

National Center on Elder Abuse
NCEA E-NEWS

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“For the average caregiver, abuse and neglect occurs because they may not have the interpersonal skills or the training to respond positively in stressful and challenging situations. We try to give them those tools and skills.”

*Donna Cochems,
Project Coordinator,
Wisconsin Caregiver
Project*

Eye on Prevention:

**Wisconsin Pilots Training Initiative
for Long-Term Caregivers**

In 2005, Wisconsin was one of three states to be awarded a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to develop programs for prevention of elder abuse and neglect in long-term care settings. We recently discussed the initiative’s success with Donna Cochems, Project Coordinator, of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Center for Career Development (CCDET) and Shari Busse, Director of the Office of Caregiver Quality of the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS).

Training to prevent abuse and neglect of long-term care recipients is often designed for supervisors such as nurses and administrators. But when Wisconsin DHFS partnered with CCDET to design its prevention program, curriculum developers envisioned a project that would support the frontline employees who perform the lion’s share of the most demanding personal assistance: caregivers. The program has been well-received; in fact, it was so well-received that although the initial funding ended in September 2007, additional resources were made available from DHFS, the lead agency in the collaboration, to continue the program through 2008.

“For the average caregiver, abuse and neglect occurs because they may not have the interpersonal skills or the training to respond positively in stressful and challenging situations. We try to give them those tools and skills,” said Donna Cochems, project coordinator and training consultant from CCDET, who is also a veteran of DHFS. “What we found is that there is very little ‘soft skill’ training (as opposed to clinical skill training) for the frontline, direct caregivers, and the participants ‘gobble it up.’”

The training modules were created for direct care providers working in residential settings, such as nursing homes, facilities for individuals with *(cont. on page 2)*

Wisconsin Caregiver Project

(cont. from front page)

“We believe that the participants are the real experts, and we try to solicit their input based on their collective, hundreds of years of experience. We also try to emphasize that all direct caregivers should have input in the care plan as an additional means of empowerment. We highlight the need to ‘take some time to make some time’ – even though you are feeling that you have too much to do, taking an extra minute or two with a resident will help in the long run.”

developmental disabilities, hospices, home health agencies, community-based facilities, and personal care agencies. The curricula rely heavily on experiential, interactive exercises that have participants “walk in the shoes” of care recipients. The format allows caregivers to gain insight and empathy into the needs of vulnerable individuals. Four themes are addressed: *Keys to Professional Caregiving*, which focuses on conflict resolution and communication skills, and observing professional boundaries; *Supporting the Professional Caregiver*, intended for use with supervisors; *Conducting Internal Investigations*; and *Responding to Challenging Situations*, which provides caregivers with the opportunity to role play or practice appropriate responses to difficulties that frequently arise during routine care provision. The modules emphasize the need to be attentive to the possibility of mistreatment and to report it, and to be aware of triggers that may contribute to abusive and neglectful behaviors.

According to Ms. Cochems, the most significant barrier encountered early on was that administrators were not sending direct care providers but were either sending supervisors or attending themselves. While the training is valuable for *all* working in long-term care settings, supervisors were not the intended audience. There were two primary reasons for the resistance. As mentioned above, professional development programs are typically designed for supervisors and administrators. Furthermore, given staffing realities and daily workloads, it is difficult to spare direct caregivers for the time needed to complete the course. Course developers responded by modifying the format so that training could be delivered on site and in smaller bites.

Ms. Cochems believes that one of the greatest strengths of the project is that it honors the work of frontline caregivers and fosters a sense of empowerment. “We believe that the participants are the real experts, and we try to solicit their input based on their collective hundreds of years of experience. We also try to emphasize that all direct caregivers should have input in the resident’s care plan as an additional means of empowerment. We highlight the need to ‘take some time to make some time’ -- even though you are feeling that you have too much to do, taking an extra minute or two with a resident will help in the long run.”

