

Iowa Elder Abuse Initiative Demonstration Projects

Executive Summary

September 26, 2012

Introduction:

Elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation is grossly under reported and under recognized across the nation; and Iowa, unfortunately is no different. In 1993, the Iowa Department on Aging created an elder abuse committee to look at the issues of elder abuse. For many of these years, this group of professionals reviewed laws, policy and the responses or lack of responses of the systems which were developed to protect older adults. The results of these efforts lead to problem statements, reports, proposed legislation, and the Elder Abuse Initiative (EAI).

Background:

For the first time in Iowa history, the Iowa Legislature approved in 2001, approximately \$475,000 to fund strategies for elder abuse detection, training and services in an effort to evaluate Iowa's fragmented system. This endeavor became known as Iowa's Elder Abuse Initiative demonstration projects. These projects were located in 4 of the 13 Area Agencies on Aging and available in 22 of Iowa's 99 counties. The EAI focused on the prevention, intervention, detection, and reporting of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation by presenting elders with options to enhance their lifestyle choices.

Elder Abuse Initiative Demonstration Projects:

The EAI was identified as a possible bridge between dependent adult abuse and elder abuse to alleviate older lowans from falling through the system cracks. Elder abuse is defined in the Federal Older Americans Act as the abuse, neglect or exploitation of an individual age 60 or older. Iowa Code Chapter 235B, Dependent Adult Abuse is defined by meeting the following three criteria: 1) Alleged victim shall be a dependent adult (Age 18 or older); 2) Alleged perpetrator shall be a caretaker to the dependent adult; and 3) Must be an allegation of abuse recognized by Iowa Code Section 235B. The constraints of the dependent adult abuse law means that many lowans age 60 or older experiencing abuse, neglect and exploitation are left in situations that lead to the deterioration of their physical health, mental health, and/or financial status. The EAI was a method to intervene in the situation and assist the elder victim and to help navigate them through the system.

This service delivery system was created through partnerships with local stakeholders. These partners included Area Agencies on Aging, the Department of Human Services (DHS), law enforcement, county attorney's, health care providers, service providers, and other community collaborators. The clients of these projects were age 60 or older; dependent or independent; not living in a licensed health care facility; at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation; or experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Outcomes:

Data was collected in the earlier EAI years, State Fiscal Year 2003 through Fiscal Year 2006; however, there was a wide variation due to an increase in demonstration projects, a refinement of data definitions and an expansion of outcome measures. State Fiscal Year 2007 through State Fiscal Year 2011, provided consistent comparable data establishing a solid foundation.

- 11,903 Total Referrals;
- 66% Had Mental Health Issues;
- 44.4% Experienced Financial Exploitation;
- 30.7% Experienced Denial of Critical Care by an Adult
- Only an Estimated 16% of EAI Clients Fell into the Category of Dependent Adult Abuse
- Identified financial exploitation and denial of critical care (neglect) by an adult as the top two categories of elder abuse

Conclusions:

- That elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation (as defined by the Older Americans Act: Elder abuse is defined in the Older American's Act as the abuse, neglect or exploitation of an individual age 60 or older) is grossly under reported and under recognized in Iowa as substantiated by the collected data. It is estimated based upon the data reported in the 22 counties served through the Elder Abuse Intervention program an estimated 41,656 older Iowans, during FY07 and FY11, did not receive elder abuse related intervention, support and potential services.
- The EAI proved the need for an elder abuse system since only an estimated 16% of referrals met the dependent adult abuse the criteria; meaning DHS had the authority to become involved. Whereas 84% of the EAI referrals did not meet the criteria of dependent adult abuse and therefore would have fallen between the cracks had EAI not been in those counties.
- The success of the project was built upon interdisciplinary team work and intervention strategies.

Recommendations:

- Establish a definition of elder abuse separate from dependent adult abuse
- Create a statewide elder abuse intervention system
- Amend Iowa Code Chapter 235B – rejected referrals and referrals of individuals age 60 and older shall be referred to the local Area Agency on Aging
- Identify gaps in criminal law to address undue influence; non caretakers exploiting, neglecting and abusing individuals age 60 and older, legal remedies to address misuse of POAs (Elder Abuse Law)
- Create a statewide Office of Substitute Decision Maker

To view the full report, please visit the Iowa Department on Aging's website at:

www.iowaaging.gov