



Polyvictimization in Later Life

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Funder Disclaimer

The Polyvictimization in Later Life Project is supported by Award Number 2012-VF-GX-K014 to the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA) from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project and its communications are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Disclaimer

This and all materials produced as part of this project do not constitute legal advice, clinical guidance or professional recommendations regarding how any specific allegation or case of elder abuse should be handled.

The content is not intended to guide or recommend responses to individual matters which must be addressed in accordance with local laws, jurisdictional procedures, standards of practice, and sound professional judgment along with careful consideration of the facts of the specific case or problem.

If there are concerns about specific cases or matters, consultation with legal, clinical, and/or other experts may be needed.

The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

An association of researchers, practitioners, educators, and advocates dedicated to protecting the safety, security, and dignity of America's most vulnerable citizens.



MISSION: *To prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older persons and adults with disabilities through:*

- Research
- Advocacy
- Public and professional awareness
- Interdisciplinary exchange
- Coalition building

NCPEA

- Conducts research and exchanges findings
- Identifies critical information needs
- Promotes interdisciplinary collaboration
- Provides information and training
- Grows coalitions & raises awareness
- Advocates for best practice and policy

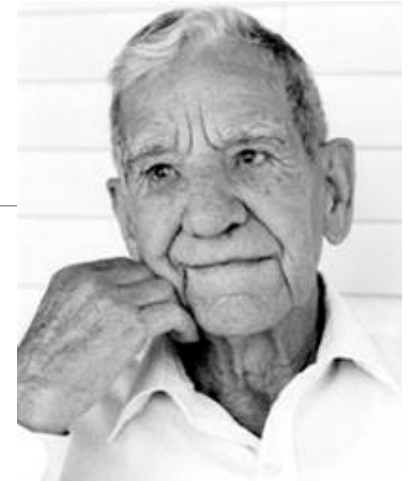
Accomplishments

- *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*
- State and local coalitions
- Advocacy
- National Forums
- Consulting on the Elder Justice Act
- Evaluation
- Training
- International leadership

- ***Mission:*** strengthen Adult Protective Services programs in order to improve the safety and independence of older persons and adults with disabilities who are victims of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation
- The *national voice* of vulnerable adults, advocating for the services they need, and for Adult Protective Services (APS)
- A membership organization with representation in every state.
- Promotes awareness, training and research

- Funded by the Administration for Community Living to establish the first **National APS Resource Center** to provide training, technical assistance and access to research to Adult Protective Services (APS) practitioners
- Hosts the only national, annual conference on elder abuse, abuse of adults with disabilities and APS
- Undertaking a national APS certificate initiative with funds from the Archstone and Wells Fargo Foundations

Project Overview



Project Background

Cooperative Grant Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Crime Victims

Grant Recipient: National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Grant Period: 2013-2015

www.preventelderabuse.org



Project Goals

- To describe how a polyvictimization perspective may improve the understanding of and response to older adults experiencing multiple victimizations and resultant trauma
- To improve the capacity of diverse professionals to address the needs of older victims of polyabuse

National Partners

- International Association of Forensic Nurses
- Justice Solutions
- National Adult Protective Services Association
- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- National Center of Elder Abuse
- National Family Justice Center Alliance
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center


Project Core Team

- **Trudy Gregorie**, Justice Solutions
- **Candace Heisler, JD**, Heisler & Associates
- **Kathleen Quinn**, National Adult Protective Services Association
- **Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik, PhD**, Klawnsnik & Klawnsnik Associates
- **Karen A. Roberto, PhD**, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
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Project Contributors

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Project Products

- Extensive research and practice literature review
 - National Forum on Polyvictimization in Later Life
 - Development of interdisciplinary e-learning curriculum
 - Training and information dissemination
 - Web-based e-learning
 - Terra Nova DVD and training guide
 - Webinars
 - Conference presentations
 - Articles submitted for publication
- 

Definition

Developed based on the practice and literature review, Forum findings, and professional expertise of the Project team

Polyvictimization in Later Life

When a person aged 60+ is harmed through multiple co-occurring or sequential types of elder abuse by one or more perpetrators, ***or***

Polyvictimization in Later Life

When an older adult experiences one type of abuse perpetrated by multiple others with whom the older adult has a personal, professional or care recipient relationship in which there is a societal expectation of trust

Perpetrators

Those with special access:

- Intimate partners
- Family members
- Fiduciaries
- Paid and unpaid service providers
- Residents in care settings

