



Seeking Solutions: Elder Abuse — Creating a Clear Vision of Where We Go from Here

Focus on Underserved Populations of Older Adults

Black/African American • Latino/a • LGBTQ+ • Native American • New American/Immigrant/Refugee • Rural



2021 New York State Elder Abuse Summit **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2022



Convened by New York State Office of Victim Services and Lifespan of Greater Rochester.
Prepared by Lifespan of Greater Rochester Inc.

Every older person
has the right to live free
of abuse, neglect,
and exploitation.

Acknowledgements

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Many people participated in the development of this Summit, in particular:

Blake Kush, Director of Training and Outreach, NYS Office of Victim Services

Rachel Gentile, Program Outreach Specialist I, NYS Office of Victim Services

Paul Caccamise, Vice President for Program, Lifespan of Greater Rochester Inc.

Kelly Zunner-Daniels, Division Leader, Upstate Elder Abuse Center at Lifespan

Tracey Siebert-Konopko, Assistant Director, Upstate Elder Abuse Center at Lifespan

Denise Shukoff, Coordinator, NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse and Special Projects at Lifespan

Art Mason, Director, Upstate Elder Abuse Center at Lifespan (retired)

Darlene Ward, Executive Director, Welfare Research Inc.

Ellen Unruh, Associate Executive Director and Evaluation Lead, Welfare Research Inc.

CaTyra Polland, Founder of Polland Enterprises, LLC

Amanda Jackson-Jacobs, Founder of AJ Solutions

Their extraordinary efforts made this Summit possible.

Executive Summary

Background

In 2021 Lifespan of Greater Rochester and New York State Office of Victim Services cosponsored a third New York State Elder Abuse Summit. Like the previous two Summits convened in 2004 and 2010, the objective was to convene approximately 100 – 120 specialists and stakeholders in elder abuse to review and update New York’s statewide Action Agenda for elder mistreatment services. Like the previous Summits, the plan was to bring together the invited participants in an in-person event in Albany to dialogue, discuss, and vote on priority recommendations for the state.

Unlike the previous Summits, however, the focus of this Summit would be different owing to a growing realization that, despite the many advances and improvements in the infrastructure of elder abuse services in New York, significant populations of older adults, especially underrepresented and marginalized communities, were not being adequately reached and served. The focus of this Summit would then be Black/African American, Latino/a, LGBTQ+, Native American, New American/Refugee/Immigrant, and Rural older adults.

Planning for the Summit began in 2018 with an anticipated event in May 2020. The declaration of a global pandemic and the resulting lockdown of many sectors of economic and social life in the state in March 2020 put an in-person event out of the realm of possibility and placed plans for the Summit in jeopardy. An Advisory Committee that was assembled in 2019 helped the Summit organizers make the transition to a virtual Summit consisting of a series of events spread over several months.

The conversion to a virtual format brought with it many unanticipated advantages including the opportunity to hear the needs of each group separately in informational webinars and in surveys. There was then extensive dialogue among the Summit participants in workgroups, prioritization of needs and recommendations, and the very important organization of multiple focus groups across the state to hear from members of the six communities themselves.

The Summit process was designed to bring representatives of the six groups and those who provide services to the planning table so that culture, history, social structure, and values would inform the recommendations that emerged.

What follows is a summary of the 2021 process and the resulting plan, a set of recommendations which will guide future initiatives and allocation of resources around elder abuse services in New York State regarding underserved and underrepresented populations.

Webinars

To learn more about the underserved populations, six webinars were offered in March 2021. Panelists in each webinar included a national representative and others from New York State with extensive experience and insight into the culture, values, and service needs of older adults among each underserved population. Summit participants were asked to watch all the videos to learn more about all six populations, and respond to online surveys to share their reactions to the

webinars and their thoughts on the significant issues facing underserved older adults. Availability of the webinars was widely publicized through the New York State Coalition on Elder Abuse and through the aging services network in New York. The public was also invited to view the webinars and complete the survey. (The webinar links are still available on the Coalition website: www.nyselderabuse.org.)

Workgroups

The next phase of the Summit consisted of virtual workgroups in which the invited Summit participants chose to join one of six scheduled groups. Workgroups were organized around the topics: (1) Direct Service and Intervention; (2) Legislation, Policy, and Research; (3) Outreach and Prevention. The purpose of the workgroup sessions was to develop recommendations related to identifying and addressing the needs of elder abuse victims from the underserved populations. The goal for each workgroup was to develop consensus recommendations — ones that were ambitious, but doable. Participants were asked to address the barriers, problems, and issues that emerged from the webinars and from their own experiences.

Plenary Session

On May 19, 2021, Summit participants attended a scheduled plenary session online to vote for a set of priority recommendations. Participants were presented with the recommendations developed from the webinar surveys and the workgroup sessions. They also were reminded of the many cross cutting issues to consider as they voted for their top priority recommendations. In all the phases of the Summit, and in the final voting on May 19, the response to the question, “Who should we be bringing to the table?” was clearly older adults representing underserved groups. This repeated recommendation gave rise to a fourth phase of the Summit: community focus groups throughout the state in summer and fall 2021.

