool is to encourage your agency to candidly and thoughtfully assess your work and the processes you use. It will help identify existing practices and introduce new approaches which may strengthen the overall response of your agency when addressing elder abuse. The tool should facilitate and encourage discussion and raise questions about roles, response, coordination, and common purpose. Note: not every element included in the self-assessment tool will be in place in every community, nor is there an expectation that every element will be or can be implemented in every community.

How is elder abuse defined?

Elder abuse, according to the Elder Justice Roadmap, “includes physical, sexual or psychological abuse, as well as neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation of an older person by another person or entity, that occurs in any setting (e.g., home, community, or facility), either in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and/or when an older person is targeted based on age or disability.”

This is not a legal definition. Statutorily, there is wide variety in how elder abuse is defined from state to state and in criminal, protective, and civil law within a state. While elders can be victimized by strangers, most abuse experienced by older adults is perpetrated by non-strangers: i.e., intimate partners, adult children, other family members, fiduciaries, and caregivers. Abuse occurs in facilities as well as community settings.

How is abuse in later life defined?

Abuse in later life is defined by the Violence Against Women Act as neglect, abandonment, economic abuse, or willful harm of an adult aged 50 or older by an individual in an ongoing relationship of trust with the victim; or domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking of an adult aged 50 or older by any individual; and does not include self-neglect.

This document contains the following sections:

- Section 1: Self-Assessment Tool
 - The self-assessment addresses six dimensions to consider in evaluating your response to elder abuse and abuse in later life.
- Section 2: Action Plan for Change
 - Based on the results of the self-assessment, the Action Plan guides the user through a process to celebrate strengths and identify future actions, projects, and steps; identifies who will undertake what actions; and provides a timeline to track progress. Inter-agency action plans are an effective way to strengthen current community response to elder abuse and abuse in later life.
- Appendix: Abuse in Later Life Power and Control Wheel
 - In 2006, NCALL adapted the Power and Control Wheel, developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN to create a graphic that represents abuse in later life. Various sections of this tool will refer back to the tactics on the wheel.

Who should be involved in completing the self-assessment?

The self-assessment process works best when completed using a team that involves your agency's leaders and staff, from policy makers to direct victim service providers. The tools are not intended to be completed by one or two individuals working in isolation. Effectively using this tool involves reflection and discussion that requires candid and thoughtful conversation among those with different experiences within the agency.

How can we use this tool in our Coordinated Community Response?

Advocates and other victim service providers play a critical role in a coordinated community response (CCR) by providing a first-hand perspective of working with older survivors of abuse. They bring a wealth of understanding and knowledge about the unique challenges older adults face and their needs regarding effective services and system responses.

Advocates and other service providers can also benefit from working in a CCR by learning ways they can work in tandem with other agencies to address the needs of older abuse survivors. Being involved in a community collaboration may help advocates to feel less isolated when attempting to address their clients' concerns. Support becomes a shared challenge, effort and responsibility within the community. Working through Section 2: Action Plan for Change with community partners presents a valuable opportunity to assess what may be working well, while investigating a response that could be more effective.

Questions and feedback

If you have questions or want to provide NCALL staff with feedback about your experience using the tools, please email ncall@ncall.us .

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Section 1: Assessment Grid

Date:	Assessment grid completed by:
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Instructions: There are six dimensions included in the assessment. For each dimension review each element and check whether or how often it applies, using the scale. In the notes section, record any comments that pertain to that dimension, such as specific accomplishments, barriers, or ideas for change.

Dimension 1: Safety Planning		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
1A	Framework				
1A-1	We define <i>safety planning</i> as an ongoing process that is survivor-driven, survivor-centered, and grounded in the person's goals, not the professional's opinions.				
1A-2	We define <i>safety</i> as freedom from continued physical, sexual, and emotional harm, coercion, and threats over the span of time.				
1A-3	We plan for safety whether the victim stays with, leaves, or remains in contact with the abusive partner, family member, or caregiver, recognizing that leaving is not the only path to safety, or necessarily the safest path for any one survivor.				
1A-4	Our safety planning processes focus on the survivor's primary concerns even if those priorities differ from the advocate's priorities.				