Another philosophy espoused is the need to respect the residents’ ability to make choices and to respect their individuality. “It’s essential to not treat caregiving like an assembly-line process.” *(cont. on page 7)*

Promising Practice:

Justice for All: Law Enforcement and Adult Protective Services Unite

On January 24th, the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) will host the first NCEA training and informational webcast of 2008. The presentation will highlight a collaborative model currently used in Massachusetts to ensure that victimization against persons with disabilities is effectively investigated and prosecuted. The model is being adapted for use with cases of elder abuse and neglect. We recently spoke with Nancy Alterio, Executive Director of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) and NAPSA President, about the success of the program, and the potential it holds for addressing elder mistreatment.

What began as a 100 day commitment for District Attorney Elizabeth Scheibel has continued for over a decade.

In response to several horrific, high profile cases of abuse against persons with developmental disabilities, Ms. Scheibel was appointed to head up a panel investigating the systemic failure to adequately protect vulnerable adults. The appointment led to the development of Massachusetts *Building Partnerships for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities Initiative* (BPI), a collaboration linking adult protective services with law enforcement and other health and human service agencies to address cases of mistreatment, neglect, and exploitation. The model, based on child protective services practices, was initially established to address the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, but eventually expanded to include individuals with all types of disabilities between the ages of 18 and 59. A year and half ago, Ms. Scheibel began adapting the program for the Northwestern district's Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). In an NCEA webcast later this month, Ms. Scheibel and Nancy Alterio, DPPC Executive Director, will detail the program and describe the process of modifying the initiative to address elder abuse.

The BPI provides a 24 hour, centralized state reporting hotline for allegations of mistreatment involving adults with disabilities. From this single point of entry, individuals are referred to appropriate health and social services, law enforcement entities, and other resources. The program currently houses a state police detective unit of six investigators who work with protective services professionals to determine if allegations suggest elements of a crime, and therefore warrant criminal investigation. The cases are then referred either to the DPPC state police, the DA state police, or the local state police. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of allegations are criminally investigated. *(cont. on page 4)*

Law Enforcement and Protective Services Unite

(cont. from page 3)

According to Ms. Alterio, “The MOU (*memorandum of understanding*) is the cornerstone of the multidisciplinary initiative.” Drafted in 1999 as a result of the first statewide conference uniting APS, law enforcement, and disabilities agencies, the protocol has been adapted by each of the state’s 11 district attorney jurisdictions. Each DA has customized the MOU for use in its jurisdiction; each MOU specifically names individuals as well as their relevant positions and roles in the process. The MOUs are updated centrally by the BPI project director so that as individuals leave, newly appointed individuals are named specifically with detailed contact information; the roles are highly defined as well. The specificity of the protocol streamlines the processing of cases entering the system and enhances the likelihood that cases that meet the standards for prosecution are legally addressed.

“Law enforcement professionals are developing a specialty area of expertise in dealing with individuals with disabilities -- for example, communication, investigation, prosecution, evaluation of competency, etc.,” says Ms. Alterio. “At the same time, APS professionals are developing expertise in investigating the elements of a crime -- how to protect a crime scene, how to protect physical evidence.” The cross training not only ensures a more thorough investigation; it breeds a sensitivity to the perspectives of professionals across disciplines. This sensitivity is essential to effective collaboration.

Although BPI is not designed to address elder abuse, the hotline does field allegations of mistreatment involving older individuals. In a recent four month period, 207 allegations of elder abuse and neglect were recorded. While these reports are forwarded to the EOE, the DPPC state police also scrutinize the allegations for evidence of criminal activity. When reports suggest that the allegations meet the threshold for criminal investigation, referrals are forwarded to the respective DA for further disposition. Ms. Alterio indicates that reports of elder abuse are sometimes made to BPI specifically because reporters know that this will lead to a law enforcement evaluation.

Another byproduct of the BPI collaboration is that it allows advocates and professionals to look for gaps in the system as well as legal loopholes that hinder response.

The webcast is scheduled to air on Thursday, January 24th at 1:00 PM EST. Registration information will soon be posted on the NCEA website at www.ncea.aoa.gov, and will be announced through the NCEA Elderabuse Listserve.

