Issues Relating to Cross-Generational Abuse and Domestic Violence

Legislative Commission’s Sub-Committee to Study Issues Relating to Senior Citizens and Veterans

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Cross-Generational Abuse and Domestic Violence among Senior Citizens

Overview of Three Primary Issues

1. Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Families

2. Intimate Partner Violence and the Elderly Population

3. Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly Population
Abuse and Neglect in Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Families
Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren Families

**Grandparent Characteristics**

- Nationally, 42% of grandparents in grandparent households are caring for their grandchildren
- Approximately 65% are between the ages of 45 – 64
- 62% of grandmothers and 38% of grandfathers caring for their grandchildren live in poverty

Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren Families

Grandchildren Characteristics

- 51% of children living in grandparent maintained families are under age 6

- 42% of children are white, 36% are African American, and 17% are Hispanic

Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren Families

**Grandparent Issues**

- Research documents feelings of anger and resentment of assuming unwanted role
- Issues related to increased social isolation, depression, failing health, financial and marital distress are commonly associated with assuming an unexpected role as well as with aging
- Concerns regarding legal relationship and ability to parent grandchildren also compound stress and frustration
- Lack of family resource and social support affect physical and psychological distress thereby reducing grandparents ability to adequately parent / care for grandchildren
Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Families

Other Factors that May Lead to Abuse and Neglect

- Lack of financial support and supportive resources
- Children’s behavior problems; especially adolescent boy
- Circumstances of placement
- Intergenerational transmission of violence
Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren Families

Clark County DFS and Relative Caregivers

“Relative Caregivers” broadly includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

Number of substantiated CPS investigations involving grandparents:
- 2005 – 18
- 2006 – 16
- 2007 – 12

1,039 children in licensed relative foster care placements

Total of 889 relative caregivers with 644 unlicensed and 245 licensed relative homes
Abuse and Neglect in Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren Families

Relative / Kinship Care

- Few studies and data regarding the number of abusive grandparents

- Studies indicate, however, that children in kinship / relative care are more likely to reunify with their parents and have greater placement stability and less likely to re-enter the child welfare system

- At the same time, relative / kinship caregivers are less likely to be offered or receive services
Relative / Kinship Care

- Very limited and restricted guidelines for financial support of relative caregivers

- Nevada does not provide subsidized guardianship for relative caregivers

- Nevada does offer 62 & Older Kinship program:
  - Must be legal guardian with relative children in placement for at least 6 months
  - Must meet 275% gross income test
  - $534 per child age 0-12 and $616 per child age 13+
  - Undue hardship waiver for age requirement for children with special needs and sibling groups
Relative / Kinship Care

- **TANF Non-needy Caretaker:**
  - Must be blood relative with gross income test of 275% of Federal poverty level
  - $417 for first child and $59 per each additional child

- **State of Nevada Child Care Subsidy Program:**
  - Licensed relative caregivers automatically eligible for full subsidy amount
  - Unlicensed relative caregivers are income means tested and may receive sliding scale percentage of the subsidy allowance
Intimate Partner Violence in the Elderly Population
Intimate Partner Violence and the Elderly Population

- Approximately 1-4 million women are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused by their intimate partners each year in the U.S. with 31% of women reporting lifetime abuse.

- Intimate partner violence transcends race, ethnic, socioeconomic and age

- Nationally, spouses or intimate partners commit between 13% and 50% of elderly abuse

- Only 2% – 5% of elder intimate partner violence is reported

- Intimate partner violence among elderly women can lead to substantial health and socio-economic consequences
Intimate partner violence may be a chronic marital/relationship issue that persists into later years or it may be “late onset domestic violence” triggered by:

- Retirement
- Changing roles of family members
- Sexual changes or disability
- Brain impairments common in aging like those due to stroke, alcoholism or Alzheimer’s may also lead to aggressive behaviors
Intimate Partner Violence and the Elderly Population

Less than 1% of elderly women over the age of 55 seek domestic violence shelter services due to:

- Perceived stigma and shame
- Lack of privacy and handicap access
- Experienced personnel to address special needs
- Judiciary and law enforcement’s mistaken belief that intimate partner violence is not a serious problem
Intimate Partner Violence and the Elderly Population

Challenges / Barriers to Service Interventions

- Distinguishing between the causes of abuse. Is it secondary to caregiver stress or persistent violence perpetrated by a chronic batterer / spouse?

- Should intervention be targeted to alleviating caregiver burden or maximizing patient safety?

- Physician screening for intimate partner violence is critical as many elderly victims routinely seek medical assistance for physical / health issues
Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly Population
Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly Population

- By 2030, 70 million Americans will be over the age of 65 with 1 in 4 a member of a minority group.

- In roughly 90% of elder abuse and neglect incidents in which the perpetrator is known, it is a family member, 2/3 of whom either spouses or adult children.

Factors leading to elderly abuse can include:
- Substance abuse, mental health, and financial instability of the caregiver.
- Family or marital conflict.
- Poor relationship and financial dependence on the care-recipient.
- History of past abuse (e.g., elderly parent abused adult child in childhood.)
Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly Population

- Elder abuse includes:
  - Physical abuse (e.g., hitting, injury with a weapon, inappropriate use of medication, unnecessary physical restraint)
  - Emotional / Psychological abuse (e.g., threats to place elderly in nursing care, removal of decision making power)
  - Neglect (e.g., inadequate provision of food, clothing, shelter, abandonment, medication, personal hygiene)
  - Financial exploitation (e.g., misuse of property by fraud, trickery, duress, or force; selling personal property; steals money, pension checks or possessions; forgery, extortion)
Profile of Older Americans

- 72% of older men are married
- 42% of older women are married; 43% are widowed
- 30% of non-institutionalized older people live alone (10.7 M)
- Half of older woman age 75+ live alone
- 450,000 grandparents age 65 and older had primary responsibility for grandchildren
- 9.4% of older Americans live below the poverty level in 2006.
- About 11% of older Medicare enrollees received personal care from a paid or unpaid source in 1999.

Source: Administration on Aging
Profile of Older Americans: 2007
Common Characteristics of Elder Abuse Victims

• The majority of victims are female
• Victims of elder abuse are often widowed or divorced
• Victims of elder abuse are often socially isolated

Source: Administration on of Justice Studies Program, Mesa Community College, Mesa, Arizona