Project Examining

- Impact on victims
- Whether certain forms co-occur more frequently than others
- Impact on other persons, systems and professionals

Selected Research Findings



Polyvictimization in Later Life

- The child abuse field has defined polyvictimization as:
 - *A person's experience of several varieties of victimizations or exposures to violence, crime, and abuse* (Finkelhor, Turner, Hamby and Ormrod, 2011)
- Elder abuse lit describes “multi-faceted abuse,” “multiple victimization,” “hybrid” or “co-occurring forms of elder abuse”
- This is the first project to define “polyvictimization” and to attempt to conceptualize it in the elder abuse field

Lit Review – Key Findings

- Substantial evidence that elder abuse cases frequently involve polyabuse
- Older adults experiencing more than one type of abuse appear to be at higher risk for dire consequences than those experiencing single form abuse, even if that form occurs more than once

Literature Review

- Late life polyvictimization occurs in a variety of ways and may involve one or multiple perpetrators
- All five types of elder abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse and care provider neglect) co-occur in various combinations frequently causing victims to suffer in multiple ways

Literature Review

- “Cascading abuse” occurs when episode(s) of a single form of abuse triggers subsequent other abuses perpetrated by different offenders

Case Example

A woman who had been sexually assaulted was neglected in her health care facility when the staff “confined (this) victim to her room for days to prevent further sexual assault by another resident” (Ramsey-Klawnsnik and Teaster, 2012, p. 55)

Health Impact

- Elder financial exploitation that co-occurs with other abuses linked to declines in victims' health and well-being
- Health outcomes may be more severe or long lasting for older victims who have experienced multiple forms of IPV
- Dong and Simon (2013): polyvictimization is associated with significant increased risk (2.59-fold) of hospitalization

Discussion Questions

- Have you seen polyvictimization among the clients you serve?
- What percentage of your cases involve PV, in your estimation?
- In your experience, do these victims suffer from greater harm than victims of one type of abuse?

Contexts of Polyvictimization



PV Occurs

- Within families (perpetrated by intimate partners and others)
- In community settings
- In care facilities
- Across diverse victim-perpetrator relationships

Kin as Perpetrators

- A national APS study found 1/3 of all substantiated perpetrators were adult children (Teaster et. al., 2006)
- Other family members, including grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and siblings also substantiated as perpetrators

Non-Family Members

Abusers can be anyone who has developed a trusted relationship with the older victim—friends, acquaintances, a caregiver, attorneys, trustees, conservators, accountants, other service providers

Case Example

The elderly man was “brutalized by a burly male home health aide employed by the victim’s wife.” The brutalized man, as he lay on a gurney in an emergency room, repeatedly told the same story of the home health aide’s beatings and neglect, while the aide and the victim’s wife insisted that the elderly man had fallen. Ultimately, the bruises on the man’s chest were determined to be the result of repeated beatings. (Gross, 2006)

Perpetrators in Care Facilities

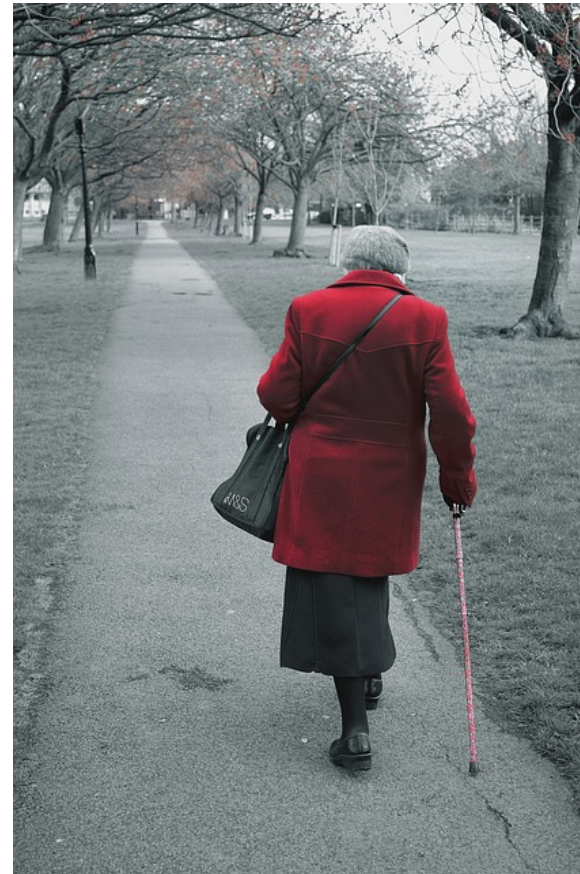
- Specific abusive acts (perpetrated by facility employee, resident, or visitor) may occur in the context of neglect by the facility in failing to prevent that mistreatment
- Cascading neglect and abuse perpetrated by facility staff and management can occur following resident abuse if disclosures are not believed and intervention is not provided