Dimension 1: Safety Planning		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
1B	<i>Process and components</i>				
1B-1	We use common language and avoid professional or technical jargon and terms.				
1B-2	We disclose any mandated reporting requirements before talking about the abuse.				
1B-3	We have strategies in place to help an older abused person determine if it is safe to attend our programs and how to safely explain to the abuser why they are there.				
1B-4	Whenever possible, each older survivor decides whether to contact other agencies, such as adult protective services or aging network services, for additional assistance.				
1B-5	All safety planning includes attention to: • Prevention strategies • Protection strategies • Emergency/crisis strategies • Staying strategies • Leaving strategies • Referrals and services • Emotional support • Time frames (immediate and long-term)				

Dimension 1: Safety Planning		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
1B-6	Safety planning includes the following steps: • Build rapport and listen to the person. • Learn what the person is most concerned with, related to the abuser and the consequences of any action that might be taken. • Ask about the kinds of abuse they have lived with. • Explore the safety planning steps they have taken in the past and how those efforts worked out. • Ask about the abuser's reaction to previous safety strategies attempted. • Explore what kinds of steps the person would try again, and why or why not. • Ask what the person wants to do, and why; understand their goals and generational values. • Think creatively <u>together</u> about a variety of options and ideas. • Problem-solve <u>together</u> (i.e., use scenarios or role plays) in advance about what they can do during and after a physical assault or other crisis situation. • Revisit the safety plan when the survivor's priorities or circumstances change.				
1B-7	Safety planning explores and accounts for multiple tactics of abuse, as reflected in the Abuse in Later Life Wheel.				
1B-8	When a person is leaving or has left an abusive partner or setting, safety planning accounts for: • A safe place to stay and live • Financial support • Health-related needs (e.g., medications, glasses, walker, hearing aids) • Care for others affected by the abuse, such as children or grandchildren who live with the victim; the victim's pets or livestock				

Dimension 1: Safety Planning		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
	• Legal needs, including protection or restraining orders (if requested), powers of attorney, end of life and health directives, wills, and immigration issues • Physical needs, such as locks, cell phones or telephones, reliable transportation • Follow-up support to make options a reality, (e.g., money for new locks and someone to install them)				

Dimension 1: Safety Planning

Notes: Accomplishments?

Notes: Barriers?

Notes: Ideas for Change?

Note: This dimension addresses access in two forms: (1) disability-related access and (2) generational accessibility.

Dimension 2: Access		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
2A	Framework				
2A-1	Our agency has a stated philosophy of providing services in ways that acknowledge and fit each older person's ability and connection to their background and community. ¹				
2A-2	We provide a 24-hour accessible crisis or help line.				
2A-3	We invite older people with disabilities from various backgrounds to conduct an accessibility assessment, including a tour of facilities and review of services. ²				
2A-4	We invite representatives from communities that reflect the demographics of our community to review our facilities and services.				
2A-5	We assign designated staff to know and maintain ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards for accessibility.				
2A-6	Our agency's staff and volunteers include older individuals and people with disabilities who reflect the demographics of our service area.				
2A-7	We conduct an agency-wide assessment of our disability accessibility policies and practices on a regular basis (i.e., every one to five years). ³				

¹ Culture is the complex, dynamic frame of reference shared by a group of people and reflected in customs, art, beliefs, spirituality, language, and institutions. Identity includes aspects of how we see ourselves in the world (and how others may see us) that are intertwined with culture: i.e., as we define our identity by such characteristics as rural, urban, gay, straight, farmer, factory worker, teacher, cook, believer, skeptic, art lover, sports lover, working class, middle class.

² We recognize that there will be varying levels of confidentiality concerns that must be addressed, but we do not automatically assume that such community-based assessment is unworkable.

³ *Self Assessment Tool for Ensuring Access for People with Disabilities* (April 2004) is available from Disability Rights Wisconsin at <http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/selfassessmenttool.pdf>. *Increasing Agency Accessibility for People with Disabilities: Domestic Violence Agency Self-Assessment Guide* (2004) is

Dimension 2: Access		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
2A-8	We conduct an agency-wide assessment of our accessibility policies and practices on a regular basis (i.e., every one to five years). ⁴				
2B	<i>Process and components</i>				
2B-1	We have a protocol to guide staff in asking older persons if they need any accommodation to use our services.				
2B-2	We refer and link older persons at risk who need more services than our agency can provide with other organizations in the aging and disabilities services networks.				
2B-3	We provide appropriate interpreter services or communication assistance to those involved in a case of reported abuse who have sensory or speaking impairments or limited English proficiency. ⁵				
2B-4	We collaborate with social service organizations and others from distinct communities when a situation requires additional knowledge and understanding.				
2B-5	We have the training, technology, equipment, or links with community agencies necessary to provide access to agency services for persons with the following kinds of needs: mobility, vision, hearing, speech, cognition.				

available from the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence: <http://wscadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Increasing-Agency-Accessibility-for-People-with-Disabilities1.pdf>

⁴ For example, the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University has self-assessment tools and processes available at <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/assessments/>.

