

# National Association of Area Agencies on Aging 2007 Aging Network Survey



## ELDER ABUSE AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE AAA RESULTS



### Scripps Gerontology Center

Jane K. Straker, Abbe Linscott Lackmeyer, & Suzanne Kunkel

June 2008

### Background

With a grant from the Administration on Aging (AoA), the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) partnered with Scripps Gerontology Center to conduct a series of brief surveys on topics of immediate interest. The first of these “mini-surveys” was designed to obtain a broad understanding of elder abuse and mistreatment and legal assistance activities at the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) level, and to identify related advocacy, training and technical assistance needs of AAAs. Besides increasing an understanding of ongoing activities, the survey was also designed to provide assistance to states in measuring the impact of legal assistance programs. The survey was conducted online and was available for approximately three weeks. Two hundred ninety-four AAAs responded for a response rate of 46.1%.

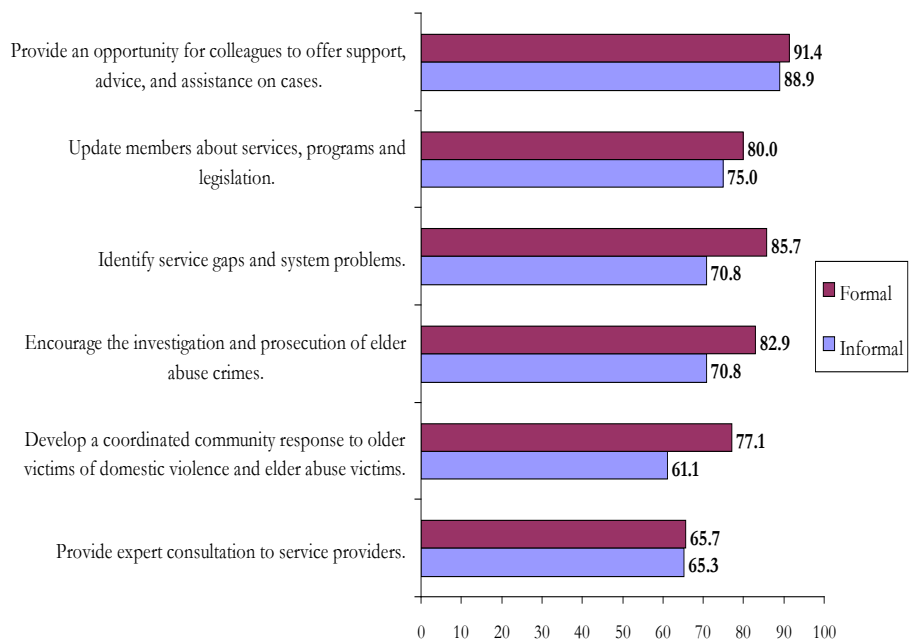
### Findings

- A little less than half (45.9%) of those AAAs responding reported being part of a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) of diverse professionals who work together locally to review cases of elder abuse and address systemic problems. When such teams were present three out of four (79.3%) AAAs were part of those teams.
- The most common team activity was providing an opportunity for colleagues to offer advice, support, and assistance on cases of elder abuse (89.7%).
- The legal issue most often reported as prevalent in the community is protective service, guardianship, powers of attorney (60.9%), followed by frauds and senior scams (59.2%), estate and end-of-life planning (56.5%) and Medicare and Medicaid issues (53.1%).
- The most commonly reported training need for Elder Abuse was social marketing of elder abuse prevention messages.
- The most commonly reported technical assistance need for Legal Assistance was the development of outreach strategies targeted to hard-to-reach populations and those with greatest social/economic need.
- A little more than 1 in 4 (27.6%) AAAs collect data on client outcomes from legal assistance programs. The most common elements they collect include the type of service provided (88.6%) and the type of legal issue addressed (84.8%).

### Elder Abuse

Multidisciplinary Teams: About 2 out of 3 (67.3%) MDTs are voluntary, informal groups. There are significant differences between informal groups and those that are formalized by legislation or administrative programs or policies. *Formal groups* are more likely to *receive financial support* (31.4% compared to 18.1%), to *operate with formalized policies and procedures* (57.1% to 22.2%) and to *maintain written documentation of policies and procedures* (65.7% compared to 37.5%). Of 12 suggested activities undertaken by teams, informal groups average 7.2 activities; formal groups average 8.3. Formal teams are significantly more likely to *work on addressing service gaps and system problems* (85.7% compared to 70.8%), to *work on developing a coordinated community response to abuse and domestic violence* (77.1% to 61.1%) and to *work on cutting through the delays built into the system* (51.4% to 34.7%). Figure 1 shows the proportion of participants who are involved in select MDT activities.

