



CAP TIPS #9

To Improve Public Awareness

How to Promote Outreach to Elder Populations

Introduction

According to the *65 Years and Older Population 2000 Census Brief*, 35 million people 65 years of age and older were counted in the United States, representing a 12 percent increase from 1990 (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-10.pdf>). Although the number of people 65 years and older increased between 1990 and 2000, their proportion of the total population dropped from 12.6 percent in 1990 to 12.4 percent in 2000.

As America's elder population rises, the awareness about potential risks for victimization must also increase. Our elders too often fall prey to property crimes, violent crimes, and fraud (among other types of victimization), and can benefit from outreach targeted to their specific needs.

2010 NCVRW offers a great opportunity to generate public awareness about crimes against elder populations, crime prevention strategies, and elder protection. It also provides victim assistance organizations the chance to partner with local, state and national organizations that are dedicated to elder protection and safety – many of whom have excellent resources that can be tapped for elder outreach and awareness during NCVRW.

In addition, May is "Older Americans Month;" the theme for 2010 is "Age Strong! Live Strong." The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (AoA) offers free resources to promote Older Americans Month at http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/Observances/oam/oam.aspx. Any partnerships established for NCVRW can also be tapped to help promote Older Americans Month in May.

Identifying Organizations that Serve Elderly

The best place to begin identifying organizations that provide services to the elderly – including many related to elder protection – is your State or Area Agency on Aging. The AoA sponsors a web page through which you can readily identify the agency for your state and, in many cases, your specific jurisdiction. This database can be accessed at:

http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/How_To_Find/Agencies/find_agencies.aspx.

The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse sponsors a web page that includes URL links to over one dozen national organizations with an interest in issues related to public safety and victimization. This website also includes links to a wide variety of publications about elder protection. You can access this website at: <http://www.preventelderabuse.org/additional/organizations.html>.

Similarly, the Office for Victims of Crime lists organizations that provide services for victims of:

- Elder abuse: <http://www.ovc.gov/help/ea.htm> .
- Fraud and identity theft: <http://www.ovc.gov/help/it.htm>.

The National Association of Triads (NATI) provides resources and technical assistance to hundreds of Triad programs nationwide. Triads are comprised of a partnership of three organizations – law enforcement, senior citizens and community groups. The sole purpose of Triad is “to promote senior safety and to reduce the fear of crime that seniors often experience.” NATI’s website offers excellent resources about elder safety, and includes a roster of hundreds of Triad programs nationwide. It can be accessed at: <http://www.nationaltriad.org/index.htm>.

Finding Resources about Elders and Elder Protection

There are many excellent online resources that offer statistics about America’s elder population, along with information specific to crime prevention, victim assistance and elder protection. For example:

- The U.S. Census Bureau’s “American Fact Finder” features a wide range of demographic data about our Nation’s elder population, including data by individual states. These resources can be accessed at: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFPeople?_submenuId=people_3&_sse=on
- The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) has many publications related to “elder protection,” including over 100 full text publications; 500 abstracts; and over 200 Federal justice websites. You can access these resources at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Search/SearchResults.aspx?txtKeywordSearch=elder+protection&fromSearch=1>.
- NCJRS also features resources addressing elder fraud, including 33 full text publications; over 300 abstracts; and 158 Federal justice websites. You can access these resources at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Search/SearchResults.aspx?txtKeywordSearch=elder+fraud&fromSearch=1>.

In addition, you can contact your state's or jurisdiction's Agency on Aging (see above) for information and resources that are available at your state and local levels.

Tips for Elder Outreach and Awareness

Once you have reached out to organizations that serve elders in your community, you can brainstorm ideas to promote elder protection during NCVRW, Older Americans Month and throughout the year. You can also promote this unique and important partnership through your local news media.

Some tips to consider for elder outreach include:

- Coordinate with your jurisdiction's Triad Program or local law enforcement agencies to offer home safety checks for elders.
- Develop a list of sites that elders may frequent, and ask the proprietors to display NCVRW information – including the theme poster, bookmarks and buttons – along with any specific resources you identify or create related to elder protection. For example:
 - Senior centers.
 - Nursing home facilities.
 - Veterans' homes and agencies.
 - Post offices (all of which will already be displaying NCVRW resources nationwide).
 - Multi-faith communities.
 - Food banks.
 - Beauty salons and barber shops.
 - Banks and credit unions.
 - Public transportation.
 - Community Action Agencies.
 - Medical professionals (including physicians and dentists).
 - Adult day service centers.
 - Emergency home response provider agencies.
 - Foster grandparent programs.
 - Any elder support groups.
 - Long-term care ombudsman agencies.
 - Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- Seek opportunities to conduct training sessions or give short speeches about elder protection, crime prevention and safety at the sites noted above during NCVRW.
- Work with your jurisdiction's elder abuse provider agencies to coordinate expanded elder outreach during NCVRW and Older Americans Month.

- Ask your local libraries to sponsor a display during NCVRW about elder protection issues, and provide free bookmarks to their elder patrons.
- Seek collaborative opportunities with banks and credit unions to promote elder awareness about fraud through public awareness displays and presentations to their clients.
- Seek opportunities to partner with organizations that assist traditionally-underserved elders, including elders with disabilities; elders with Limited English Proficiency (LEP); and GLBT elders, among others.
- Using the elder protection resources you've identified or created, seek media opportunities to expand your outreach efforts and address elder protection issues through:
 - Appearances on local television or radio talk shows.
 - Development of public service announcements that target elder populations and elder protection.
 - Submitting an opinion/editorial column to your local newspapers about elder protection to generate greater awareness of crimes against the elderly, including elder abuse and fraud.
- You can also partner with senior centers and nursing homes to tap volunteers who can support your NCVRW activities, such as stuffing envelopes or assembling ribbon pin cards. You can use the sample "certificate of appreciation" included in the 2010 NCVRW Resource Guide to recognize any volunteers.

For More Information

Please contact National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Project Consultant Anne Seymour via email at annesey@atlantech.net; or by telephone at 202.547.1732.