

A Review of the Elderly Abuse and Elderly Abuse Programs and Recommended  
Improvements

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A Review of the Elderly Abuse and Elderly Abuse Programs and Recommended  
Improvements

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## **Abstract**

The following research paper will review elderly abuse and elderly abuse programs in the United States. This paper will discuss what current programs are available to abused senior citizens. A review of literature pertaining to elderly abused individuals and theories that help to explain what needs elderly abused individuals require from programs. Additionally, recent legislation and treatments for various elder abuses are also discussed. Based a review of the academic literature, legislation, and current treatment programs recommendations are made regarding potentially successful abuse programs.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

I believe that elderly abuse is a subject in the criminal justice system that is easily overlooked. Much attention is paid to victims of murder and child abuse, but little attention is paid to elder abuse. With the large number of baby boomers reaching retirement age, it is important that the subject of elder abuse continue to be researched. In this paper, I hope to provide an overview of abuses of elders, resources that are available to elderly victims, as well as the future regarding elder abuse.

Elderly abuse can be a difficult ordeal to go through. Not only is it an embarrassment to the abused, but it can also leave an elderly person without any money or resources. Fortunately, there are services which can assist with victimized elderly individuals. These services help to counsel the abused, and assist them in better understanding their victimization.

Wallace and Roberson (2011) point out elderly victims who are subject to physical abuse are twice as likely to require rehabilitation than a younger victim. Unfortunately it does not appear that there is the equivalent amount of treatment providers for the elderly. It is important that they receive proper care, and I hope to show which types of programs are successful, and

which types of programs need improvement. Additionally, I will touch upon how recent legislation can affect the care that treatment centers provide to victims of elderly abuse.

Despite the help of service providers, more can be done to assist the abused. There are some programs that are more beneficial than others. It is important to identify those programs that are successful, and those that are not as successful.

### **Methods of Approach**

Information for this paper will be based on secondary sources related to the abuse of elderly citizens. These sources will include those from the fields of law enforcement, social work, and community corrections. These sources will come from accredited journals, required textbooks from the Criminal Justice Graduate Program, and State Legislature. I will also review relevant theories that I have come across during my studies in the Criminal Justice program, which help to explain elderly abuse.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

After researching treatment programs, I anticipate that there is room for much improvement. I anticipate that I will find some inefficiency and I will also find programs that just do not do a good job with rehabilitating the abused. Rather, they try to use a template based, one-size-fits all approach.

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## **Section I. Introduction**

Many senior citizens are not healthy enough to live alone, and thus require assistance with daily living needs. Such tasks as cooking and showering can become difficult for seniors, so caretakers are needed to assist. Seniors who require assistance live in care facilities, or are taken care of by family members. These living arrangements can sometimes cause frustration and confrontation between the caretaker and the senior.

Frustration can lead to forms of abuse or neglect of the senior citizen. It is important to understand what resources are available for abused senior citizens. It is also important to review these resources and services to see what can be overhauled, improved, or revamped.

Despite the help of service providers, more can be done to assist the abused. It is important to identify what is successful, and what is not as successful. Identifying what has been successful in current programs will help to lead to recommendations for future elder abuse services.

Being abused as a senior citizen can be a difficult ordeal to go through. Not only is it an embarrassment to the abused, but it can also leave an elderly person without any money or resources. Fortunately, there are services which can assist with victimized elderly individuals. These services help to counsel the abused, and provide help for them to better understand their victimization.

As mentioned in the beginning, crimes against senior citizens will increase in the future. This is due to the sheer number of baby boomers reaching retirement age. The number of care givers will also increase along with the elderly population. Both formal nursing and adult care organizations and informal home care will be given to senior citizens. With the senior citizen

population and the care giver population set to grow, the aggregate number of elderly victims will rise. It is important that elderly abuse is reported. It is also important that those impacted by elderly abuse receive the proper care and treatment.

## **Section II. Literature Review: Literature, Legislation and Journal Review**

### *Literature Review*

Elder abuse is defined by the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) as “...intentional or neglectful acts by a caregiver or ‘trusted’ individual...” Elder abuse can occur physically, emotionally, or sexually. Abusive acts can also be in the form of exploitation and neglect. Furthermore, abusive acts include intentional acts or neglectful acts typically performed by a caregiver, or a person that is close to the abused elder. Elder abuse is more prevalent than what is typically reported. The NCEA (2011) states that one in ten elders are abused. Only one in five of those abusive acts are reported.

