Our current grant funded initiatives

Our current grant funded initiatives are:

Central Virginia Task Force on Domestic Violence in Later Life

Two grants provide funding for this initiative:

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Virginia Elder Justice Training and Services Project

This project is supported by Grant No. 2012-EW-AX-K004 awarded by the Office of Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. Project concludes 9/30/2016.

For almost 40 years, the Virginia Center on Aging (VCoA) has worked to protect and improve the quality of life of older Virginians. We are a statewide agency located on the MCV Campus of VCU. VCoA was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1978 to be an interdisciplinary study, research, information and resource facility utilizing the full capabilities of faculty, staff, libraries, laboratories and clinics for the benefit of older Virginians and for the expansion of knowledge related to the aged and the aging.

Abuse in later life

Our response to a growing problem

The nation and the Commonwealth of Virginia are aging rapidly. As the number of adults 50 and over grows, so does the incidence of abuse of older adults. Services are under resourced, inadequately staffed, and training is lacking. At the same time, caseloads are growing and becoming more complex.

Our Abuse in Later Life Program has been tackling this issue since 1998, providing training and technical assistance in best practices for professionals from diverse fields who encounter older victims. We help them gain the knowledge and skills needed to provide appropriate and meaningful assistance. Our ultimate goal is to bring hope, healing and dignity to older victims in Virginia.

Since 2007, we have trained more than 3,000 professionals throughout the Virginia and across the nation in recognizing and responding to abuse in later life.

Growing our resources to respond

Our abuse in later life programs would not exist without grant awards. New funding will be required to maintain and expand our response.

Our services

Helping professionals respond to abuse in later life

Our workshops, training, and technical assistance help professionals understand the types and dynamics of abuse in later life; discover resources available from professionals in other disciplines; better understand the role different disciplines can play in finding solutions; create avenues to find innovative approaches to improve systems; join with new partners to enhance coordinated care, always placing the person first.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse:

In an emergency: Call 9-1-1

To report any form of elder abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse) or neglect, call your local department of social services or the Virginia Department of Social Services’ 24-hour, toll-free Adult Protective Services Hotline at (888) 832-3858.

For crisis intervention, support, information and local program referrals for victims of family violence or sexual assault, their friends, families, professionals and the general public, contact The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance’s toll-free, confidential 24-hour statewide Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 838-8238 or visit their website at www.vsdvalliance.org.

Our partnerships

Statewide and local

Partnerships with others are central to our work. Our partners include both statewide and local agencies as well as coalitions that include disciplines as varied as:

- Law enforcement
- Criminal justice
- Social services
- Aging services
- Health care
- Mental health
- Victim advocacy
- Housing
- Faith communities
- Financial institutions

We always welcome new partnerships. Please contact us to become a partner agency or to get involved.

Key Training Points

1. Focus on victim safety
2. Be aware of and avoid assumptions
3. Recognize abuser tactics
4. Work collaboratively

The curriculum for our day-long multi-disciplinary trainings was developed by the US Justice Department, Office of Violence Against Women, US Department of Homeland Security, and the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life.

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Updated 3/31/16

Our work is recognized in White House report

In September 2014, our Central Virginia Task Force on Domestic Violence in Later Life was one of six Violence Against Women Act funded programs from Virginia recognized in the White House Report: Twenty Years Fighting Violence Against Women.
Abuse in Later Life Program

The numbers

Aging of the population
Every day in the US, 10,000 people turn 65. The fastest growing demographic is those over 80.

Underreporting of abuse
Elder abuse can be difficult to research, since most cases go unreported. One study estimated four out of five cases go unreported and another suggests unreported cases are 24 times those of reported cases.

Many studies, however, don’t reveal the full scope of the problem because they limited the types of abuse explored or they excluded older adults with cognitive impairments.

Health and economic costs
Current data suggest about ten percent of people 60 and older who live at home suffer abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Some studies show approximately half of those with dementia are victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Abuse in later life triples the risk of premature death and causes unnecessary illness, injury and suffering. Victims are four times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home and three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital.

While not much research has been done on the total economic cost, one study found the annual financial loss by victims nationwide was estimated to be at least $2.9 billion in 2010, an increase of 12% over 2008.

Those with cognitive incapacities suffer 100% greater economic losses than those without cognitive incapacities.

Questions and answers

Who is affected by abuse in later life?
People from all backgrounds:
- all income levels
- all ages from 50 to 100+
- all racial and ethnic groups
- all religions
- all living settings
- women and men
- all geographic settings
- all ability levels

What does it look like?
Abusive behavior includes:
- controlling who the victims see, what they do, where they go, or what happens with their money
- calling the victims names or threatening to hurt them
- stealing from the victims
- threatening to leave or put them in a nursing home
- hurting the victims’ pets
- hitting, shaking, pushing, burning or choking the victims
- touching the victims in ways or places they do not want to be touched
- withholding food, water, medication or other needed goods or services

What are the signs an older adult may have been victimized?
A victim of abuse in later life may have any of the following signs:
- fear
- unexplained injuries
- isolation or withdrawal
- verbal abuse or controlling behavior by a caregiver or family member
- lack of amenities or medical aids he or she should be able to afford
- loss of control of funds
- unexplained sexually transmitted disease

Sources:

What are people saying about our trainings?

When asked, “What did you like” and “What was most valuable,” participants in our cross-training for victim service providers responded:
- [information on] ageism; makes this issue more apparent
- not [making assumptions] about people
- learning about all the agencies that can assist
- the different approaches by different agencies
- use of videos in increasing sensitivity to different aspects of [abuse]
- [trainers] were experienced and gave good examples from their work
- safety plans…[and] questions to ask victims
- information on abuser tactics
- engagement…kept me interested and involved
- different…way of thinking; areas to improve on
- best activities in any training I’ve had
- now I know how to handle these referrals/issuses in my clients
- learning to collaborate more with other agencies and services

Comment from a trainer on the nationally developed day-long victim services curriculum
The time, planning, and detail that has been put into this curriculum almost makes the process seem effortless…Every detail has been covered. Power Points, sample scripts, videos, and even small group discussions have been planned out to the minute. We have everything we need to facilitate Abuse in Later Life workshops for victim and aging service practitioners…

When asked, “What did you like” and “What was most valuable,” participants in our law enforcement training responded:
- first class attended in 18 years that addressed this issue. Very good.
- explanation of elder abuse statutes
- the emphasis on agency collaboration
- being reminded that elder abuse occurs more often than we think
- real life examples
- the details to look for to initiate a case
- learning about [long-term care] ombudsman
- learning about APS
- really wonderful job!! All of the trainers presented as if they had been doing this together for years!!!
- great job in talking about cognitive limitations, how this impacts the investigation
- good information regarding conducting interviews and possible roadblocks
- helping recognize abuse signs and how to start investigations.
- gaining more information and resources to better investigate these incidents

Comment on a cross-disciplinary training for a project kick-off
Judges joined with social workers and law enforcement officers joined with attorneys, mental health professionals joined with the faith community leaders and bankers joined with prosecutors; … Each member brought to the table their expertise and knowledge, and each … left the table with more of both …

Our current grant funded initiatives

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**Central Virginia Task Force on Domestic Violence in Later Life**

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**Virginia Center on Aging**

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