Focus Groups

During the summer of 2021, Lifespan convened a new Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the six groups to help plan and implement focus groups of older adults from the six populations. A coordinator and focus group facilitation specialist were hired to lead this fourth phase of the Summit. The Advisory Committee helped to identify and recruit organizations across New York to hold the focus groups and assisted in constructing a set of structured interview questions to be presented to each group. A total of 17 organizations were recruited; 291 older adults participated in 41 focus groups. Their responses validated many of the issues and recommendations identified in the previous phases of the Summit. Their responses also highlighted priorities for an Action Agenda, such as the need to acknowledge the role of bias and discrimination in the history of marginalized communities, the centrality of family, the role of faith communities as trusted resources in times of trouble, as well as the need for accessible sources of help.

New York State Elder Justice Action Agenda

The Covid-19 pandemic led the Summit convenors into a process that resulted in much more robust information gathering, expansive dialogue, and rigorous analysis and prioritization of needs than the original plan of a single in-person event would have produced. In addition to the invited Summit participants, other service providers and the public statewide were able to comment and offer input. Their thoughts about barriers and their vision of an ideal service system are reflected in the major themes below from the webinar surveys, workgroups, and focus groups which will come to life as implementation of the updated New York State Elder Justice Action Agenda begins:

- Racism, especially systemic racism.
- Alternatives to the criminal justice system.
- Primary role of family and community, especially faith communities.
- Targeted outreach to underserved and marginalized communities.
- More extensive research about elder mistreatment in communities outside the majority culture.
- Underserved populations must be present at the planning table.
- Lack of knowledge about resources.
- Need for more culturally sensitive and affirming practices and practitioners.
- Need for a more diverse workforce.
- Accessibility for linguistically diverse groups.
- More locally accessible sources of help.
- More resources, including better technology, especially in rural areas.
- More education and training for professionals and the public.

Below are the major features of the Elder Justice Action Agenda adopted by Summit participants during the workgroup sessions. Additional information on the recommendations developed during the workgroup sessions, general cross cutting issues, themes and solutions related to each of the six underserved populations, results from the focus groups held around the state, and references to the many recurring ideas put forth during different components of this unique statewide Summit can be found in multiple sections of the full report.

Direct Service & Intervention

- Leverage research to support increased funding for programs that focus on underserved populations of elder abuse victims.
- Foster meaningful and equitable partnerships with organizations, programs, and individuals with diverse expertise.
- Train staff on elder abuse signs and symptoms, barriers they may face, and underserved populations/intersectionality.

Legislation, Policy, and Research

- Conduct focus groups with underserved populations — “Who do you trust?”
- Provide funding and training for community-based organizations in diverse communities.

- Research role of family in each underserved population to help with better intervention models.
- Expand the E-MDT model to include all forms of abuse/complex cases. (This recommendation was voted as one of the top three. However, E-MDTs across the state have already expanded beyond just financial exploitation cases to now include all forms of mistreatment.)

Outreach and Prevention

- Break down silos between formal service systems and faith communities, grassroots organizations, etc. Silo busting — increase collaboration.
- Include voice of victim in prevention strategies.
- Include representation from underserved groups among volunteers and in outreach efforts (including survivors of elder abuse).

Next Steps

The 2021 New York State Elder Abuse Summit, Seeking Solutions: Elder Abuse — Creating a Clear Vision of Where We Go from Here, was designed to produce a roadmap for planning and resource allocation for several years into the future. Lifespan plans to hire a dedicated coordinator to partner with an Advisory Committee and stakeholders around the state to put the recommendations into action and to create a safe, accessible, and healing service system for older adults impacted by elder mistreatment with a special focus on those groups who have been historically underrepresented and underserved. One of the many comments from the Summit discussions, surveys, and online meetings stands out as a guiding principle for activities which proceed from the Summit recommendations:

**“Meet the community where they are,
where they feel safe and comfortable,
and let them lead.”**

Convenors of the 2021 New York State Elder Abuse Summit

New York State Office of Victim Services

The New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS) was created in 1966 as one of the first independent state agencies established for crime victim compensation. In addition to providing compensation and direct services to innocent crime victims, OVS advocates for rights and benefits for innocent victims throughout New York State.

OVS has a three-tiered mission to:

- Provide compensation to victims of crime, their family members, and other eligible individuals in a timely, efficient, and compassionate manner.
- Fund direct services to victims of crime and their families through a network of programs across New York State.
- Advocate for the rights and benefits of all victims of crime.

The agency also funds the NYS Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams (E-MDT) Initiative which addresses all forms of elder abuse.

Lifespan of Greater Rochester

Lifespan of Greater Rochester Inc. is an aging services nonprofit. The organization was founded in 1971 and provides over 30 services to help older adults take on the challenges and opportunities of longer life. Lifespan's services include elder abuse prevention and intervention services, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, care management, health care navigation, caregiver education and financial management, among other programs. NYS Office for the Aging provides support for Lifespan's statewide elder abuse prevention and intervention programs. Through funding from the NYS Office of Victim Services and the NYS Office for the Aging, Lifespan also oversees the statewide Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team Initiative addressing all forms of elder mistreatment.

New York State Office for the Aging

The New York State Office for the Aging's programs provide older persons access to a well-planned, coordinated package of in-home and other supportive services designed to support and supplement informal care. NYSOFA also has consistently supported elder mistreatment outreach, education, and prevention programs and services throughout New York State. NYSOFA's goal is to improve access to, and availability of services that enable older New Yorkers to live, work and age in their community of choice.



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