Elder abuse is a subject in victimology that is often overlooked. Much attention is paid to victims of murder and child abuse, but little attention is paid to victims of elder abuse. With the large number of baby boomers reaching retirement age, it is important that the subject of elderly abuse continue to be researched.

Elderly victims are subject to the same crimes that other abuse victims are subjected to. The issues facing elderly victims after a crime are compounded due to their diminished physical and mental abilities. Crime that causes bodily harm is much more serious to a senior citizen; because they do not have the ability to recover the way a younger person would. Wallace and Roberson (2011) revealed that elderly victims who are subject to physical violence are twice as likely to be hospitalized than a younger victim. This may be due to the fact that during an attack it is less likely that a senior citizen can appropriately protect themselves.

Many abused elders face abuse in their homes, or in home care facilities. In these cases, the caregiver will abuse the elder. Unfortunately for the elder, they are physically unable to protect themselves from physical abuse or neglect. Abuse by caregivers falls under two

categories: domestic abuse and institutional abuse (Schmallegger, 2007). Domestic abuse occurs at the hands of those related to the victim. Institutional abuse occurs at the hands of caregivers who are not related to the victim, such as in nursing homes. A survey conducted by the National Center on Elder Abuse showed that the majority that approximately 61% of abuse occurs in domestic settings, while approximately 8 % occur in institutional settings (NCEA, 2000).

Care takers include those nursing home facilities, and also in-home family caretakers. Abuse can be in the physical form and also in the emotional form. Care takers who feel burdened and stressed by can begin to mistreat their elderly patient/family member by neglecting and ignoring the elderly individual's needs both physically and psychologically. Karmen (2010) cites that approximately 1.5 million elderly Americans were the subject of abuse. Reports of elderly abuse by caretakers are just as faint as with more common crimes against the elderly. Senior citizens who live under the care of a family member or caretaker are not only subject to physical harm, they are also subject to abuse by neglect. A caretaker's intentional or unintentional disregard of an elder's needs is in fact the largest form of abuse the NCEA recorded in their recent survey. The NCEA survey showed that approximately 42 % of reported abuse was in the form of neglect (NCEA, 2000). Physical abuse was the second most reported form of elder abuse (20.1%), followed by abandonment (13.2%) (NCEA, 2000).

Crimes involving fraud or finances are also more hurtful against an elderly individual. Schemes such as those involving charity fraud, funeral fraud, and savings frauds often target senior citizens (NCEA, 2011). If an elderly individual is conned out of their finances, it is likely that will not recoup what they lost. Many senior victims live on social security or a similar fixed income payment, and their ability to find employment is not as great as if they were a younger individual. A significant financial loss can prevent them from obtaining

items including food and medicine. Also, their ability to obtain loans is hampered, as banks and other lenders note that an elderly person's ability to repay the loan is limited.

The following review reveals a variety of methods to which different organizations handle elderly abuse cases. A few victim services organizations have been selected to show what current organizations are currently available to abused elderly individuals. The Maricopa County victim services organization and the Washington State Adult Protective Services group are localized organizations which help to assist abused elders in various ways.

An article written by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (2003) offers a glimpse into what can be improved in the area of services for the elderly abused. This study reviewed three local prosecutor's offices that contain elderly victim services units. According to the study, only approximately 24% of victim service programs that were poled have elderly abuse specialists on hand (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2003). These individuals who specialize in elderly abuse have received specialized training in how to approach and deal with elderly abuse cases. Those who receive specialized training are more familiar with how to handle elderly abuse cases. They are more knowledgeable on how to communicate with the elderly, know where to go for further assistance, and can even familiarize and comfort elders with the criminal justice and court systems. Those who do not receive elderly abuse training are less likely to deal with elderly abuse cases successfully. According to the article, those who have not received specialized training in elderly abuse do not have the appropriate amount of experience to work effectively with elderly victims (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2003).

