



Identifying and Responding to Elder Abuse: An Officer's Role

TRAINING AND DISCUSSION FACILITATION GUIDE

The purpose of *Identifying and Responding to Elder Abuse: An Officer's Role* training video series is to present information regarding the complexities of elder abuse and how law enforcement and partners can effectively respond to older victims. This discussion guide is designed to reinforce key information highlighted in the videos, encourage discussion on additional topics, and assist law enforcement in applying this information to their local community.

1. FALSE IMPRISONMENT

1. How should a law enforcement officer respond if they observe an older person walking down the street looking confused and disheveled?
2. Why is it important for responding officers to listen to a potential victim even if it's suspected they might have a cognitive impairment?
3. Why may an older adult be unable to reach out for support or help?
4. When should a patrol officer secure the scene and involve an investigator in your department?
5. What specific needs during the initial response and/or after contacting law enforcement may older victims have?

2. FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION BY A FAMILY MEMBER

1. Elderly victims of financial exploitation may be reliant on their caretaker who is also the offender. How might this affect the way they present to law enforcement?
2. How can a case involving a civil document such as a power of attorney be a criminal matter?
 - a. How can a power of attorney be used to justify financial exploitation?
3. Discuss what information law enforcement should be equipped with before arriving on the scene of an elder abuse call and why.
4. Why is it critical to capture the history of the victim-offender relationship?
5. Discuss how the victim in this case was still able to be a witness and explain her wishes even though she had a diagnosis of dementia.
6. Discuss how advocates or Adult Protective Services can support patrol officers and investigations.

3. FINANCIAL ABUSE BY A STRANGER

1. What are the signs and symptoms of financial exploitation of an older victim?
2. Why is the giving of money to the suspect in the video not considered voluntary?

3. What questions may be helpful to ask victims in order to gather additional information, identify potential risks, and best support victims?
 - a. What questions may be harmful or have a negative impact on victims?
4. Discuss intimidating or exploitive behaviors perpetrators may use towards older adults that may not be sufficient to file criminal charges?
5. How might responding officers enlist the help of family members?

4. NEGLECT

1. What are some of the signs of neglect?
2. In the neglect cases, why is it important to establish the perpetrator had caretaker responsibilities through the interview and conversations seen in the video?
 - a. How did the officers get the perpetrator to admit responsibility?
3. What information should officers document that might be helpful to an investigator if potential neglect of an elderly person exists?
4. Why is it critical that officers thoroughly and accurately document statements that occur before the start of an official interview?
5. Discuss the various roles that patrol officers play in your community in recognizing and responding to early warning signs of potential abuse.

5. PHYSICAL ABUSE

1. What are the signs and symptoms of physical abuse of an older victim?
2. What behaviors might a victim of elder abuse exhibit that may seem counterintuitive to responding officers?
 - a. What are the reasons they may occur?
3. Describe how perpetrators of elder abuse might try to manipulate responding officers.
4. What needs may a victim of elder abuse have after leaving an abusive relationship?
5. Discuss the statement, "the same abuse can happen if you're 85 or 25."

UNDERSTANDING ELDER ABUSE

1. What are some key issues to think about when interviewing an older adult, particularly those with cognitive impairments or mental illness?
2. The videos highlight the role of different agencies. When working with victims of elder abuse, how can forming community partnerships benefit victims and patrol officers?
3. What ways can law enforcement show support of and understanding to victims of elder abuse when on-scene?
4. Discuss various challenges that officers in rural and urban areas may face when responding to elder abuse calls.
 - a. What community organizations has your department developed relationships with to support victims of elder abuse?
 - b. What partnerships can we establish to better support older victims?
5. What other type(s) of elder abuse may be occurring at the same time as the one being investigated?
6. What critical information should responding officers capture in elder abuse reports? How may information from previous incidents involving the same individuals impact officers who respond at a later date?



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AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS, VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITHOUT WHOM THIS VIDEO WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.

For additional tools, visit www.theIACP.org/elder-abuse