



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
INDIGENOUS AGING

Recognizing and Responding to Elder Abuse in Tribal Communities

Presented By:

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Advocacy*

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What is Elder Justice?

Elder Justice in Indian Country

- ❖ Protection and advocacy of the rights, dignity, and well-being of Native American older adults
 - ❖ Addresses abuse, neglect, and exploitation within tribal communities
 - ❖ Ensures access to essential resources, healthcare, and support services
 - ❖ Upholds elders' cultural, traditional, and community leadership roles
 - ❖ Centers elders' voices in decisions affecting their lives
 - ❖ Integrates traditional practices and values with Western legal and social systems for a holistic approach
 - ❖ Inclusive of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and tribal communities
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- ❖ Source: National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative/Elder Justice Center

<https://www.elderjusticecenter.org/nativeamerican-elder-justice-1>

Elder Justice in Tribal Communities

Historical trauma, jurisdictional complexity, underreporting, and cultural strengths.

Unique challenges:

- ❖ Remote geography
- ❖ Jurisdictional overlap
- ❖ Historical mistrust

Elders may hesitate to report abuse, increasing the need for skilled investigations.



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Elder Protection Codes



What is an Elder
Abuse Code?

National Indian Council on Aging Recommendations on Tribal Elder Abuse Codes

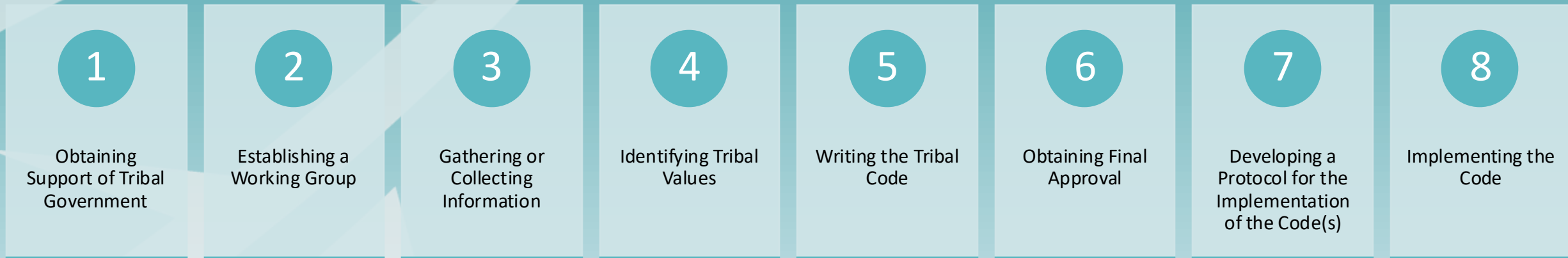
- A tribal elder abuse code allows tribes to create laws that protect older adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation within their jurisdiction. These codes define the identification and resolution of elder abuse, detailing which agency investigates reports and how protection services are delivered.
- Each tribe should develop its elder abuse code, incorporating its unique beliefs and values rather than adopting a foreign code. Model codes can serve as helpful examples, but tribes should embrace their sovereignty in this process.

Reference:

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (2014). Civil and criminal elder protection code examples. <https://iasquared.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/developing-tribal-elder-abuse-codes.pdf>

National Indian Council On Aging, The Elder Abuse Task Force (2008). Using your tribal values to develop elder protection code: A step-by-step guide for communities. <https://www.nicoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Elder-Protection-Workbook-Final.pdf>

Eight Steps to Developing Tribal Elder Abuse Codes



Reference:

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (2014). Civil and criminal elder protection code examples. <https://iasquared.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/developing-tribal-elder-abuse-codes.pdf>

National Indian Council On Aging, The Elder Abuse Task Force (2008). Using your tribal values to develop elder protection code: A step-by-step guide for communities. <https://www.nicoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Elder-Protection-Workbook-Final.pdf>



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Elder Protection Teams

Native American Elder Justice Initiative
(NAEJI) National Resource Center

Why create an Elder Protection Team?