For more information on the BPI program, visit the project website online at: www.buildingpartnershpsma.com/ . Questions regarding the MOU can be directed to Ms. Alterio via email at nancy.alterio@state.ma.us .

*“The MOU
(memorandum
of
understanding)
is the
cornerstone of
the
multidisciplinary
initiative,”*

*Nancy Alterio,
Executive
Director,
Disabled Persons
Protection
Commission*

Featured Case:

Multidisciplinary Collaboration Key to the Arrest in Financial Exploitation Case

“This is the first case of its kind to be prosecuted in Cowlitz County. It was really frustrating. I kept getting ‘No, this is a civil matter.’”

*Sarah Flohr,
Trust Officer,
Cowlitz Bank*

The embezzlement of a half-million dollars from an elderly Washington couple led to an investigation that crossed state lines and culminated in the arrest of 52 year old Tom Sigea in Montana. Sarah Flohr, the trust officer who refused to drop the case, channeled her frustration into the development of a regional vulnerable adult multidisciplinary task force.

The case of abuse and exploitation of Albert and Lila Sigea of Cowlitz County, Washington, began to emerge slowly in early 2005, but it wasn't until December, 2007 that their son, Tom Sigea, was arrested in Montana. If not for the persistence and persuasive efforts of trust officer and administrator Sarah Flohr, the case may never have been viewed as a criminal act.

“It was really frustrating. I kept getting ‘No, this is a civil matter.’”

Ms. Flohr, who has a paralegal as well as banking background, became involved when Cowlitz Bank was appointed the guardian of the estate and trustee of the Sigea trust in 2005. The embezzlement first came to light when Doug Sigea, Tom's brother, revealed that his parents' brokerage company had noticed financial irregularities. As the details and forensic accounting began to paint a grim picture of the situation, Ms. Flohr became outraged and questioned why this wasn't being viewed as a crime, and treated as a crime. Ms. Flohr persisted for months before she connected with the “right” person, newly elected county commissioner in January 2007, Axel Swanson. Together, in response to their frustration of not being able to insight a criminal investigation, they created the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Vulnerable Adult Task Force. In turn, the CWVATF provided the teeth, the tools, and the networking needed to push the case through the criminal justice system.

Ms. Flohr and Mr. Swanson explored existing neighboring task forces in Washington and Oregon to develop their model. The resulting coalition is comprised of approximately 75 invited representatives from various law enforcement agencies, APS, health and social services, prosecutors and other legal professionals, the county commissioners, professional guardians, legislative representatives, and even members of local school boards. Meetings are held monthly and feature speakers from across sectors. Ms. Flohr reports that confidentiality issues have been successfully negotiated to allow for all types of case discussion, including the need to address aging predators. CWVATF members provide and receive support, education, and use

(cont. on page 6)

Multidisciplinary Collaboration Key to Addressing Financial Exploitation Case

(cont. from page 5)

the forum to advocate for the needs of vulnerable adults and to lobby for legislative changes. Members have also benefited from the expertise of the neighboring coalitions. According to Ms. Flohr, “Cowlitz County detectives went to Clark County, Oregon, to see how they investigated cases” while processing the Sigea case.

The Sigea case illustrates the complexities that often impede investigation and intervention in cases of elder abuse. Ms. Flohr notes that one of the major obstacles in dealing with the case was Albert Sigea’s initial resistance to intervention. He was in a state of denial about the extent to which he and his wife were being exploited. Also, common to many cases of mistreatment, multiple types of abuse were occurring; in addition to financial exploitation, Tom Sigea is accused of neglecting his parents needs.

Not only is the Sigea case the first of its kind to be prosecuted criminally in Cowlitz County, the Cowlitz Bank is also pursuing civil remedies to recover lost assets.

During the course of the investigation, Albert Sigea, now a widower, moved to California to live with his grandson and his family. By all accounts, he appears to be happier and healthier than when the case came to light. Although initially reluctant to address the case, he has given the Ms. Flohr permission to talk about his experiences in the hope that others can be helped.