Other victim service organizations offer various tasks that can contribute to positive results. According to an article by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (Otto, 2006), various suggestions were collected regarding how to improve victim services for the elderly. Included in

those suggestions was the need to have various counseling services. Not every elderly abuse victim goes through the same situation. The Maricopa County victim services program provides various counseling services for the elderly, including support groups and crisis intervention specialists (Otto, 2006).

Another local organization that helps to assist elderly abused is Adult Protective Services. Adult Protective Services is a state organization found in all states in America. One local protective services organization the State of Washington, Adult Protective Services (APA), which receives reports of offenses against elders, and investigates these reports. Offenses include those of the physical nature, fraud, and neglect. APS prioritizes these reports by the likelihood of immediate harm to an elder (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2010). They provide services including: protective orders, legal assistance, in home care services, and referrals to other community services.

A review of literature helps to define the issues of elder abuse. As described in the paragraphs above, elder abuse is not only physical. Elder abuse can also be in emotional in form. There are local and national organizations that assist with abused senior citizens. In order to further understand what organizations and counseling is currently available to abused elders.

### *Legislation Review*

For the most part, federal law for elderly abuse is basically non-existent. There are federal laws for child abuse and domestic violence fund services and shelters, but not a comparable one for elderly abuse (NCEA, 2010). Elder abuse, and funding for elderly abuse activities can be found in the Older Americans Act. The majority of elder abuse laws are at the state level.

Recently President Barack Obama enacted provisions in his new health-care reform bill specifically calling out assistance to the elderly – the Elderly Abuse Act of 2010(HR 1783. , S.1070). This includes the authorization of \$757 million over four years for the Elder Justice Act (Elder Justice Coalition, 2010). An emphasis on the reporting of elderly abuse was placed in this act. Civil monetary penalties can be enforced upon those who are to report abuse, but choose not to do so. It also calls for more nursing home transparency. Included is the requirement for employees of nursing homes and similar facilities to complete a national and state background checks.

Another new piece of legislation was passed in the State of New York. When citizens grow older, one common practice to help with contractual decision making is to grant another person the ability to make certain decisions. This is known as granting another individual ‘power-of-attorney’. Close family members are usually given power-of-attorney over their elder family member’s financial decision making. Family members can abuse this power, and direct monies away from the principal, and towards their own interests. Commonly, the signature of the elder is required. The State of New York now requires that both the principal and the agent sign to the document. By having both parties sign to the document, “...you create a special fiduciary relationship with the principal that imposes legal responsibilities...” (Carr, 2009). The new law also requires the principal to expressly describe any items, or money that transfers to the agent.

At the community level, police departments and senior citizens are attempting to combat elderly abuse as well. These collaborative groups are known as triads. These triad groups consist of representatives from the police department, the sheriff’s office, adult protective services (APA), and senior citizens of the community. These groups attempt to fight and come

up with ways to better fight the victimization of the elderly. The individual groups have worked together to gain, among other things, search warrants to those homes and facilities that have been in question.

Adult Protective Services statutes are present in every state, including the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The APA laws help to establish a process for reporting and investigating elderly abuse. It also helps to provide guidance to social service groups assisting elderly victims. APS laws in each state can vary.

To combat elderly abuse, many states have enacted legislation to provide rights to victims of elderly abuse. In the state of Washington, RCW 74 Chapter 74.34 helps to define and process elderly abuse. Elderly victims fall under the definition of ‘Vulnerable adult.’ This is defined to include “...persons receiving services from any individual who for compensation serves as a persona aide to a person who self directs his or her own care...” (Revised Code of Washington, 2011). Reporting abuse is of great importance in the state of Washington to the point where it’s criminal not to do so. RCW 74.34.053 is titled ‘Failure to report – False report – penalties.’ A failure to report for an individual who knowingly fails to make a report is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

Washington state also has recently passed Initiative 1163, which provides protections from vulnerable seniors and individuals with disabilities (May and Hunter, 2011). Initiative 1163 focuses much of its language on caretakers and caregivers in long-term care facilities. Among the items included in this initiative is the requirement that caregivers pass federal background checks. It also require that long-term caretakers have 75 hours of training and also a certification exam (May and Hunter, 2011).

Legislation is an important aspect to understand in elder abuse. It provides potential remedies to address the problem of elder abuse. Continued legislative support can also give added exposure to the growing problem of elder abuse.