Reduce	Reduce stereotypes
Address	Address lack of protocol
Improve	Improve responses
Improve	Improve communication and coordination
Improve	Improve elder disrespect training
Reduce	Reduce underreporting

Reference:

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (2014). Tribal Elder Protection Team: Introduction to Tribal Elder Protection Teams. [Tribal Elder Protection Team: Introduction to Tribal Elder Protection Teams](#)

What is a Tribal Elder Protection Team?

- A Tribal Elder Protection Team is a group of professionals responsible for addressing elder abuse within their Nations and for their citizens. State organizations have similar teams, which they refer to as multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). Both types of teams consist of various professional disciplines, as well as roles for elders and cultural leaders. Tribal Elder Protection Teams aim to ensure an effective and culturally appropriate response for their Nations and the services they provide.
- The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS) in Oregon have been recognized as one of the longer-standing and most effective communities in addressing elder abuse since 1999, thanks to their Multidisciplinary Team (CTWS-MDT) that includes a diverse group of community representatives.
 - The Senior Wellness Center
 - Tribal Police
 - Tribal Prosecutor's Office
 - BIA/Tribal Social Services
 - Tribal Housing Authority
 - Indian Health Service (IHS)
 - Community Health Representatives (CHR)
 - Victims of Crimes Office
 - Assisted Living
 - Oregon Adult Protective Services

Reference:

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (2014). Tribal Elder Protection Team: Introduction to Tribal Elder Protection Teams. [Tribal Elder Protection Team: Introduction to Tribal Elder Protection Teams](#)



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Adult Protective Services (APS)

Native American Elder Justice Initiative
(NAEJI) National Resource Center

Adult Protective Services APS

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a social services program focusing on helping older adults and adults with disabilities by investigating allegations of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and financial exploitation and by offering services and support to promote safety, independence, and quality of life.

Nationally APS in Indian Country: Due to diverse Tribal Cultures APS programs strive to incorporate cultural sensitivity and respect tribal customs, traditions, and language both verbal and body, and use listening skills to honor and respect the elder when addressing such sensitive issues.

APS looks different within each Tribal Nation, County, and State



Adult Protective Services State and Tribal Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria Vary Among Tribal Nations:

Age Definitions:

Tribal nations may define “adult” or “elder” differently based on cultural and systemic factors.

Elder Abuse Codes:

The presence or absence of an elder abuse code within a tribal system can influence eligibility.

State APS Eligibility Criteria:

States have specific requirements for APS services, which may differ from tribal criteria.

Collaboration Between Tribal Nations and States:

When tribal nations and states work together, it is critical to, understand both state and tribal eligibility requirements, and facilitate communication and collaboration to ensure alignment and respect for both systems.

Review State Elder Abuse Specific Laws: eagle.usc.edu/state-specific-laws/

Working with Tribal Elders

- If you are assisting someone who is a tribal member, ask them which tribe they are enrolled in or connected to.
- Obtain their permission before contacting the tribe or a tribal representative.
- Review any existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs), or cooperative agreements, as there may already be procedures in place.

Who is considered an Elder?

Although age 65 has become the standard age at which individuals are considered elderly in American society, there is no such consensus among Indians (Cohen & Rindfuss, 1996).

Medicare and Social Security consider 65 years to the age of eligibility for benefits.

In Native American culture, an elder is a revered individual who is a source of wisdom and leadership for their tribe.

Indian Health Services (IHS) agencies considers elders to be 55 years of age and older.

Elders are not defined by age, but rather the respect they have earned through their teachings and actions.

Coordinated Response Between Adult Protective Services (APS) and Tribal Nations:

Building Relationships

- **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs):** Formal agreements can outline roles, shared responsibilities, and communication protocols.
- **Regular Meetings:** Establish consistent communication channels to review cases, share best practices, and build trust.
- **Tribal Liaisons:** Appoint tribal representatives or liaisons to work directly with APS.

Policy and Resource Sharing

- **Customizable Frameworks:** Create adaptable APS frameworks that allow tribes to integrate their own protective measures.
- **Funding and Resources:** Ensure equitable access to resources for tribes, such as legal assistance, advocacy, and protection services.