⁵ Appropriate assistance includes such measures as using professional interpreters or staff fluent in the person's language; safeguarding confidentiality when using non-staff assistance; ensuring that the interpreter or communication assistant has no stake or conflict of interest in the case; and, avoiding family members unless requested by the person (and without involvement in the case); providing aids and materials at no cost.

Dimension 2: Access		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
2B-6	In our interactions with older survivors, we are attentive to and respectful of generational customs and courtesies.				
2B-7	Our response accounts for ways in which aspects of an older adult's perspective and experience might influence their decision-making and response, such as: • Mistrusting information provided by law enforcement, health care, or social services • Seeing information provided by law enforcement, health care, or social services as contrary to religious beliefs • Deferring to other relatives or adult children when family decision-making is the norm • Misunderstanding because of limited English proficiency⁶				

⁶ These recommendations reflect the work of Dr. Georgia J. Anetzberger in adult protective services investigation and assessment training prepared for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Dimension 2: Access

Notes: Accomplishments?

Notes: Barriers?

Notes: Ideas for Change?

Dimension 3: Outreach & Services		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
3A	Framework				
3A-1	We promote survivor self-determination in all programs and services.				
3A-2	When we assess community gaps and needs, we intentionally include the needs of older adults. This involves gathering information from groups of older adults, survivors, and community interveners from a wide range of backgrounds to identify service gaps, barriers, and outreach strategies.				
3A-3	We review age-related statistics from our own agency and other intervening systems to determine where and to what extent older victims of abuse are seeking help.				
3A-4	Our definition of service eligibility addresses whether we will provide direct services or refer outside of our agency in cases of: - Abuse of an older person by a family member or caregiver - Survivors who are not in imminent danger - Older men who are victims of elder abuse and abuse in later life				
3A-5	Older survivors have a central and visible role in all outreach activities and program services, including board, staff, and volunteer positions; programming and decision-making; community presentations; peer support; support groups; and court watch and other types of systems advocacy.				
3B	Outreach				
3B-1	We use a wide variety of methods to advertise our services and build awareness of elder abuse and abuse in later life, including such approaches as brochures, posters, placemats for meal sites and home-delivered meals, and forums for professionals and agencies that have contact with older persons.				

Dimension 3: Outreach & Services		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
3B-2	Our outreach materials include photos of older adults, depicted in a wide range of circumstances and abilities.				
3B-3	Our outreach materials are inclusive of older adults, using language such as 'abuse across the lifespan.'				
3B-4	Our outreach materials are adapted for older adults which may include larger print and a list of services available specifically to address the needs of older victims.				
3B-5	Outreach materials consider language that is more likely to resonate with older adults, for example positive language around dignity and respect, or using specific behaviors to describe abuse rather than labels such as elder abuse or domestic violence				
3B-6	Our outreach materials are available at a wide range of locations in the community, such as our buildings and offices, social service and aging network agencies, health care facilities, banks, apartment complexes and senior centers, fairs, and meal sites.				
3B-7	Staff and volunteers regularly attend and distribute information on abuse in later life at events where older people gather, such as senior fairs, workshops on advance directives and living wills, Medicare seminars, meal sites, and holiday fairs or other public events held within faith communities.				
3C	<i>Welcoming older persons</i>				
3C-1	We allow extra time to work with older persons and recognize that they may need more time to build relationships, heal, express themselves, and consider choices.				
3C-2	When safe to do so, we offer home visits by advocates to older persons who are unable or unwilling to come to the agency.				