Though elated that the Sigea case has finally resulted in an arrest, Ms. Flohr shows no indication of slowing down her advocacy efforts. She serves as a mentor at the bank and trains new employees on the topic of financial exploitation. She will soon begin producing, through a local television station, a program highlighting the issues of vulnerable adults.

“This shouldn’t have been unique, it shouldn’t have been special. I just want to say that you shouldn’t give up because someone says ‘No.’ Just keep trying.”

What Do You Think? Question of the Month:

What is the greatest barrier that you face in intervening in cases of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation?

***We welcome readers’ thoughts.
Email your comments to:
NCEA-info@aoa.hhs.gov .***

***Include “Question of the Month”
in the subject line.
Responses will be featured in the
next newsletter, with a new
question to consider.***

December’s Question of the Month:

Based on your own experiences with multidisciplinary task forces, coalitions, and other collaborations, what has been the most significant outcome?

“The greatest benefit of the task force has been that members think, ‘We are all in the same room, we can figure out a solution.’”

***Sarah Flohr,
Founding Member of the
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Vulnerable
Adult Task Force, Washington***

Wisconsin Caregiver Project

(cont. from page 2)

According to Shari Busse, DHFS Director of the Office of Caregiver Quality, not only the development but the dissemination of the curricula requires successful partnerships. DHFS and CCDET have a history of collaborating to address issues in long-term care. For this initiative, they partnered effectively with the LTC Workforce Alliance to promote the availability of the training.

While outcomes of the project's impact are difficult to measure at this stage, anecdotal responses and indicators reflect its success. In order to meet the grant requirement that the training be sustained beyond the pilot phase, project developers have implemented a train-the-trainer program. Participants report feeling empowered by the knowledge gained through the experience, and train-the-trainer sessions are quickly filled, often generating waiting lists. Based upon the early figures, it is estimated that the project will result in the training of over 60,000 frontline, paid caregivers.

To expand the program's reach, the materials have been posted online. They can be used without permission, though Ms. Busse requests that Wisconsin DHFS and CCDET be credited as the source. Although the training was developed specifically for use in Wisconsin, it is adaptable for use in any state. In addition, a DVD version is available for the cost of shipping and handling.

To access Wisconsin Caregiver Training Project materials, or to obtain ordering information for the DVD, visit:

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/caregiver/training/trgIndex.HTM> .

For additional information on the project, contact:

Shari Busse, Director
Office of Caregiver Quality
Division of Quality Assurance
Department of Health and Family Services
bussese@dhfs.state.wi.us

Multidisciplinary Team Mini-Grants Update

The application period for proposals for the NCEA Elder Justice Community Collaborations Project ended on December 21, 2007.

According to Pamela Teaster, President of the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA, the NCEA grantee directing the project), 37 proposals were received and are currently under review.

Notifications of awards are expected to be made by the end of January, 2008.

State News: Initiatives, Programs, and Legislation

Wyoming Enacts New Legislation

House Enrolled Act #120 became effective on July 1, 2007. The legislation made a number of modifications to the state's adult protective services (APS) program: it added definitions of abuse and exploitation of vulnerable adults in Wyoming; provided for additional positions and training in APS; and mandated the development of local multidisciplinary community-based adult protection teams.

The newly designated APS positions have been assigned to areas within the state to support the efforts of local offices in responding to cases involving vulnerable adults. The new professionals refer vulnerable adults to appropriate resources within their communities. In addition, the newly designated professionals are responsible for facilitating community teams and assisting the state office with training and education, both within the department and for communities at large. Prior to July 2007, there were 6 community teams throughout the state. Since the new legislation was enacted, 11 teams have been created, bringing the current total to 17

functional teams.

The increased coverage of community teams, in combination with the strengthened definitions of financial exploitation and intimidation, are intended to enhance prosecution of perpetrators, and increase deterrence and prevention efforts. The modifications are also expected to generate collaboration within the community among involved stakeholders, improve data collection, and improve training efforts.

