

# World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

# OUTREACH GUIDE



## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Building Strong Support for Elders

JUNE 15th

*How community organizations can generate awareness, foster action to end elder abuse, and affirm our nation's commitment to justice for all.*

### Introduction

As Americans, we believe in justice for all. Yet, an estimated 5 million, or 1 in 10, older Americans experience elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Working together, we can build the essential social supports that prevent abuse and keep everyone safe as we age.

The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations (UN) launched the first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) on June 15, 2006 in an effort to unite communities around the world in raising awareness about elder abuse. WEAAD is in support of the UN's International Plan of Action acknowledging the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue. WEAAD serves as a call-to-action for individuals, organizations, and communities to raise awareness about abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older people.

The Administration on Aging (AoA), an agency of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), is sponsoring the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Tool Kit to encourage national, state, and local organizations to raise awareness about elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation and to empower communities to get involved and take action.

Community organizations, places of worship, and small businesses including banks, pharmacies, and grocery stores, as well as senior centers and community centers, are on the frontline when it comes to elder abuse prevention. Staff and members of these organizations encounter people of all ages on a daily basis and are in a position to recognize and intervene in instances of elder abuse, as well as to educate the community about this problem.

Participation in WEAAD can increase public awareness of elder abuse. By joining the effort to explain why elder abuse occurs, how we can prevent and address it and how we can shape the public conversation. Be a change architect. Help us to build solutions that will support older people and strengthen our communities.

Keep in mind that other organizations in our communities may also be participating in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, so reach out to community partners to see if there are opportunities to work together to raise awareness about elder abuse.

## About This Guide

Your organization is in a position to empower older people by raising awareness about the complex issue of abuse and encouraging collective action. No matter what format you choose, this guide will help you plan and implement a successful WEAAD campaign. This guide is part of a larger [Tool Kit](http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips) that can be found at <http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips>.

## Steps To A Successful Campaign

### DEFINE THE GOAL OF YOUR CAMPAIGN

The first step in planning a successful campaign is determining the goal. As someone who works on elder issues or provides direct service to older people in your community, you probably have a wealth of experience that you can draw on to inform your goal and shape your campaign. Use your direct experience as inspiration this WEAAD. Some examples of campaign goals are listed below—but please don't let these examples limit you.

- Recognize adult protective services professionals and law enforcement officers who are working to protect older adults in your community
- Educate our communities about the role everyone can play in preventing elder abuse
- Promote respect and dignity of others
- Provide a night of respite to caregivers
- Explain legislative and programmatic changes that were authorized under the Elder Justice Act
- Brainstorm with policymakers in your community about policies and programs that could be implemented to prevent elder abuse

### DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

Deciding on the campaign's goal will help you to define and reach the right audience who will contribute to, and benefit from, and participate in the campaign.

### DEVELOP YOUR THEME

We encourage you to use the WEAAD theme, **"Building Strong Support for Elders"**. The nationally recognized color for WEAAD is purple.

### DECIDE ON A FORMAT

We've included many examples of types of events to help you commemorate WEAAD. See the next section, "Picking a Format" for details.

### SCHEDULING

When is the best time to hold your event? Consider community partners' schedules and the overall community calendar before setting a date for your event. There are several things to keep in mind.

- Will your community be able to participate? In general, avoid planning events during business hours unless your event is a brainstorming session or meeting. Avoid conflicting with major holiday or community events unless you are developing a joint event.
- Do you have enough time to publicize the event, identify community partners for collaboration, and plan the agenda?

### CHOOSE A VIRTUAL VENUE

WEAAD outreach and elder abuse prevention can take place at a distance. Here is an overview of Tools for Reaching a Remote Audience from the National Council on Aging (NCOA): <https://d2mkcg26uvvg1cz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/Tools-for-Reaching-a-Remote-Audience.pdf>.

### SET THE AGENDA

Decide on the planned sequence of activities that will help you accomplish your event goals. In what order should events occur? When can participants expect to hear a special speaker or participate in a special activity? Having a well-defined roadmap for the day with built in flexibility for the unexpected will serve you well.

## DEVELOP AN OUTREACH PLAN

Identify potential partners and platforms to help raise awareness about your campaign.

- **Connect with others.** If you have not already done so, get in touch with the program director at your local Area Agency on Aging and county Adult Protective Services and ask them to partner with you, participate in, or help publicize your campaign. Connect with your local elder justice coalition or multidisciplinary team. These teams can provide a great networking opportunity and allow you to connect with like-minded individuals who serve older people. It is a great place to outreach for your campaign as well as finding partners and participants.

Network with senior service providers. Are they also planning a WEAAD campaign? Can you pool resources and co-sponsor a campaign?

- **Mailing.** Snail mail can still be very useful. Send flyers to your mailing lists or ask your community partners to mail flyers on your behalf. You may want to ask local banks or utility companies or others to include small WEAAD campaign inserts with their mailings as well. Use the tools such as fliers, fact sheets, and presentation templates available at <http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips>.

- **Social Media.** Engage with the community through social media. Make Facebook ads, or share WEAAD posts on sites like Twitter and Instagram. Promote your campaign and start a discussion of elder rights issues by encouraging people to share their thoughts and insights. We encourage you to join our Social Media Countdown to WEAAD with expert blogs, resources, Twitter chats, and more using the hashtag #WEAAD. Sample posts and more information on social media outreach are available at <http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips>.
- **News Outlets.** Publications big and small may be of great assistance to you as you begin to publicize your campaign. Are there local newsletters where you can place blurbs about WEAAD? What about community bulletin boards or small print publications? Don't forget about the big guys too. Your local newspaper or TV news broadcast may donate advertising space or offer discounts to non-profits or other community programs. See what they have to offer.
- **Share your plans on the WEAAD website.** Once you've planned your WEAAD activities, connect with others around the country and share your plans with a national audience at <http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/events> and sign up as a National WEAAD Partner.

