



“Join Us” in the Fight Against Elder Abuse: Tip Sheet for Individuals & Families

How *You* Can Help in the Fight Against Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is an under-recognized problem with devastating and even life-threatening consequences. Many organizations work tirelessly to help prevent elder abuse, and you, too, can help in the fight. Throughout the year, there are many holidays and observances that allow us the opportunity to honor older individuals and raise awareness of elder abuse. However, spring presents a unique series of observances to engage public attention, enlist public support, and generate activity and involvement at a grassroots level:

- [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#) is observed annually on June 15th.
- May is [Older Americans Month](#), a time dedicated to highlighting issues impacting older citizens.
- Mother’s Day is recognized in the US on the second Sunday in May, and Father’s Day is observed on the third Sunday in June.
- [National Crime Victims’ Rights Week](#) is a weeklong observance throughout the US every April to promote victims’ rights and to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This is a prime opportunity to remind the public that in many cases, elder abuse victims are also victims of crime.

To maximize these opportunities, the NCEA is enlisting action from communities and individuals that can affect long-lasting changes in the lives of vulnerable seniors. We invite and encourage you to “Join Us” by planning or participating in community activities that coincide with Older Americans Month, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and other events to generate public attention.

The NCEA has compiled the following list of ideas of how you, your family, and friends can “Join Us” in drawing attention to the problem of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Some activities focus on specific observances, such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Some ideas, such as visiting an older neighbor or relative, are simple yet meaningful at any time of year. Other suggestions, such as volunteering, require a little more commitment and planning. But whether the effort is great or small, once a year or throughout, all of these activities empower you to make long-lasting differences in the lives of vulnerable elders.

Together, we have the power to prevent elder abuse.



June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!

- Is your community sponsoring a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event, such as a candlelight vigil, senior expo, rally, or other public forum? Show your support by attending and encouraging your friends and family to participate. Volunteer to distribute pamphlets or brochures. (You can download NCEA Fact Sheets by visiting www.ncea.aoa.gov).
- On World Day, make it a priority to visit an older friend or relative who lives in a nursing home.
- Purple is the color that has been designated for elder abuse awareness by the International Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. Wear purple in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15th.
- Start an elder abuse awareness group on a social networking site, like “Facebook,” and encourage “friends” to join the group. Provide links to information and advocacy resources. Start a campaign to get “X” number of “friends” to join by World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Reaching Out

Isolation is a known risk factor for elder abuse, neglect, and self-neglect. But reducing isolation is as simple as sparing a little time to reach out to our seniors. By reaching out through an informal visit, or by volunteering with one of the many programs that provide support to older individuals, we can help to reduce the risk of elder abuse.

- Commit to visiting an older friend, family member, or neighbor who lives alone, or invite them to a family activity, such as a Little League Game.
- Ask an older acquaintance to share their talents by teaching you or your children a new skill, such as knitting, or how to bake a favorite recipe.
- Volunteer at a local chapter of Meals on Wheels or pledge to commit to one day a month. Home-delivered meals can be helpful in preventing self-neglect. This also allows the volunteer to observe if the senior is managing well at home, or if he or she may need other assistance.
- Become a Long-Term Care Ombudsman Volunteer. Ombudsmen act as advocates for those living in nursing homes and assisted living communities to assist in resolving complaints and issues. To find a program in your area, visit: <http://www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman> .
- Volunteer with the Senior Medicare Patrol Program (SMP). These volunteers help beneficiaries and their families detect and report Medicare/Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse. For more information, visit the website of the SMP Resource Center: <http://www.smpresource.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home> .



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- Participate in a citizens’ group to advocate for residents of long-term care. For more information on groups in your area, visit the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care at: http://www.nccnhr.org/static_pages/citizens_groups.cfm .
- Become involved with your local elder abuse prevention coalition or contact your APS or Attorney General’s office to enlist support for starting one. For more information on how to develop an elder abuse prevention network, see the NCEA publication: *Creating Effective Local Elder Abuse Prevention Networks: A Planning Guide*, online at:
• http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/ncearoot/main_site/pdf/EffectiveLocalElderAbusePreventionNetworks.pdf .
- Organize or participate in a “Chore Store.” Elders who live in their own homes may be finding it more difficult to maintain their houses or may need help running errands. Work with a community group, senior center, neighborhood association, or faith-based organization to develop a directory of members willing to share resources and talents at no cost or greatly reduced fees (for example, lawn work, small repairs) and circulate the directory to elders who may need these services.

Ways to Promote Senior Involvement

- Become a Senior Companion. Individuals 60 or over can become a companion to help a frail elder retain his or her independence. To learn more about this program, visit:
• www.seniorcorps.gov/about/programs/sc.asp .
- Become a classroom “Grandparent.” Many aging services sponsor programs that place volunteers in classrooms. The grandparent shares in classroom activities, and helps both teacher and students by providing a little extra attention, assistance, and support. The program not only strengthens the educational experience, but fosters intergenerational respect.
- Bring on the dogs, cats, and other friendly companions! Many local animal shelters “loan” their “guests” out for pet therapy excursions to nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Research demonstrates that interacting with pets can enhance physical and emotional health.
- Participate in a telephone reassurance program. Sponsored through many aging services agencies, these volunteers phone isolated individuals daily to check on their well-being.
- Triad is a partnership of three community sectors (public safety, criminal justice, and seniors) collaborating to keep seniors safe from crime. Volunteer with your Triad's Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) Council. For more information, visit:
<http://www.nationaltriad.org/index.htm> .



Other Suggestions for Older Individuals to Reduce the Risk of Elder Abuse:

- Maintain a normal schedule for doctor and dentist visits.
- Investigate financial and legal planning strategies, including advanced health directives, and develop and follow through with a plan that meets your needs.
- Investigate daily money management programs for assistance in budgeting, banking, and bill-paying.
- Talk about your needs with a trusted friend, neighbor, or loved one, and ask for help. The key to maintaining overall independence is in identifying areas where you can use assistance, and asking trustworthy sources for help in these areas. Area agencies on aging and other aging services organizations can provide assistance in identifying resources available and suitable for your needs. To find resources in your area, call or the Elder Care Locator at 1-800-677-1116, or visit: www.eldercare.gov.

For More Information:

- Check out the *Community Guide to Raise World Awareness on Adult Abuse*, developed by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, for more ideas on how to become involved. To access the toolkit, visit the “WEAAD Resources” page at: <http://www.inpea.net/weaad.html>.
- To download logos, posters, and other public awareness materials to commemorate Older Americans Month from the US Administration on Aging website, go to: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/Observances/oam/oam.aspx.
- For a wealth of suggestions on raising awareness of crime victims and their rights, download the *National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Resource Guide*, online at: <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2010/index.html>.
- Visit the website of the National Center on Elder Abuse/NCEA: www.ncea.aoa.gov, or contact us by email: ncea-info@aoa.hhs.gov, by phone: 302-831-3525, or by mail:

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