Conclusion: Moving Forward Together

The foundation of a coordinated response lies in **respect, shared knowledge, and trust**. By recognizing tribal sovereignty and promoting joint efforts, APS and tribal nations can provide effective and culturally sensitive elder protection.

Impact

- ❖ Strengthening systems, honoring elders, and improving safety.
- ❖ Strong elder justice systems improve safety, enhance intelligence sharing, and disrupt exploitation networks.



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Native American Elder Justice Initiative
(NAEJI)
National Resource Center

Native American Elder Justice Resource Center

- **Technical assistance, education and training for Tribal APS workers**
- **State and Tribal Hotlines to access elder abuse resources**
- **Cultural sensitivity training modules are recommended for all professionals and individuals working with Native Americans**
- **Elder Abuse Codes Toolkit**
- **Elder Protection Team Toolkit**



NAEJI Elder Justice Resources

- **Tribal APS Working Group is a monthly meeting of tribal APS professionals who share ideas, best practices and resources**
- **Elder Abuse Code Summit coming in 2025**
- **Providing technical assistance and training to tribes establishing elder abuse codes and elder protection teams**
- **Presenting on elder abuse at various elder protection conferences for tribal, state, and federal agencies**
- **Publications and resources**



[← RETURN TO ALL INITIATIVES](#)



ABOUT NAEJI



TRAININGS



RESOURCES



HOTLINES & CODES



SCAM AWARENESS



CONTACT US

WHAT IS NAEJI?

IASquared's Native American Elder Justice Initiative has the commitment to ensuring the safety, well-being, and rights of older adults, specifically focusing on addressing and preventing abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

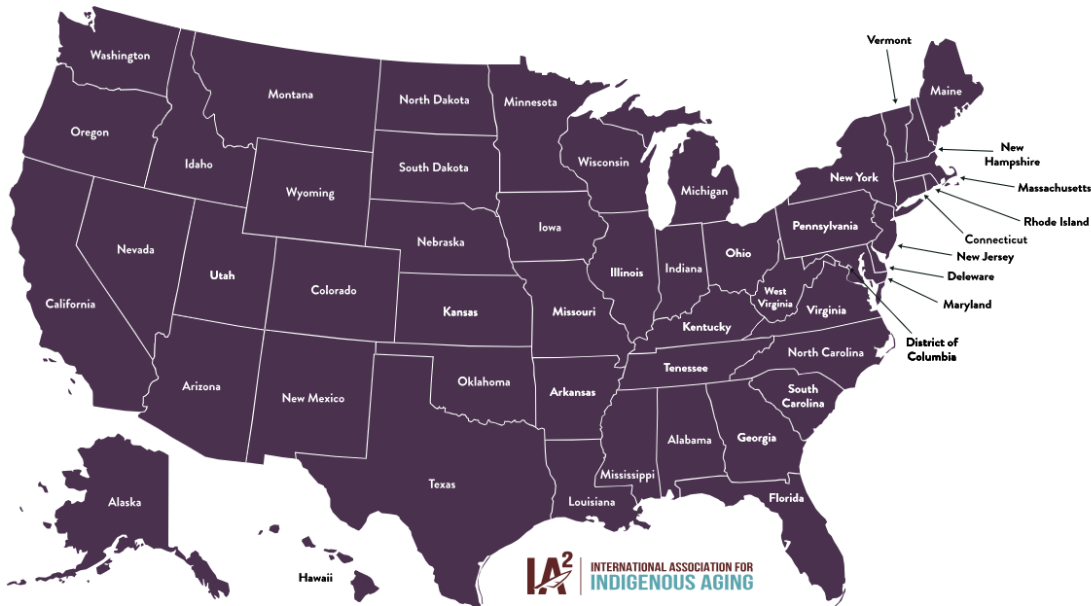
[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#)

State and Tribal Hotlines

Welcome to the Native American Elder Justice Initiative's Hotline Resource Center. This platform is dedicated to providing you with crucial information on state and tribal hotlines that specialize in elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation within Native communities. Whether you're an elder, a caregiver, a family member, or an advocate, these hotlines are here to offer immediate support, guidance, and resources tailored to your needs.