### *Journal Review*

Dimah and Dimah (2002) reviewed elderly abuse from a minority perspective. They studied elderly abuse among African Americans in the state of Illinois. Part of their motivation for focusing on African Americans was that elderly abuse among African Americans did not receive much attention. The researchers found that African Americans are more susceptible to exploitations financially. These findings show the need for specialized victims services towards financial fraud. More than any other victim population, senior citizens are the focus of financial fraud. The financial and psychological blow can be devastating. Elderly victims could have worked their whole lives for retirement, and it could be wiped out by an instance of fraud. The blow can cause a downward spiral for the victim, causing further health related issues. Victim services can assist elderly victims with filing a civil action against the offender (Wallace and Roberson, 2011). Should the victim obtain a favorable decision regarding their claim, the courts can help to expedite a payment schedule that fits the victim's needs.

Gold and Gwyther (1989) review a pilot educational curriculum which is designed to help prevent elder abuse and neglect. According to Gold and Gwyther (1989) describe potential family conflict as interactions between two family members "...exacerbated by unclear or inappropriate communication and expectations." (p. 9). According to the authors, family stress comes when the interaction between children and parents changes. As a family grows older, the dynamic changes, whereas parents were once the caregivers, but later in life the roles change. To help avoid and prevent abuse, Gold and Gwyther propose the family stress model, which is

model that is broken up into four modules (financial, functional, social and emotional). Each module focuses on specific on how a family should handle issues that can arise when the living dynamic for a family changes. The module is taught by family life educators. The family stress model aims to empower families to identify stressful moments and diffuse them before any violence or abuse occurs. At the time of the writing of this article, the family stress model and modules were being tested on a pilot basis so no statistics could be recovered regarding the success of the program. Despite this, the authors were able to identify some potential shortcomings of the model. The authors note that the models cannot meet the individual needs of a person (Gold and Gwyther, 1989). Another limitation, the authors point out is that the model aims to help to prevent elder abuse, rather than intervene in an already abusive situation (Gold and Gwyther, 1989).

Another article with respect to elder abuse is by Richard L. Douglass. In his article, he reviews the findings of a Michigan field study regarding elderly abuse. The study included what forms of abuse were most likely to occur by domestic caregivers. The study's findings noted that physical abuse occurred less frequently than that of neglect and emotional or physical abuse: "Active neglect occurred less frequently than emotional or verbal abuse, and physical abuse was generally considered a rare event..." (Douglas, 1983, p. 399). Among its conclusions, the Michigan study found that the most typical cause of neglect and abuse stems from the burden caused by the requirements of caring for an elderly (Douglas, 1983). According to Douglas (1983) "The burden of caring without occasional relief, can lead to despair, anger, resentment, or violence amount some caretakers" (p. 401).

It is important when discussing elderly abuse programs to understand past literature reviews along with legislation. Reviewing what has worked and what has not worked can lend

itself to successful programs. It is also important to understand what legislation is out there that can assist to push elderly abuse programs. Literature and legislation can help give individuals a background of elder abuse, and what is currently available to the abused. To supplement those facts, it is important to understand theories that are associated with elder abuse. Theories can assist in explaining what causes elder abuse, and at the same time it can also assist in finding useful abuse prevention methods.

### *Comparison of Elder Abuse Intervention Services*

In attempting to find what works best with abused senior citizens, it is important to compare what is currently available. A recent study completed by Brownwell and Wolden (2002) compared the approaches of two elderly abuse services which are provided to abused senior citizens. This study was designed to compare the Walk the Walk organizations social services programs

Walk the Walk is a non-profit organization whose mission is to identify and prevent elder abuse. The activities of this organization include fundraising, raising awareness of the elderly abused. Its most ambitious feat is “Mary’s House” a shelter that for the elderly abused, which also includes a twenty-four hotline for senior citizens in need.

Another service Walk the Walk includes is the Crime Victims Assistance Program. It is more of a criminal justice approach to handling elder abuse, where victims are put into contact with law enforcement and law enforcement support agencies. This particular service of Walk the Walk provides victims with pro-bono legal advice. This service can also assist with any financial needs, including assistance with financial hardship. The Crime Victims Assistance Program can also help victims gain access to the Police Department for assistance.