## Picking A Format. What Will Your Event Look Like?

A variety of formats are possible for your WEAAD activities. The best format for your event will depend mainly on your goals. Here are a few event styles you may wish to consider. You can use these ideas as conversation starters with other organizers as you begin to plan your event.

### VIRTUAL PANEL DISCUSSION

Panel discussions are an excellent way to get people to think deeply about a particular subject. They are ideal for complicated and multidimensional subjects, including elder abuse prevention. Panels usually include three or four people with distinct areas of expertise or experience in a particular subject. These discussions generally start with a short presentation by each panelist, followed by a period of facilitated discussion and questions and answers.

This type of event allows community members to hear from and talk with local service providers and adult protective services workers, as well as financial and legal experts, to learn more about preventing elder abuse. Participants can not only voice their questions, comments, and concerns, but also hear expert tailored responses. Be sure to find a diverse group of panelists that will add interest and draw wide audiences to the event.

## WEBINAR

Events structured around a presentation by a well-known or expert keynote speaker tend to attract both audiences who care about the subject as well as people interested in that speaker's ideas, position, or background. Thus, expert speakers may attract a varied audience of people who are knowledgeable about elder abuse prevention as well as people who may know very little.

When choosing a speaker, think of a community member with a strong reputation and good oratory skills who would have an interest in speaking about the importance of protecting seniors. Possibilities to consider include local government officials, social services experts, professors from a local university, or journalists.

## TELE TOWN HALL MEETING

Public meetings that allow community members to share their opinions are an excellent way to start a community conversation about elder abuse. Often, town hall meetings include an address from an elected official or other community leader. Many community members welcome the opportunity to have their voices heard, and influence leaders as they make decisions about policies and priorities.

A town hall meeting could be a great way to break the silence surrounding elder abuse and elder rights. However, it is important to frame the topic in a way that will generate interest and enthusiasm to attract your audience. Participants need to know that their investment of time will contribute to results that will benefit the community.

## VIRTUAL COFFEE CHAT OR LUNCH AND LEARN

Talk to community members, friends, and family over a coffee or meal to talk about the signs of elder abuse and how to prevent our communities from harmful scams. Presentation materials are available for you to customize to meet your needs at <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips>.

## MEDIA OUTREACH

Make an effort to reach isolated older adults through direct mailing, ads in local newspapers, and radio interviews. Include elder abuse prevention information in community and neighborhood association newsletters or e-Newsletters.

Organize a "Letter to the Editor" campaign to raise awareness not only of elder abuse, but also of the local resources that are available through your agency/organization or community partners. Letter templates are available at <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips>.

Harness the power of social media to promote WEAAD! Use our social media tools with tips on using social media to promote #WEAAD as well as sample posts and shareable graphics in English and Spanish: <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/social-media>. Make sure to include the hashtag #WEAAD in all of your WEAAD related posts.

## DISTRIBUTE WEAAD PLACEMATS & BOOKMARKS

Reach out to your local home-delivered meal service providers, such as Meals on Wheels, or community or faith-based organizations to distribute WEAAD placemats and educational bookmarks: <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips>.

## ART FOR AWARENESS

Host a 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. Work with your state's attorney general's office, division of aging, and department of education, as well as local newspapers, school districts, or other organizations to sponsor a contest. Use winning entries and create a [virtual gallery](#).

## LAUNCH A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT)

Alliances among local entities who have regular contact with older adults, such as aging services providers, health professionals, long-term care and nursing home staff, law enforcement officers, and others, can help improve the health, safety, and financial security of older adults. Consider starting an elder justice coalition or MDT in your community as a way to launch WEAAD. This type of multidisciplinary effort can contribute richly to your community efforts to prevent and intervene in cases of elder abuse for years to come. Contact the National Center on Elder Abuse for more information about starting or reinvigorating your own local elder justice community coalition. <https://ncea.acl.gov>

Observing WEAAD is a great way to bring your community together to work on elder abuse issues, but there are many opportunities throughout the year to continue this work. Here are a few:

#### APRIL

- **National Crime Victims' Rights Week** – Remind your community about elder rights by displaying a poster about elder abuse prevention, or find more resources here <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw>. Start an elder abuse awareness group on a social networking site and encourage people in your networks to join the group. Refer to the social media guide at <http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips> for sample posts.
- **National Sexual Violence Awareness Month**
- **National Financial Literacy Month** – Ask banks in your community to include in their monthly bank statements a fact sheet about financial exploitation.

#### MAY

- **Older Americans Month** – Join the national celebration of older Americans and all they contribute to our society. Find out more at <https://acl.gov/oam>.

#### JUNE

- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15)** – Sponsor a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day campaign. Wear purple on June 15 in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

#### SEPTEMBER

- **National Grandparents Day**

#### OCTOBER

- **UN International Day of Older Persons**
- **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**
- **National Residents' Rights Month** – Include an article about elder abuse and the importance of elder rights in your organization's newsletter

#### NOVEMBER

- **National Family Caregivers Month** – Sponsor a day of respite for caregivers in your community.

### For More Information

- Visit our website for additional Tool Kit items and more information at <http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home>.
- 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 (World Elder Abuse Awareness Day) page at [www.inpea.net/weaad.html](http://www.inpea.net/weaad.html).
- 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 <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw>.
- Contact **The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)**:  
ONLINE: <https://ncea.acl.gov>, EMAIL: [ncea@med.usc.edu](mailto:ncea@med.usc.edu), PHONE: 1-855-500-3537

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