Figure 1: Most common activities of MDT by team structure



# n4a Aging Network Survey

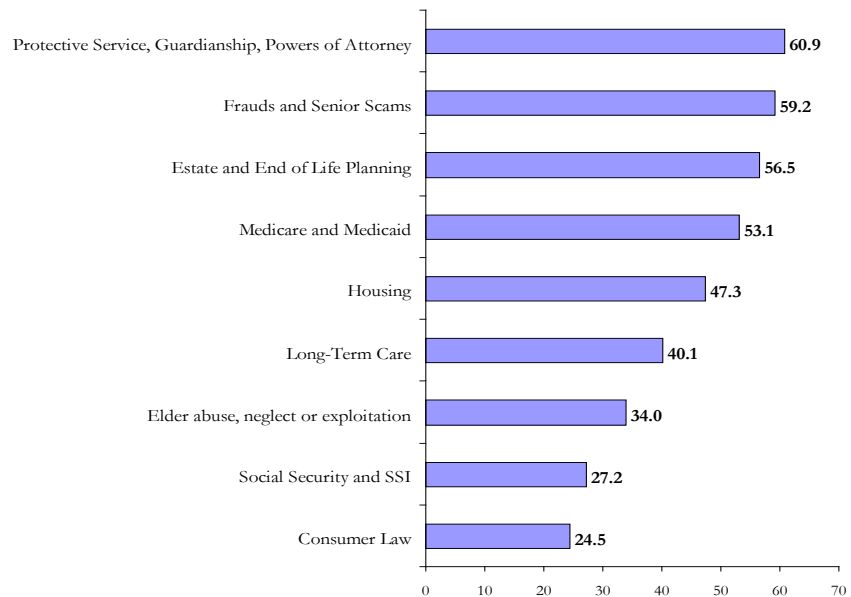
## ELDER ABUSE AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE

### AAA RESULTS

#### Legal Assistance

Participants were asked to identify up to 5 (out of a list of 15) legal issues that are most prevalent in their communities. As shown in Figure 2, the most common include: *protective service, guardianship, powers of attorney, frauds and senior scams* (credit card, charity, door to door, foreign lottery, etc.), and *estate and end of life planning*. Issues mentioned by fewer than 1 in 5 participants include: *legal basics, other public benefits, health care* (HMOs, physicians, hospitals), *income security* (pensions, investments), *age discrimination* and *other*.

Figure 2: Most prevalent legal issues



#### Training and Technical Assistance

Participants were asked to identify elder abuse training topics that would be most useful to their AAA as well as technical assistance needs related to legal issues. The following lists the most common training and technical assistance topics for both elder abuse and legal issues.

#### Elder Abuse

- 60.9% Social marketing of elder abuse prevention messages.
- 51.7% Strategic alliances and the development of multidisciplinary elder abuse networks.
- 51.7% Cultural competence to address abuse, neglect or exploitation with minority, tribal, or disadvantaged populations.
- 43.1% Identification and reporting of elder financial and/or legal exploitation.

#### Legal Assistance Issues

- 58.5% Development of targeting and outreach strategies to hard-to-reach populations and those in greatest social/economic need.
- 41.2% Development of outcome measures to assess the impact of legal services on lives of older clients.
- 31.6% Development of legal service delivery strategies that focus on the interface of IIIB providers with low cost service delivery mechanisms such as legal help lines.
- 26.5% Development of intake and/or assessment instruments that accurately identify legal issues.

[www.scrippsaging.org](http://www.scrippsaging.org)    [scripps@muohio.edu](mailto:scripps@muohio.edu)    (513) 529 2914  
 396 Upham Hall, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056



To print/download this research brief: <http://www.scripps.muohio.edu/research/publications/elderabuselegal.html>

For other Scripps reports go to: <http://www.scripps.muohio.edu/research/publications.html>

The authors extend our gratitude to the staff of the Office of Elder Rights for their assistance on the development of the survey and comments on earlier drafts of this report. For more information on issues of Elder Abuse, please contact Stephanie Whittier ([Stephanie.Whittier@aoa.hhs.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Whittier@aoa.hhs.gov)) or on Legal Assistance, Omar Valverde ([Omar.Valverde@aoa.hhs.gov](mailto:Omar.Valverde@aoa.hhs.gov)). Funding for this document was made possible (in part) by grant 90AM3126 from the Administration on Aging. The views expressed in these materials do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, or represent official Administration on Aging policy.