Brownwell and Wolden (2002) argue that a social services approach is more beneficial when dealing with elder abuse than the criminal justice approach is. Brownwell and Wolden investigated several cases handled by Walk-the-walk and their various services programs. The investigation by Brownwell and Wolden included “sociodemographic profiles of victims and abusers, types and circumstances of abuse, service interventions, and service outcomes.” (pg 475). Ultimately, Brownwell and Wolden conclude that the social service intervention is more beneficial when dealing with elderly victims.

Articles are not the only sources of information that can be beneficial for understanding the abuse of senior citizens. In researching for elder abuse, it is beneficial to read statistics, legislation, and accredited journals. The information shows that elder abuse is an ongoing issue in which counties, elected officials, and criminal justice researchers have studied. Tackling elder abuse requires attention from these components. It is important for a criminal justice observant to research the issue and raise awareness of it. It is also important for elected officials to come up with the necessary laws to punish offenders.

It is important when discussing elderly abuse programs to understand past literature reviews along with legislation. A thorough review of literature and legislation can provide an archive of how elder abuse has been combated in the past. Reviewing what has worked and what has not worked can lend itself to successful programs. Literature reviews can also provide statistics and legislation help to discuss factual matters of elder abuse, but it is also important to understand theories behind elder abuse. Statistics show how prevalent abuse is in a certain society. It is also important to understand what legislation is out there that can assist to push elderly abuse programs. Literature and legislation can help give individuals a background of elder abuse, and what is currently available to the abused. An exhaustive review of literature and

legislation can hopefully provide a blue print for successful elder abuse programs. To supplement those facts, it is important to understand theories that are associated with elder abuse. Theories can assist in explaining what causes elder abuse, and at the same time it can also assist in finding useful abuse prevention methods

### **Section III. Theoretical Framework:**

Studying theories that are associated with elder abuse can ultimately help to determine what forms of treatment works best for elder abuse victims. Studying and reviewing theories related to elder abuse can help to identify what areas of assistance abused senior citizens need. In the absence or lack of available data, theories can help to explain certain behaviors of individuals. Theories can also help emphasize available data which can help to explain certain events. There are various theories to that can identify behaviors of the abuser and the abused, and explain among other things abuses due to family stress, financial dependency, or just lifestyle decisions. A review of these theories can lead to recommendations to improve programs that assist abused senior citizens.

Wallace and Roberson help to identify theories associated with elder abuse. According to Wallace and Roberson (2011), the social and economic lines of abuse of elderly victims are similar to that of most instances of family violence. Wallace and Roberson (2011) describe that elderly abuse is not an isolated instance; rather it is a pattern of abuse that includes not only physical abuse, but also emotional abuse and neglect. A few theories of elder abuse are described by Wallace and Roberson.

One of the theories reviewed by Wallace and Roberson is the Family Stress Theory, developed by Phillips. According to Wallace and Roberson (2011), this theory suggests that providing care to elderly family members can cause family stress, and ultimately lead to the victimization of the elderly family member. Those caring for other family members can become overwhelmed with the demands of caring for their relative. The pressure can become so intense that the relative caretaker can becomes abusive. Abuse can include physical abuse and neglect.

Anti-abuse programs which can help families identify abusive relationships would be beneficial. Counseling can help to provide techniques that can defuse volatile situations. As Wallace and Roberson (2011) note, close proximity to family members for extended periods of time can become stressful for both the elderly family member and the caretaker.

Wallace and Roberson also associate the psychopathology theory as one that is associated with elder abuse. This theory by R.S. Wolf and K. A Pillemer states that abusers typically are sufferers of mental disorders (Wallace and Roberson, 2011). Mental disorders can cause an individual to become violent. Researchers have found psychopathology present in many elderly abusers (Wallace and Roberson, 2011).

Another theory that describes elder abuse is the Social Exchange Theory by J. L. Davidson. This theory helps to explain the increased financial dependency of abused senior citizens. The Social Exchange Theory deems financial dependency as a source for abuse. Here a senior citizen becomes financially dependent on the caretaker. As the dependency increases, the relationship between the elderly individual and the caretaker begins to destruct. Eventually it can lead to the abuse of the elderly party.