If this is an emergency, please dial 911 immediately.

Navigating our resource center is simple. Below this text, you'll find an interactive map of the United States. To find the hotline resources specific to your state, simply click on your state on the map and a popup will appear featuring a concise list of both state and tribal hotlines available in your area.



View State-Specific Elder Abuse Codes: Expand for Detailed List

Alabama	Alaska
Arizona	California
Colorado	Connecticut
Iowa	Idaho
Indiana	Louisiana
Maine	Michigan
Minnesota	Mississippi
Montana	Nebraska
Nevada	New Mexico
North Carolina	North Dakota
Oklahoma	Oregon
South Dakota	Texas
Washington	Wisconsin
Wyoming	

Alabama

Welcome to the Native American Elder Justice Initiative's Hotline Resource Page for your state. Here, you'll find a comprehensive list of both tribal and state hotlines dedicated to addressing elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation within Native communities. These resources are available to offer immediate assistance, guidance, and support.

If you are in an emergency situation, please call 911 immediately.

Tribal Hotlines

Alabama Indian Affairs Commission	1-334-242-2831
Cher-O-Creek Intra Tribal Indians	1-334-756-2889
Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama	1-256-734-7337
Ma-Chis Lower Creek Indian Tribe	1-334-449-0607
Mowra Band of Choctaw Indians	1-251-829-5900
Poarch Band of Creek Indians	1-251-368-9136
Star Clan of Muscogee Creeks	1-334-285-2491
United Cherokee Anni-Yun-Wiye Nation	1-256-582-2333

Delaware

Welcome to the Native American Elder Justice Initiative's Hotline Resource Page for your state. Here, you'll find a comprehensive list state hotlines dedicated to addressing elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation within Native communities. These resources are available to offer immediate assistance, guidance, and support.

If you are in an emergency situation, please call 911 immediately.

State Hotlines

Delaware Elderly Abuse and Exploitation Project	1-302-577-8508 or 1-302-739-4211
Delaware Long Term Care Ombudsman	1-800-223-9074 or 1-302-255-9390
Division of Family Services	1-502-665-2650
Division of Long Term Care	1-877-453-0012
Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities	1-800-223-9074

Training Modules

- ❖ Elder Abuse Training
- ❖ Policy Training
- ❖ Legal Training
- ❖ Healthcare Training
- ❖ Financial Abuse Training
- ❖ Medication Issues Training
- ❖ Caregiving Training
- ❖ Behavioral Health Training
- ❖ Social Services Training

Cultural Sensitivity Training

All professionals and individuals working with Native Americans may find this information useful and informative. **This training** will provide a starting point to develop your cultural sensitivity journey by providing an overview of foundational, cultural, and practice issues.



Training Modules

When conducting trainings, always begin the training with the **Elder Abuse module**. It provides foundational information that is relevant to all other sections.

Elder Abuse Training

Training Duration: Approximately 40 Minutes
Date Published: June 2016, updated June 2020



Elder abuse generally refers to many types of mistreatment by someone whom the elder has a special relationship with. Information about the types of abuse, elder protection teams, elder vulnerability, and prevention is provided.

Key Information: **Elder Abuse in Indian Country**

Policy Training

Training Duration: Approximately 1 hour 30 minutes
Date Published: January 2018



Provides an introduction to policies and legislation impacting elder programs in Indian Country. Professionals who may find this module informative may include: tribal leaders, tribal attorneys, personnel, and tribal program officers.

Key Information: **Policies & Legislation Impacting Elder Programs in Indian Country**

Questions & Discussion

**For More
Information!**



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Thank you for attending!

Peggy Jo Archer

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Naeji.org

A large mural of a Native American woman's face is the central focus. The mural is painted on a brick wall and is split vertically: the left side of her face is green, and the right side is white. She has dark hair and is wearing a yellow star-shaped earring. The background of the mural is a mix of blue, green, and brown. The mural is partially overlaid by a teal banner at the bottom and an orange banner on the left side.