Dimension 3: Outreach & Services		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
3C-3	We provide services in locations that are safe, comfortable, and welcoming for older victims of abuse, including sites that are safe from potential abusers and that feel safe to older persons; accessible for those using a wheelchair, walker, or cane; quiet and with minimal background noise so that those with hearing limitations can readily participate.				
3D	<i>Attention to questions of capacity</i>				
3D-1	We start with food, rest, a review of medications, and an opportunity to talk about the abuse.				
3D-2	We check for the impact of and reactions to living with abuse.				
3D-3	We do not assume that staying in a relationship equals incompetence.				
3D-4	We recommend testing for competency only if there is evidence of cognitive limitations.				
3D-5	We are linked with aging programs, health care professionals, and others in the community who understand cognitive limitations and issues.				
3E	<i>Emergency housing and shelter</i>				
3E-1	We provide or make arrangements for emergency housing and shelter to people regardless of gender who experience abuse in later life.				
3E-2	Our emergency housing and shelter is organized to include survivors who are unable to participate in shelter upkeep routines.				
3E-3	Our shelter and emergency housing is organized to provide home health services to older persons who need such assistance or allow personal care attendants or home health agencies to provide it.				
3E-4	Shelter intake processes allow for the time an older survivor needs to process and intake forms are accessible, in large print and allow for breaks for the person as needed.				

Dimension 3: Outreach & Services		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
3F	<i>Support and counseling</i>				
3F-1	Our individual and peer counselors have experience and training related to abuse in later life.				
3F-2	Our mixed-age support groups address the particular issues faced by victims of abuse in later life.				
3F-3	Economic advocacy is tailored to the needs of older adults, such as working with social security administration or helping the older person access pension benefits.				
3F-4	We provide a support group tailored to older survivors.				
3F-5	Each older survivor can choose whether or not to attend individual counseling, support groups, or other offered services.				
3F-6	Each older survivor's cultural and spiritual or faith values are incorporated into any service or case management plan.				
3G	<i>Legal advocacy</i>				
3G-1	Our legal advocacy services address the needs of older survivors of abuse around divorce, separation, and protection orders.				
3G-2	We have established links with attorneys who can provide assistance with wills, establishing or revoking power of attorney, Medicare appeals, and housing rights.				
3G-3	We consider the implications of any mandatory or pro-arrest policies on older victims who are dependent on their abusers for their physical care, navigating the complexity of each situation.				

Dimension 3: Outreach & Services		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
3G-4	Our legal advocacy services address the unique and complex legal situations of older immigrants around language, dependency on abusive family members, and obtaining information and legal assistance.				
3H	<i>Referrals</i>				
3H-1	Our agency routinely receives referrals for older adults from law enforcement, prosecutors, clergy, aging programs, and mental health and health care providers.				
3H-2	Our agency routinely receives referrals for older adults from agencies organized in and working with culturally distinct and diverse communities.				
3H-3	We have established relationships with community partners and developed strategies to serve victims of domestic and sexual abuse who live in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.				
3H-4	We make “meaningful referrals” to community services: i.e., beyond brochures and business cards. We have links to specific agencies and practitioners, facilitate calls from victims to referral sources, and call on a victim’s behalf, if requested.				

Dimension 3: Outreach & Services

Notes: Accomplishments?

Notes: Barriers?

Notes: Ideas for Change?

Dimension 4: Policy & Procedure		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
4A	Framework				
4A-1	Survivors of abuse in later life participate in crafting and directing agency policy and procedure.				
4A-2	We conduct an annual review of all agency policies and procedures to determine their impact on older persons.				
4A-3	We involve communities from a wide range of demographic groups as partners throughout the process when crafting policies and procedures.				
4A-4	Abuse in later life is considered in all policies and procedures, not only in age-specific policies.				
4B	Content				
	Our policies and procedures:				
4B-1	Define abuse in later life.				
4B-2	Direct agency accessibility practices.				
4B-3	Articulate our working relationship with adult protective services, including partnering on home visits in suspected domestic or sexual abuse.				
4B-4	Guide staff in responding to non-abusive substitute decision-makers and caregivers.				
4B-5	Guide staff in responding to a substitute decision-maker and caregiver who is or may be the abuser.				

Dimension 4: Policy & Procedure

Notes: Accomplishments?

Notes: Barriers?

Notes: Ideas for Change?