The Department of Family Services in Wyoming is fully engaged in enhancing partnerships involving Adult Protective Services that will lead to increased training efforts, specifically with law enforcement and the judicial system. The Wyoming State Adult Protective Services Team meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from APS and other state agencies, non profits, and community groups who share a vision to "assure the safety and well being of vulnerable adults by using a coordinated, interdisciplinary approach." The goal of the Team is to "reinforce the effort of local teams and to support their value, inquire and clarify as to

the effectiveness of services and make related policy recommendations, educate on a community level, and share stories of the successes and challenges of state-wide issues relative to Adult Protective Services."

Special thanks to Dorothy Thomas, WY State APS Consultant, for contributing this story.

The ElderAbuse

Listserve provides a free, 24-hour online link to others who are working on elder abuse issues. It is a forum for professionals working in the area of elder mistreatment to share and solicit information to improve prevention and response efforts for elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect.

Subscription is restricted to professionals in order to facilitate a secure environment for free and open discourse.

To request a subscription, complete the form on the [NCEA website](#) or email the list manager, Sharon Merriman-Nai, at NCEA-info@aoa.hhs.gov.

Provide your name, profession, organization address, phone number, and a statement of your experience in the field.

Federal Legislation Update:

A Monthly Look at Proposed Legislative Activity that May Impact Older Individuals

The **Elder Justice Act (S. 1070/H.R. 1783)** gained the support of Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) in December, bringing the total to 19 co-sponsors in the Senate, and 86 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives.

S. 1070 >> [Click here to read the Senate bill](#)

H.R. 1783>> [Click here to read the House bill](#)

The **Community Choice Act (S. 799/ H.R. 1621)**, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) in March, would amend Title XIX of the Social Security Act "...to provide services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the individual's needs, and to provide equal access to community-based attendant services and supports in order to assist individuals in achieving equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency...." The bill was recently endorsed in the House of Representatives by James McGovern (D, MA-3), Ed Pastor (D, AZ-4), John Murtha (D, PA-12), Phil English (R, PA-3), Raul Grijalva (D, AZ-7), Eni Faleomavaega (R, AS), and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D, DC), for a total of 51 co-sponsors. There are 19 co-sponsors in the Senate.

S. 799 >> [Click here to read the Senate bill](#)

H.R. 1621 >> [Click here to read the House bill](#)

Preparing America's Seniors for the Digital Television Transition of Act of 2007, S. 2125 / H.R. 3862, is intended "to improve public awareness in the United States among older individuals and their families and caregivers about the impending Digital Television Transition," recognizing the implications, including isolation, this transition may have on senior citizens. The bill was introduced in the Senate on October 2, 2007, by Herb Kohl (D-WI) and is co-sponsored by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA). It was introduced in the House on October 16, 2007, by Albert Russell Wynn (D, MD-4) and is co-sponsored by Representative G.K. Butterfield (D, NC-1). The bill was recently endorsed by Representative Edolphus Towns (D, NY-10).

S. 2125>> [Click here to read the Senate bill](#)

H.R. 3862>> [Click here to read the House bill](#)

Additional Federal Activities of Note:

Hearing: Senate Special Committee on Aging

December 12, 2007 – "Reverse Mortgages: Polishing not Tarnishing the Golden Years"

To access the webcast of this hearing, [click here](#) .

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently posted a webpage on the **Serious Focus Facilities Initiative**, which includes a list of nursing homes throughout the U.S. with a history of serious quality problems. To access background on the initiative and the current list of SFFs, [click here](#) .

Elder Abuse Research and Literature

The Clearinghouse on Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly (CANE) at the University of Delaware maintains an annotated catalog of peer-reviewed literature on elder mistreatment and related issues. The following are highlights of recently identified publications. To search for additional references, visit the [CANE website](#).