Counseling that can assist with financial counseling would be beneficial to help offset the abuses due to financial dependency. Helping families, who live and care for their elders, towards counseling will help to cope with any financial hardships. Counseling can help families understand that living with other and elderly family members requires tightening of the family budget.

The Lifestyle Theory, as developed by M. Hindelang and his colleagues and reviewed by Wallace and Roberson, states that the likelihood of becoming a victim pertains to an individual's lifestyle (Wallace and Roberson, 2011). This is another victimization theory that pertains to

elder abuse. Elderly individuals make lifestyle decisions which ultimately lead to their victimization. Rather than living in an assisted living facility with trained nurses and staff, some senior citizens decide to live with relatives. Choosing to live this lifestyle increases the likelihood that the senior citizen will be victim of elderly abuse. Family members are not typically trained the way assisted living staff members are trained. Family members may not have the same patience or skills to care for senior citizens.

The Social Bond Theory is also relevant to elder abuse. Hirschi (2006) believes that juvenile crime is indirectly associated with the relationship between parent and child. If the relationship between parent and child is strong the child will more strongly consider the parents' preferences, and is less likely to commit a crime (Hirschi, 2006). This bond is likely to continue throughout the life of the relationship between parent and child. Later in life, the roles of the parent and child switch, with the child becoming the caretaker and the parent then becoming the subordinate. One can argue that if the relationship is strong the child will continue to take into account the parent's preferences, and less likely abuse or neglect the parent. The same can hold true with a senior citizen and non-related caretaker. If a strong bond is formed between the two, abuse and neglect is less likely.

As one can see, there are many theories which are associated with elder abuse. Stretching from the Family Stress Theory to the Social Bond Theory, one can see that a strong relationship between individuals help to reduce the likelihood of elder abuse. Combining knowledge of theory along with knowledge of current legislation and literature reviews can help to provide the necessary information organizations to develop appropriate programs to help assist abused senior citizens. When determining what is appropriate for abused elders, relying on the

knowledge of legislative matters, literature reviews and statistics, and theories are instrumental when determining appropriate elder abuse programs.

## **Section IV. Recommendations**

Attention to elderly victims will become an important issue in the future because by 2025 it is estimated that the elderly population will represent 21% of the US population (Wallace and Roberson, 2011). There will be more senior citizens in elderly care facilities than ever before. It is easy to infer that if the elderly population increases, than the crimes against elderly victims will also increase. In order to address the needs of these victims, it is important that there are enough facilities and institutions that can care for elderly victims.

2010 was an important year for improved care of elderly victims. The Elderly Justice Act of 2010 (S. 1070/H.R. 1783) provides for a substantial increase in funding for senior citizens. It also places an emphasis, and ultimately a requirement, on the reporting of elderly abuse.

Hopefully the increased funding will be put to good use. Recommended uses for the money should go towards the hiring of more officials to recognize, monitor, and investigate claims of abuse. It would also be helpful of some of the money went to training of newly hired individuals working with elder patients, and also money to help community training to for in home caretakers.

### *Community Training and Increase of Skilled Workers*

One recommended area of improvement is to increase funding that can help support community training. Community training should focus more towards helping individuals identify elder abuse, and also to help them understand the reporting process. As mentioned in the literature review, an article written by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (2003) shows the specialized training of employees is greatly beneficial. Approximately a quarter of victim services programs have specifically trained employees who specialize in elderly abuse. Specialists that can handle physical abuse are important; however there should be individuals

who also specialize in other forms of elderly abuse assistance as, developed by Phillips and expressed by Gold and Gwyther (1989) in the family stress model. These specialties would include financial, functional, social, and emotional assistance.

#### *Improvements to Adult Protective Services*

Even with funding, it is important for victim services providers to provide the necessary help. For those who were physically abused, it is important for the assisting victim service organization to remove the elderly from the abusive environment, and to ultimately help them find a new safe home. Adult Protective Services plays a major role in helping abused individuals find safer homes. One improvement that would assist the APA in handling abuses would be an increase in reporting. The APA helps to establish guidelines with the reporting of physical abuse. Phillips, as noted by Karmen (2010) that the elderly often view abuse as a family matter that can only bring shame to families. One can assume from Phillip's Family Stress Theory that many abuses go unreported. To ensure more effective abuse reporting, the APA can create more awareness of abuse to the public. Increased awareness would help citizens better spot incidents of abuse.