Case Example

...two teenage girls... were charged with physical, sexual and emotional abuse of seven Alzheimer's patients over four months at the Good Samaritan Society nursing home in Albert Lea, Minn., where they worked... The girls allegedly poked residents' breasts, hit their genitalia, stuck gloved fingers in their noses and mouths until they screamed, spit into their mouths, rubbed men until they became erect and laughed about their exploits later at school or driving around town (Connolly, 2009)

Response to Victims of Polyvictimization

- Polyvictimization in later life is a common, complex, multi-dimensional problem
- Must be addressed comprehensively
- Responses must be victim-centered and trauma-informed



Clinical Issues

- Recognize victims
- Believe victims
- Apply forensic principles to investigate
- Provide appropriate response
- Hold perpetrators accountable
- Provide effective prevention

Forensic Interviewing Sample Questions*

- How are things at home?
- How are things in the nursing home?
- What's different since your son moved in?
- How is it for you living at your daughter's?
- Is anything bothering you?
- Are you in pain?
- Can I help you with any thing?
- Are you worried?

*See Ramsey-Klawnsnik, 2004 for info.

When Abuse is Disclosed

- If in forensic role – gently ask open-ended questions using forensic principles
- Screen for additional maltreatment
- Ask (for example): “Did anything else happen that you did not like?”
- Listen, empathize, offer assistance, document, report
- Arrange trauma-informed response

Trauma-Informed Response

- Strengths-based framework
- Grounded in understanding of and responsiveness to trauma impact
- Emphasizes physical, psychological, emotional safety for providers and victims
- Creates opportunities for victims to rebuild sense of control & empowerment (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet, 2010)

Trauma-Informed Principles

- Prioritize victim's need for safety, respect, acceptance
- Maximize victim choice & control
- Use empowerment model, validate victim strengths
- Recognize trauma impact on coping strategies
- Victim-provider partnership is key
- Emphasize mutual self help
- Minimize re-victimization chances



Discussion

- Should awareness of polyvictimization influence APS' work? If yes, how vis-a-vis:
 - Intake procedures?
 - Investigation protocols?
 - Interventions offered to the victims?
 - Case closure decisions?
 - Community collaboration?
 - Public education initiatives?

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Polyvictimization in Later Life

by Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik, Ph.D., and Candace Heisler, J.D.*

The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA) has been awarded a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to conduct a two-year (2013-2015) project regarding polyvictimization in later life.

Various elder abuse scholars refer to “multifaceted abuse,” “multiple victimization,” “hybrid” or “co-occurring forms of elder abuse,” but prior to this NCPEA initiative, the term “polyvictimization” has not been defined or conceptualized within the elder abuse field.

In contrast, it has been explored in the child abuse field and defined by Finkelhor, et al. as a person’s experience of several varieties of victimizations or exposures to violence, crime, and abuse. (D. Finkelhor, H.A. Turner, S. L. Hamby, and R. Ormrod, “Polyvictimization: Children’s Exposure to Multiple Types of Violence, Crime, and Abuse,” *Juv. Just. Bull.*, Nat’l Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence series (2011).)

**Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik is a sociologist researcher, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed certified social worker, and contributing editor to VED.*

Candace Heisler is a retired assistant district attorney, San Francisco, a trainer and consultant on elder abuse and domestic violence, and co-author of Elder Abuse Detection and Intervention: A Collaborative Approach.

NCPEA is grateful to OVC for the opportunity to undertake this groundbreaking exploration of polyvictimization within elder abuse and creation of resources to equip professionals to respond effectively. NCPEA also expresses gratitude to our partner organizations and to the many professionals who have participated in the project by contributing literature or practice resources or by attending the forum. The training materials under development will be available free of charge.