Protecting Senior Investors: Report of Examinations of Securities Firms Providing "Free Lunch" Sales Seminars

**Office of Compliance Inspections and Examinations Securities and Exchange Commission, North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA) & the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA)
September 2007**

Financial service firms increasingly target senior investors making them vulnerable to financial fraud and exploitation. This report summarizes the findings of a recent review of financial service firms that offer "free lunch" sales seminars. The investigations were part of a larger initiative launched in 2006 by the SEC and the North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA) to address growing concern over elder financial abuse in the financial services industry. Over 100 examinations were completed in Florida, California, Texas, Arizona, North Carolina, Alabama, and South Carolina, which were all chosen for their large retiree populations. The study found that "free lunch" sales seminars commonly target seniors and often use misleading marketing materials. Many senior participants mistakenly believe that the "advisors" are unbiased and do not understand that they are actually representatives of large corporate firms. These results indicate a significant need for more active and effective regulatory oversight of financial services sales seminars. To this end, regulators have compiled a list of suggestions to guide the financial services sector in this effort. (Note: This report is accessible online at: <http://www.sec.gov/spotlight/seniors/freelunchreport.pdf> .)

Assessing Capacity in the Setting of Self-Neglect: Development of a Novel Screening Tool for Decision-Making Capacity

**Naik, A., Pickens, S., Burnett, J., Lai, J., Dyer, C.
Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect; Vol. 18 (4), 79-91; 2007.**

Research has indicated that self-neglect is commonly associated with a decline in decision-making capacity. This study employed and evaluated the COMP Screen, an instrument designed to measure the decision-making capabilities of self-neglecting adults. The tool was used to evaluate the decision-making capacity of both self-neglecting seniors and a control group of non-self-neglecting seniors. Results showed no statistically significant difference between the responses of each group on any section of the questionnaire. One possible explanation for this unexpected result is that although self-neglecting adults may be capable of making sound decisions, they may simply be incapable or choose not to follow through with necessary subsequent actions. Findings of this study suggest that the COMP Screen lacks validity as a screening tool for measuring decision-making capacity in self-neglecting elderly adults. Further research is needed to determine whether a modified version of the tool may be useful.

Calendar of Events

March 26-30, 2008

*The National Council on Aging (NCOA)
and the American Society on Aging (ASA)
Annual Joint Conference: Aging in
America*

Marriot Wardman Park Hotel and the Omni
Shoreham Hotel — Washington, D.C.

Website: [Click Here](#)

Telephone: 415-974-9675

February 11 - 12, 2008

*2nd Annual International Conference on
Elder Abuse*

The Marriott Newport Beach Hotel & Spa -
Newport Beach, CA

This course is designed for physicians, healthcare
professionals, and others who work with older
adults.

Website: [Click Here](#)

Telephone: 310-437-0555. ext. 125

February 28-29, 2008

*American Psychological Association (APA)
Summit on Violence and Abuse
in Relationships: Connecting Agendas
and Forging New Directions*

Hyatt Regency — Bethesda, Maryland

Website: [Click Here](#)

Telephone: (512) 845-9059

April 22 - 24, 2008

*International Family Justice Center
Conference*

Westin Horton Plaza – San Diego, CA

Website: [Click Here](#)

Telephone: 888-511-FJCA

May 15-16, 2008

Regional APS Conference

Sheraton Hotel - Arlington, TX For more
information contact [Valencia Gill-Hooper,](#)

[LMSW](#)

Telephone: 214-670-0793

May 5 – 6, 2008

*Legal Assistance for Seniors' 4th
Annual Elder Abuse Conference*

Hilton Oakland Airport Hotel – Oakland,
CA

Website: [Click Here](#)

NCEA/CANE
Center for Community Research and
Service/CCRS at the University of
Delaware
297 Graham Hall
Newark, DE 19716
On the Web at: www.ncea.aoa.gov
Email: ncea-info@aoa.hhs.gov
Telephone: 302-831-3525

NCEA Grantees:

Clearinghouse on Abuse and
Neglect of the Elderly,
University of Delaware (CANE-UD)
On the Web at: www.cane.udel.edu

National Adult Protective Services
Association (NAPSA)
On the Web at: www.apsnetwork.org

National Committee for the
Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA)
One the Web at:
www.preventelderabuse.org

National Center on Elder Abuse

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