It is important that further work be done to research elderly abuse. The signing of the Elderly Justice Act of 2010 (HR 1783. , S.1070), was an important achievement for victim's rights, however advocates for victim's rights should not rest on their accomplishments. As highlighted by the criticisms of the Washington State Adult Protective Services, more can be done to improve APS as well as other victim services organizations.

#### *Greater Collaboration between the APS and Geriatric Assessment Services*

Another recommendation to help improve the APS is to have APS social workers work in collaboration with geriatric assessment services. Geriatric assessment services social workers

can help to evaluate home care facilities to establish what environment the home can provide. The APS social worker can assist with the establishing the needs of the abused victim. In collaboration, the APS social worker and the geriatric assessment services social worker can find the best environment for the elder. A similar model was studied, in which the geriatric service worker and an APS employee worked in collaboration, in New Jersey. The New Jersey APS social worker would respond to a report regarding elder abuse or neglect and work with a geriatric assessment social worker to help mitigate any further abuse (Heath, Kobylarz, Brown, and Castano, 2005). The report found that of the cases referred to the geriatric services organization LGAPS by the New Jersey APS, LGAPS contributed “at least one relevant intervention in 81% of referred APS clients” (Heath, Kobylarz, Brown, and Castano, 2005). Another area in which the APA can assist is in finding elders quality homes of various financial situations. As noted earlier, in many states, the APA can help to assist elders to find homes. One disturbing trend is occurring in commissioned based senior-placement private services. These private companies find homes for seniors, however they rely on commissioned based individuals rather than trained social workers. Many of these sales individuals are not properly trained in home-placement, focusing on finding homes for seniors where there is the biggest commission. In Seattle, over a three year span, there have been 143 cases in which senior citizens were placed in homes with major violations (Berens, 2010). By becoming more involved with home placement, the APA can help to find quality and appropriate homes.

#### *Improved relationship and engagement between elderly and caretaker*

It is also important that caretakers are encouraged to engage with their patients. As noted by the Social Bond Theory, if there is a strong relationship between two individuals, then less likely abuse or neglect will occur. Encouraging caretakers to openly communicate with the

seniors that they are caring for can create a stronger relationship. Engaging in conversation, games and other activities can help to foster that relationship. State assistance can help caretakers better engage their patients by offering training opportunities which can improve the caretaker's communication skills.

## **Section V. Summary and Conclusion**

In the upcoming years, there will be a shift in the American culture. In the near future, there will be more senior citizens than ever before. Baby-boomers are quickly approaching retirement age, and will eventually reach senior citizen age. As they become older, many of them will require assistance from their family members, or from caretakers to conduct basic living needs. These new living conditions can become difficult for both the caretaker and the senior citizen.

Living with-in close proximity can lead to an evolving frustrating relationship between the caretaker and elder. This frustration can boil over and lead to abuse of the elder. With a growing population of elderly, it is easy to see that the number of abuse claims will also rise. It is important that senior citizens have the programs available to help to alleviate these abuses.

Organizations such as Adult Protective Services are there to assist abused citizens. However APA cannot do it alone. They require legislative assistance to help preserve the rights of abused senior citizens. Recent laws have also help to assist with elder abuse.

Laws have been enacted to help to assist with the funding of programs that can help abused senior citizens. The Elderly Justice Act of 2010 (HR 1783. , S.1070) was enacted, and allows for more funding to services and organizations such as the APA to help with such items as hiring and training employees.

It is important that further work be done to research elderly abuse. The signing of the Elderly Justice Act was an important achievement for victim's rights, however advocates for victim's rights should not rest on their accomplishments. As highlighted by the criticisms of the Washington State Adult Protective Services, more can be done to improve APS as well as other victim services organizations.

The spike in the senior population will create opportunities for offenders to prey on the elderly. History has shown that criminal offenses evolve with society. The rise and evolution of the internet also included the rise and evolution of cyber frauds and other crimes. As the elderly population grows in numbers, new types of abuse and fraud will likely target those 60 and older. Hopefully in the future, authorities will better identify future trends, fight those new crimes that target seniors, and provide the necessary treatment to elderly victims.

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