Dimension 5: Training		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
5A	Framework				
5A-1	We have established and routinely update a library of resource materials and professional literature on abuse in later life.				
5A-2	We include long-time workers, new workers, volunteers, and board members in agency training on abuse in later life.				
5A-3	We provide specific training on abuse in later life on an annual or more frequent basis.				
5B	Content Our training addresses:				
5B-1	Ageism				
5B-2	How to build an elder-friendly and supportive environment				
5B-3	How to respect and meet the needs of older persons from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.				
5B-4	Safety planning approaches and practice				
5B-5	Impact of violence, abuse, and trauma across the life span				
5B-6	Legal and economic issues affecting older survivors of abuse (e.g., financial crimes, elder abuse reporting laws, guardianships, powers of attorney, Medicare, and Social Security)				
5C	Methods				
5C-1	We use hands-on methods such as scenarios and role play to practice safety planning and review agency policies and procedures.				
5C-2	We utilize a variety of approaches in providing and supporting training for staff, volunteers, board members, and community members, such as conferences and workshops, “brown bag” lunch presentations, and web-based or distance learning.				

Dimension 5: Training		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
5D	<i>Community connections</i>				
5D-1	We participate in and provide cross-training with law enforcement, adult protective services (APS), the aging services network, and senior organizations.				
5D-2	We organize training and provide materials to humane society staff and animal control officers on the role of companion animals in patterns of abuse and exploitation of older individuals.				

Dimension 5: Training

Notes: Accomplishments?

Notes: Barriers?

Notes: Ideas for Change?

Dimension 6: Community Collaboration		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
6A	<i>Framework</i>				
6A-1	We are active participants in a community collaboration or multidisciplinary team to address abuse in later life and elder abuse, and our DV and/or SA CCR specifically addresses the specific needs of older victims.				
6A-2	We encourage and provide release for staff to join the boards of directors of community agencies that focus on older persons.				
6B	<i>Relationships</i>				
6B-1	Our relationships with law enforcement, adult protective services (APS), the aging services network, organizations focused on older adults, and community-based organizations are characterized by: • Strong linkages • Frequent communication • Cross-training and other joint events or projects				
6B-2	We organize and participate in informal events to encourage domestic violence, sexual assault, APS, and aging network professionals, and culturally-specific and community-based organizations to get to know each other (e.g., “brown bag lunch” presentation, after-work social, movie screening).				
6C	<i>Systems change</i>				
6C-1	We are linked with and participate in state efforts focused on abuse in later life, including state domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions and state coalitions on aging.				
6C-2	We are linked with and participate in national efforts focused on elder abuse and abuse in later life, such as NCALL (National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life), NCEA (National Center on				

Dimension 6: Community Collaboration		This applies...			
		Always/Yes	Sometimes	Never/No	Need more info
	Elder Abuse), NAPSAs (National Adult Protective Services Association), NCPEA (National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse), and others.				
6C-3	We educate policymakers on the need for improved legislation and funding for services to all potential victims of abuse in later life.				
6C-4	We participate in a fatality review team for elder abuse cases (if applicable).				

Dimension 6: Community Collaboration

Notes: Accomplishments?

Notes: Barriers?

Notes: Ideas for Change?

Section 2: Action Plan for Change

Now that you have completed the self-assessment tool, you have the foundation for creating a plan for change for any concerns you may have identified during this process. Following is a template to aid in designing this plan for change. Note this template includes space for indicating those concerns about your current response to elder abuse but also space for highlighting your strengths and what is going well.

Step 1: Recognize your strengths and accomplishments while identifying what needs to change in your response to abuse in later life.

- Review each area of the assessment grid and note where you checked “sometimes” and “never.”
- Identify what is missing in your response and where you need more information.
- Identify strengths and accomplishments in the current response to abuse in later life.

Step 2: Set priorities and next steps for the changes you would like to make. Keep in mind:

- New or revised policies and/or procedures
- Better connections and communication
- New or expanded training
- Stronger collaborations

Step 3: Assign tasks and set timelines.

Step 4: Track your progress by reviewing this Action Plan at selected intervals, such as every six months.

Action Plan: Strengthening Our Response to Abuse in Later Life

Dimension	Strengths and Accomplishments	Concerns	Priorities and next steps:	Assigned to:	Due by:	Progress/Update
1) Safety Planning						
2) Access						
3) Outreach & Services						

Action Plan: Strengthening Our Response to Abuse in Later Life

Dimension	Strengths and Accomplishments	Concerns	Priorities and next steps:	Assigned to:	Due by:	Progress/Update
4) Policy & Procedure						
5) Training						
6) Community Collaboration						

Appendix: Abuse in Later Life Wheel

In 2006, NCALL adapted the Power and Control Wheel, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN to create this wheel.