This and all materials produced as part of this project do not constitute legal advice, clinical guidance or professional recommendations regarding how any specific allegation or case of elder abuse should be handled. The content is not intended to guide or recommend responses to individual matters, which must be addressed in accordance with local laws, jurisdictional procedures, standards of practice, and sound professional judgment along with careful consideration of the facts of the specific case or problem. If there are concerns about specific cases or matters, consultation with legal, clinical, and/or other experts may be needed.

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An outcome of this project will be the development of a definition of polyvictimization during later life, as supported by evidence from research and practice developed by the academics and practitioners involved in the project.

A key goal is to illuminate how a polyvictimization perspective may improve the understanding of and response to older adults experiencing multiple victimizations and resultant trauma.

Team and Deliverables

The project is conducted by a core team of elder abuse content experts from diverse fields: Trudy Gregorie; Candace Heisler, J.D.; Kathleen Quinn; Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik, Ph.D.; Karen A. Roberto, Ph.D.; Daniel Sheridan, Ph.D., R.N.; and Pamela Teaster, Ph.D.

Oversight is provided by NCPEA President Georgia Anetzberger, Ph.D.

adults who experience more than one type of abuse appear to be at higher risk for dire consequences than those who experience a single form of maltreatment. Late-life polyvictimization occurs in a variety of ways, may involve one or multiple perpetrators, and is underreported to authorities. All five types of elder abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse and care provider neglect) can and do co-occur with each other in various combinations, frequently causing victims to suffer in multiple ways.

To illustrate, in a poll of APS professionals nationwide, 15% of respondents said that victims of multiple types of abuse comprise over 80% of their caseloads; 75% said that such victims represent over 25% of their cases. (NAPSRC QuickPoll (distributed to National APS Listserv); National Adult Protective Services Resource Center (2013).)

Prior to this NCPEA initiative, the term “polyvictimization” has not been defined or conceptualized within the elder abuse field.

The partnering organizations are the International Association of Forensic Nurses, Justice Solutions, the National Adult Protective Services Association, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), the National Center on Elder Abuse, the National Family Justice Center Alliance, and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

The project will create training materials on this topic, including a web-based curriculum, a DVD produced by Terra Nova Films, and articles to appear in scholarly journals as well as professional newsletters. Findings will also be presented at selected conferences and delivered through webinars.

Literature and Practice Search

The core team conducted a national literature and practice search to compile and analyze elder abuse findings germane to polyvictimization. They drafted concept papers to summarize the findings. Substantial evidence was found that cases of elder abuse frequently involve polyvictimization. Furthermore, older

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary research has linked elder physical abuse to psychological abuse, neglect, and financial abuse. Wiglesworth and colleagues studied 129 persons with dementia and their caregivers, and detected elder mistreatment in 47.3% of cases. (Aileen Wiglesworth, Laura Mosqueda, Ruth Mulnard, Solomon Liao, Lisa Gibbs, and William Fitzgerald, “Screening for Abuse and Neglect of People With Dementia,” 58 *J. Am. Geriatric Soc’y* 493 (2010); available at http://CenterOnElderAbuse.org/docs/ScreeningAbuseNeglectPwDementia_Wiglesworth2010.pdf.)

All care recipients who were physically abused were also psychologically abused, neglected, or both. About one-third (31%) of mistreated elders experienced multiple types of mistreatment. Similarly, both psychological abuse and care provider neglect often co-occur with other harms in abusive relationships.

See POLYVICTIMIZATION, next page

POLYVICTIMIZATION, from page 3

Anetzberger reviewed 289 cases investigated by APS in Cleveland between 1987 and 1995. When psychological abuse or neglect was present, other forms of abuse were also present in 89.7% of these cases. (G. Anetzberger, "Psychological Abuse and Neglect: A Cross-Cultural Concern to Older Americans," in Archstone Foundation, "Understanding and Combating Elder Abuse in Minority Communities" 141 (1998); available at http://www.Archstone.org/publications2292/publications_show.htm?doc_id=675223.)

Sexual Assault and Co-abuse. It is also not unusual to discover additional forms of abuse co-occurring with sexual assault. Among 429 care facility residents who were reported to state authorities as sexually abused, 193 disclosed to investigators that they had been sexually assaulted. Among the disclosing victims, 13% revealed that their abusers threatened them and 19% reported that they had been subjected to additional forms of abuse. (Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik, Pamela Teaster, and M. Mendiondo, "Researching Clinical Practice: Findings From the Study of Sexual Abuse in Care Facilities," 11(2) *VED* 17 (Jul./Aug. 2008).)

