



“Join Us” in the Fight Against Elder Abuse: Tip Sheet for Organizations

How Your Organization Can Generate Awareness & Foster Action in the Fight Against Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is an under-recognized problem with devastating and even life-threatening consequences. Throughout the year, there are many holidays and observances that provide organizations like yours the opportunity to honor older individuals and raise awareness of elder abuse. However, spring presents a unique series of observances to engage public attention, enlist public support, and generate activity and involvement at a grassroots level:

- [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#) is observed annually on June 15th.
- May is [Older Americans Month](#), a time dedicated to highlighting issues impacting older citizens.
- Mother’s Day is recognized in the US on the second Sunday in May, and Father’s Day is observed on the third Sunday in June.
- [National Crime Victims’ Rights Week](#) is a weeklong observance throughout the US every April to promote victims’ rights and to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This is a prime opportunity to remind the public that in many cases, elder abuse victims are also victims of crime.

To maximize these opportunities, the NCEA is enlisting action from communities and organizations that can affect long-lasting changes in the lives of vulnerable seniors. We invite and encourage you to “Join Us” by planning or participating in community activities that coincide with Older Americans Month, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and other events to generate public attention.

The NCEA has compiled the following list of examples of how your organization can “Join Us” in drawing attention to the problem of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Some activities focus on specific observances, such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day while others may be conducted at any time of year. Some suggestions involve a greater commitment than others. All of the suggestions, however, are intended to help your organization engage community members in order to make long-lasting differences in the lives of vulnerable adults.

Together, we have the power to prevent elder abuse.



June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day initiatives focus public attention on elder mistreatment, but also on many valuable aging services. Therefore, organizations that participate in World Day events have a golden opportunity to generate public support and recruit new volunteers, and volunteerism is the lifeblood of many of these programs. Here are some ideas for World Day activities:

- Organize a candlelight vigil or a march down Main Street in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- Host a rally on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and invite seniors, advocates, spokespersons, and government officials to talk about the issues and the ways that citizens can become involved in prevention. Don't forget to invite the local press!
- Distribute elder abuse public awareness materials at a local sporting event, concert, or fair.
- Ask local banks or utility companies to include small elder abuse awareness inserts (that your organization supplies) with the May or June statements. You can find fact sheets on the [NCEA website](#) to use or modify for the inserts, and don't forget to mention any other “Join Us” activities your community is holding.
- Purple is the color designated for elder abuse awareness. Distribute purple ribbons to your staff, nursing home professionals, Adult Protective Service staff, law enforcement, and other community organizations and members in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- Partner with a local nursing home for a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day barbeque or picnic. Include activities and food for residents and their families, staff, and the community. Ask volunteers to bring food and games to play and coordinate the activities with nursing home staff. Invite the press for added exposure and increased elder abuse awareness.
- Start an elder abuse awareness group on a social networking site, such as “Facebook,” and encourage “friends” to join the group. Start a campaign to get “X” number of “friends” to join by World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- Hold a community yard sale at a central location such as a senior center or church/synagogue with proceeds going to an elder abuse support group or community outreach efforts to help elderly in crisis.
- Organize a “Letter to the Editor” writing campaign to raise awareness not only of elder abuse but of the local resources that are available through APS, area agency on aging offices, and other organizations. Be sure to include contact information and hotline/helpline phone numbers as well as web addresses for relevant organizations.

Art for Awareness’ Sake

For many reasons, elder abuse has been a difficult topic to capture and sustain public attention. However, some organizations have been successful in using the arts to engage public involvement to promote difficult causes. Here are some suggestions:

- Organize an Elder Abuse Awareness Quilt Show/Competition depicting themes related to elder abuse, as the Violence in Aging Council of Pitt County, North Carolina did in 2008. Entries may be solicited from senior centers, quilting groups, sewing circles, educational institutions, scout troops, individuals, and others. Mount the entries in a local mall and ask shoppers to vote on their favorites. Since quilts are larger than life and eye-catching, they can attract a great deal of attention.
- ClothesLine Show: Sponsor a t-shirt design contest or activity with a youth group or scout troop. Ask contestants to depict the themes related to elder abuse. Display the shirts on a clothesline at a senior center, health fair, or other “Join Us” event.
- Student Arts or Essay Competition: Young people are dedicating themselves to a host of social causes, and elder abuse prevention can capitalize on this enthusiasm. In a pilot project, over one hundred high school students in Delaware participated in the NCEA Student Arts Competition. Work with your state Attorney General’s office, Division of Aging, Department of Education, local newspaper, school district, or other organization to sponsor a similar contest on the theme: Why Should I Care About Elder Abuse? Use winning entries in local campaigns, and display art work in community libraries and public buildings.

Create a Community Safety Net

- Organize a “Chore Store”: Elders who still live in their own homes may be finding it more difficult to maintain their houses or need help running errands. Have a community group, senior center, neighborhood association, or faith-based organization develop a directory of members willing to share time or resources at no cost or greatly reduced fees (for example, lawn work, small repairs). Circulate the directory to elders who may need these services.
- Include elder fraud or scam alerts in community and neighborhood association newsletters.
- Start or join a local elder justice coalition. Alliances among local entities who have regular contact with seniors, such as aging services providers, health care professionals, long-term care staff, skilled nursing home staff, law enforcement, and others, have been shown to improve communication and coordination among collaborators and to increase protection of older persons’ health, safety, and/or financial security. Contact the NCEA for more information about starting or reinvigorating your own local elder justice community coalition.



*“Join Us” in the Fight Against Elder Abuse:
Tip Sheet for Organizations*

Page 4/4

For More Information:

- Check out the *Community Guide to Raise World Awareness on Adult Abuse*, developed by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, for more ideas on how to become involved. To access the toolkit, visit the “WEAAD Resources” page at: <http://www.inpea.net/weaad.html> .
- To download logos, posters, and other public awareness materials to commemorate Older Americans Month from the US Administration on Aging website, go to: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/Observances/oam/oam.aspx .
- For a wealth of suggestions on raising awareness of crime victims and their rights, download the *National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Resource Guide*, online at: <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2010/index.html> .
- Visit the website of the National Center on Elder Abuse/NCEA: www.ncea.aoa.gov , or contact us by email: ncea-info@aoa.hhs.gov , by phone: 302-831-3525, or by mail:

National Center on Elder Abuse
c/o University of Delaware
Center for Community Research and Service
297 Graham Hall
Newark, DE 19716