AI/AN and Medical Forensic Examination (MFE) Considerations


AI/AN and Medical Forensic Examination (MFE) Considerations

- The purpose of this guidebook is to enhance care delivery to American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) patients, families, and communities affected by violence by providing resources and support to forensic healthcare providers serving in Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal, and Urban Indian (I/T/U) settings. The guide does not provide coverage for all patient care situations or scenarios.



This booklet is a companion guide to the Forensic Health Care & Caring for AI/AN Patients guidebook and offers reference to the medical forensic examination best practices and special considerations for patient care.

AI/AN and Medical Forensic Examination (MFE) Considerations



MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

women, girls, and people have gone missing, or been communities have been mourning them for generations. have created national attention to this crisis of missing and so known as missing and murdered indigenous women and indigenous relatives (MMIR), or other names specific to This crisis encompasses a wide scope of violent crimes including human trafficking, domestic, sexual, and intimate partner violence.

and how to support awareness and prevention efforts as well as response, please see resources listed below.

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Special Considerations for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examination & Hepatitis B Treatment

Guideline for postexposure: Hepatitis B	Individual/patient is unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or has a negative titer	Individual/patient is vaccinated
Source is known Hep B positive	Ad vaccine	
Source has an unknown Hep B status	Ad vacc	

Hepatitis B Virus vaccine:

- Administer first dose at initial visit, months, and 3rd dose in 4 to 6 months
- Retest the patient in 6 weeks and

All individuals with HBV infection should be screened for HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia.

HBIG = hepatitis B immune globulin

Reference:
• Center for Disease Control and Prevention
• Hepatitis B Guidelines


American Indian and Alaska Native Patients & Medical Forensic Examination Considerations

ABOUT US

Forensic Health Care
Division of Nursing Services
Office of Clinical and Preventive Services
Indian Health Service

IHS MISSION

to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.



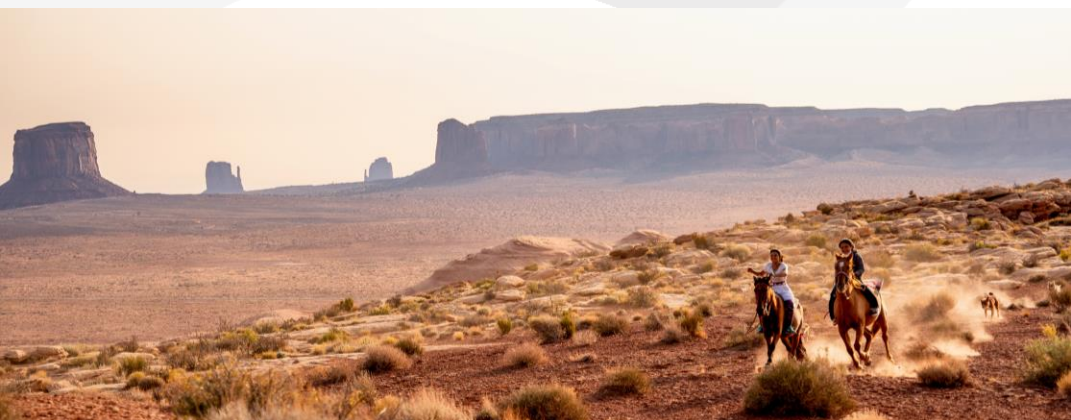
AI/AN and Medical Forensic Examination (MFE) Considerations

- Individuals who have experienced violent crimes (e.g., sexual assault, sexual abuse, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, human trafficking, strangulation, etc.), should have access to trauma-informed, patient-centered, medical forensic health care.
- The purpose of the medical forensic examination is to assess, diagnose, and provide treatment for individuals who have experienced a violent crime.

Caring for AI/AN ELDERS

- Elder abuse is an intentional act, or failure to act, that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult. An older adult is traditionally someone aged 60 or older. In some Tribal communities, it is 55 and older due to local cultural beliefs or lower life expectancies. The abuse can occur at the hands of a caregiver or someone the elder trusts. Common types of elder abuse include:
 - Emotional/Psychological
 - Neglect
 - Financial
 - Sexual
 - Physical
 - Spiritual Abuse

Caring for AI/AN ELDERS



Rates of elder abuse vary by study, location, and tribal affiliation from 4.3% to 45.9%

Varying rates of abuse suggest healthcare providers should be encouraged to screen and intervene despite the lack of empirical evidence.