Another expression of polyvictimization related to sexual and other abuse involves a "cascading" effect when episode(s) of a single form of abuse trigger(s) subsequent other abuses perpetrated by different offenders. For example, a woman who had been sexually assaulted was neglected in her health care facility when the staff "confined (this) victim to her room for days to prevent further sexual assault by another resident." (Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik and Pamela Teaster, "Recommendations and Practice Guidelines From a Recent Comprehensive

Study on Sexual Abuse in Institutions," 36(3) *Generations* 53 (2012).)

Exploitation Effects. Elder financial exploitation that co-occurs with other abuses has been linked to victims' health and well-being. Jackson and Hafemeister compared 38 cases of pure financial exploitation (in which this was the only form of abuse that occurred) with 16 cases of "hybrid" financial exploitation (exploitation co-occurred with physical abuse or neglect) substantiated by Virginia APS. (Shelly L. Jackson and Thomas L. Hafemeister, "Pure Financial Exploitation vs. Hybrid Financial Exploitation Co-occurring With Physical Abuse and/or Neglect of Elderly Persons," 2(3) *Psychol. Violence* 285 (2012); abstract available at <http://PsycNet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=buy.optionToBuy&id=2012-04350-001>.) They discovered that elders experiencing hybrid financial exploitation were less healthy overall than those experiencing pure financial exploitation.

Similarly, health outcomes may be more severe or long lasting for older victims who have experienced multiple forms of intimate partner violence. Baker and colleagues found that older women who experienced physical and verbal abuse were less optimistic, more depressed and hostile, and showed more negative or ambivalent emotional expressiveness than women who did not experience violence. (M.W. Baker, A.Z. LaCroix, C. Wu, B.B. Cochrane, R. Wallace, and N.F. Woods, "Mortality Risk Associated With Physical and Verbal Abuse in Women Aged 50 to 79," 57(10) *J. Am. Geriatrics Soc'y* 1799 (2009); abstract available at <http://www.NCBI.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19682130>.)

Context of Late-Life Polyvictimization

Polyvictimization of older adults occurs within the family (perpetrated

by intimate partners as well as other relatives), the community, and care facilities, and across diverse victim-perpetrator relationships. The elder abuse literature is replete with evidence concerning the frequency with which kin victimize older adults.

A national APS study found that one-third of all substantiated perpetrators were adult children who abused parents aged 60 and over. In fact, the most common perpetrator was adult offspring. (Pamela B. Teaster, Joanne Marlatt Otto, T.D. Dugar, M.S. Mendiondo, E.L. Abner, and K.A. Cecil, "The 2004 Survey of State Adult Protective Services: Abuse of Adults 60 Years-of-Age and Older," Report to the National Center on Elder Abuse (Administration on Aging 2006).)

Family Perpetration. In many instances, offspring perpetration involves polyvictimization, as illustrated by *A Mother Never Gives up Hope* (Terra Nova Films, 2009), in which four older mothers describe long-term, multifaceted abuse by their adult sons. Other family members, including grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and siblings, also have been substantiated as perpetrators of polyvictimization.

Abuse of Trust. Abuse and crime reports reveal that non-family members perpetrate multifaceted victimization of older adults within the community. Potential community abusers can be anyone who has developed a trusted

Abuse by Caregiver

The elderly man was "brutalized by a burly male home health aide employed by the victim's wife." The victim, as he lay on a gurney in an emergency room, repeatedly told the same story of the home health aide's beatings and neglect, while the aide and the victim's wife insisted that the elderly man had fallen. Ultimately, the bruises on the man's chest were determined to be the result of repeated beatings. (Jane Gross, "Forensic Skills Seek to Uncover Hidden Patterns of Elder Abuse," *NY Times*, Sept. 27, 2006; available at <http://www.NYTimes.com/2006/09/27/us/27abuse.html>.)

Perpetration by Family

"Miss Mary" faced ongoing demands and financial exploitation by her grandson and his wife that culminated one night in a five-hour sexual and physical attack by the grandson in which Mary was seriously injured and threatened with death. She was dragged across broken glass and gravel; her nose was twisted, leaving her face black and blue. The attack ended when the grandson passed out and

Mary was able to call 911. The abusive tactics did not end with the arrest. The wife cashed out Mary's insurance policy without telling Mary. The family shunned Mary and supported the grandson at trial. (U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime and the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, "I'm Having to Suffer for What He Did," In Their Own Words, NCJ Number 227928 (2008).)

