

Civil Legal Aid: Building a Program to Address Elder Abuse

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It is estimated that as many as one in ten older adults experiences elder abuse. Civil legal aid programs commonly offer services that are beneficial to victims of abuse, including:

- Domestic Violence Services
- Housing (Landlord/Tenant, Foreclosure Prevention)
- Health Care Access
- Income Maintenance
- Consumer Protection

However, many legal aid organizations are building programs or units that are specifically tasked to address elder abuse. These programs offer holistic services for older adults who have experienced maltreatment and engage in outreach to the community on this specific issue. Additionally, attorneys and legal staff within the program gain expertise in the specialized field of elder justice. Additional services that a specialized program may offer include:

- Revocation of planning documents
- Recoupment of stolen funds
- Assistance with obtaining long-term care services and supports
- Addressing financial exploitation-related Medicaid denials

Funding

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) offers specific grant opportunities for programs that provide services for victims of crime. Additionally, each state has an administrator tasked with distributing Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, and may issue their own grant opportunities. The level of funding for these services has increased over the years, and many legal assistance programs have utilized this funding to address elder abuse. Learn more about VOCA funding in the NCLER webcast, [Elder Abuse: Insight Into the Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\)](#).

Program Models

Some program models include:

- Indiana Legal Services: [Legal Assistance for Victimized Adults \(LAVA\) Project](#)
- [Michigan Elder Justice Initiative](#)
- Bet Tzedek: [Elder Justice Team](#)
- Jefferson County, Kentucky: [ElderServe](#)
- [Maine Legal Services for the Elderly](#)
- More can be found on the [OVC website](#)

First Steps

If you are considering starting a program focused on services for survivors of elder abuse, a good first step may be to participate in a [multidisciplinary team](#) in your community. By participating in these teams, you can get a sense of the legal needs of older adults and build your program to develop this expertise and seek funding.

Please contact ConsultNCLER@acl.hhs.gov for free case consultation assistance. Sign up for our email list and access more resources at [NCLER.acl.gov](https://www.acl.gov/ncler).

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