Medical Forensic Examination Considerations

- Obtain patient consent and assent to conduct the medical forensic examination.
- Follow the facility's policies and procedures to care.
- Incorporate Adult Protective Services per mandatory reporting requirements.

Ongoing intergenerational and historical trauma has created barriers such as trusting the healthcare and criminal justice systems. Building a rapport might not happen immediately. Forensic healthcare providers should practice in a culturally appropriate manner, understand the complexities of trauma, and respect the patient's medical decisions related to their care.

Medical Forensic Examination Considerations

- Recognize that the caregiver/individual who brought them to the clinic/hospital could be the perpetrator, and screen accordingly.
- No matter the patient's past medical history (e.g., dementia/Alzheimer's, mental health, hearing or visual impairments, substance use, etc.), **provide the patient with the utmost respect and dignity throughout the medical forensic exam and subsequent healthcare visits.**

Medical Forensic Examination Considerations

- **Recognize that elders might have constraints with mobility.** Ensure patient comfort by proper positioning throughout the exam and modify as needed. Patient comfort is the number one priority.
- **Understand that the fear of bringing shame to themselves, or their family, and fear of disrupting family systems** is a major barrier to seeking health care and reporting to the criminal justice system. Culturally, family/community often takes precedence over individual needs.

"Disrespect" and "Bothered"

The National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative training module - Language While Working with Elders: Baker-Demaray (2005) found when asked if they have been abused or neglected, AI/AN elders indicated they have not.

- When the term “disrespect” was used instead of abuse or neglect, elders discussed many incidents that could classify as abuse or neglect.
- When asking AI/AN women about sexual abuse, no abuse was admitted, but when the term “bothered” was used, descriptions of rape and sexual exploitation were detailed.

Caring for AI/AN Elders

Below are some questions constructed to illicit narrative information about potential abuse and neglect:

- **Are you being disrespected? If so, in what ways?**
- **Has anybody hurt you?**
- **Are you afraid of anybody?**
- **Is anyone taking or using your money without your permission?**
- **Is anyone taking your things without your permission?**
- **Are you being bothered? If so, in what ways?**

Prevent Elder Abuse

Raise awareness, offer education, commit to recognizing signs & symptoms of abuse, listen to elders and their needs, recognize storytelling as an indirect way to expressing themselves.

Listening Session



**AMERICAN INDIAN
and ALASKA NATIVE**
RESOURCE CENTER FOR BRAIN HEALTH



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Community Questions

What are the most pressing challenges you face in responding to elder abuse within your community?

How do cultural values and traditions influence the way elder abuse is perceived and addressed in your tribe?

What gaps exist in resources, training, or policies that impact your ability to protect elders effectively?

How can state APS and tribal APS professionals work together more effectively to prevent and respond to elder abuse?


What role can cultural practices and community resources play in enhancing the safety and well-being of elders?

Based on today's discussion, what do you believe are the top priorities for supporting your community in addressing elder abuse?

References and Resources

Administration for Community Living, National Center on Elder Abuse

Elder Justice Initiative, DOJ, Neighborhood Map

International Association for Indigenous Aging - Native American Elder Justice Initiative  National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

Eldercare Locator, U.S. Administration on Aging

National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative & Elder Abuse Training Module

National Resource Center for Alaska Natives

National Resource Center on Native American Aging Tribal Law & Policy

Southwest Center for Law & Policy (legal training and technical assistance to Tribal communities)

National Adult Protective Services Association

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Elder Abuse

American Indian and Alaska Native Culture Card.

Crowder J, Burnett C, Laughon K, Dreisbach C. Elder Abuse in American Indian Communities: An Integrative Review. J Forensic Nurs. 2019 Oct/Dec;15(4):250-258. doi: 10.1097/JFN.0000000000000259. PMID: 31764529.

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