See POLYVICTIMIZATION, page 15

POLYVICTIMIZATION, from page 4

relationship with the older victim—friends, acquaintances, a caregiver, attorneys, trustees, conservators, accountants, or other service providers.

Facility Abuse. Elder abuse within care facilities can involve polyvictimization. The specific abusive act(s) (whether perpetrated by a facility employee, resident, or visitor) may occur in the context of neglect by the facility in failing to prevent that mistreatment. The contract between resident and facility involves the resident's obligation to pay for care and the facility's obligation to provide a safe environment. By creating an environment in which resident abuse has occurred, the facility has neglected that resident's need for safety and failed to fulfill the financial contract with the person entrusted to its care. Furthermore, cascading neglect and abuse perpetrated by facility staff and management can occur following the assault of a resident if disclosures are not believed and needed intervention is not provided.

Two teenage girls. . . were charged with physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of seven Alzheimer's patients over four months at the Good Samaritan Society nursing home in Albert Lea, MN, where they worked. . . The girls allegedly poked residents' breasts, hit their genitalia, stuck gloved fingers in their noses and mouths until they screamed, spit into their mouths,

rubbed men until they became erect, and laughed about their exploits later at school or driving around town. (Marie-Theresa Connolly, "When the Mind Falter, Is Sex a Choice?," Washington Post, Sept. 20, 2009; available at <http://www.WashingtonPost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/18/AR2009091801144.html>.)

Polyvictimization in Later Life National Forum

To involve selected, knowledgeable, and influential elder abuse practitioners

observations and recommendations. Those interviewed included research, policy, APS, domestic violence, and sexual assault professionals.

Terra Nova Films videotaped the forum proceedings and the results will provide foundational material for the training resources under development.

Definition Developed

Based upon project findings to date, the following working definition has been developed:

Polyvictimization in later life occurs when a person aged 60 or older

By creating an environment in which resident abuse has occurred, the facility has neglected that resident's need for safety and failed to fulfill the financial contract with the person entrusted to its care.

and researchers in the project, the "Polyvictimization in Later Life National Forum" was held on October 1, 2013 in St. Paul, MN, in conjunction with the National Adult Protective Services Annual Conference.

Approximately 100 professionals from across the country, representing diverse fields, discussed definitional issues and germane research findings, practice observations, and training needs. In addition to presentations by core team members and large and small group discussions, key elder abuse specialists were interviewed to capture their

is harmed through multiple co-occurring or sequential types of elder abuse by one or more perpetrators, or when an older adult experiences one type of abuse perpetrated by multiple others with whom the older adult has a personal, professional, or care recipient relationship in which there is a societal expectation of trust. Perpetrators of polyvictimization in later life include individuals with special access to older adults

See POLYVICTIMIZATION, next page

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POLYVICTIMIZATION, from page 15

such as: intimate partners; other family members; fiduciaries; paid or unpaid care or service providers, resident(s), or service recipients in care settings.

Implications, Next Steps

Project findings to date reveal that polyvictimization in later life is a common, complex, multidimensional problem that must be addressed comprehensively. Responses and interventions must be victim-centered and trauma-informed.

Trauma-informed services are those in which service delivery is influenced by an understanding of the impact of interpersonal violence and victimization on an individual's life and development. (D.E. Elliott, P. Bjelajac, R.D. Falot, L.S. Markoff, and B.G. Reed, "Trauma-Informed or Trauma-Denied: Principles and Implementation of Trauma-Informed Services for Women," 33(4) *J. Community Psychol.* 461 (2005).)

Implementation of victim-centered and trauma-informed responses and interventions can moderate the effects

of polyabuse on victims. Therefore, a trauma-informed framework will be integrated into the training materials to be developed.

Agenda for Second Year

Key questions being addressed as the project enters its second year include the following:

1. How can a theoretical framework be advanced or adapted to explain polyvictimization in later life? The Socio-Ecological Model holds promise as a framework and will be explored and evaluated.
2. Are risk factors for polyvictimization different from those for elder abuse in general?
3. How are victim variables (e.g., age, health, and socio-economic status, for example) and perpetrator variables (e.g., motives, personality, behaviors) related to polyvictimization?
4. What forms of elder abuse most commonly co-occur? What accounts for this phenomenon?
5. What are the professional implications for preventing, identifying, and best responding to late life polyvictimization? ■

Polyvictimization in Later Life: References

NAPSA Conference, October 29, 2014

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