

# Service Providers & Systems Working to Address Elder Abuse

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Many different service providers and systems are working to address elder abuse. No single professional group or system can meet all of a victim's needs. Therefore, civil legal aid attorneys should be aware of all of the potential partners and work being done in this area to both maximize resources and provide the best services for survivors of elder abuse. Cross-training and participating in multidisciplinary teams or task forces leads to more effective client referrals, enhanced collaborations, stronger programs, improved public policy, and better services for victims.

This list is not a comprehensive list of all professionals and systems working to prevent and address elder abuse, but contains information about some of the key players. To locate some of these providers in your area, use the [Eldercare Locator](#) service.

## Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a social services program provided by state and local governments. Most APS programs serve both older adults and younger adults with disabilities who need assistance because of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation. APS systems and programs vary by state, and they are often housed within departments of health and human services, or the department of aging. In all states, APS is responsible for receiving and responding to reports of abuse and works with clients and other professionals to strive for safety and independence.

As an attorney, you should become familiar with your state's mandatory and permissive reporting laws. These will help you determine whether you can or must report elder abuse to APS in certain circumstances. See the Navigating Ethical Issues & Complex Situations section of this Toolkit for more guidance.

### Learn More:

- [APS Technical Assistance Resource Center](#)
- [National Adult Protective Services Association](#)

## Area Agencies on Aging

An Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is an agency designated by a state to address the needs and concerns of all older adults at the regional and local levels. AAA is a general term—names of local AAAs vary, and can be structured differently by state. Their geographic coverage can be a city, a single county, or a multi-county district. Many AAAs are responsible for contracting with legal assistance providers to provide legal assistance to older adults pursuant to Title III-B of the Older Americans Act.

AAAs coordinate and offer services such home-delivered meals, homemaker assistance, caregiver services, and more. They are a great resource for older adults who have experienced abuse and can help with ensuring that essential services are in place to help survivors remain independent.

Learn More: [National Association for Area Agencies on Aging](#)

## Civil Legal Aid

Civil legal aid attorneys can help older adults who have experienced abuse by assisting with obtaining protective orders, revoking misused powers of attorney, obtaining stolen funds, and more. Civil legal aid programs are funded by a variety of sources, but many who are providing services to victims of elder abuse receive Title III-B funding and/or funding from the Legal Services Corporation. Civil legal aid programs are also generally equipped to handle the associated legal issues discussed in this guide, such as Medicaid, housing, and consumer issues. Civil legal remedies may be helpful whether or not a criminal prosecution is pursued. Learn more in the Role of Civil Legal Aid section of this Toolkit.

### Learn More:

- [Administration for Community Living: Legal Services for the Elderly Program](#)
- [Legal Services Corporation](#)

## Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system includes many professionals who play a role in identifying elder abuse, protecting victims, and prosecuting the person or persons responsible for the abuse. These professionals include law enforcement, crime victim services, prosecutors (local and state), Medicaid Fraud Control Units, Attorneys General, U.S. Attorneys, U.S. Department of Justice, community corrections (pre-trial, probation, parole), coroner/medical examiner, and more.

If the prosecutor's office is pursuing criminal charges, you will want to coordinate civil case strategy to ensure that you are strategically bringing your civil case at the appropriate time and that you are not acting at cross purposes with the prosecution or failing to file within the statute of limitations for civil actions while a criminal action is being pursued. If there is a criminal conviction, the court may be able to enter an order for restitution.

Learn More: [Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative](#)

## Elder Abuse Task Forces and Elder Justice Coordinators

The Department of Justice has Elder Justice Task Forces and Assistant US Attorney Elder Justice Coordinators in each federal district in the country. The Task Forces provide coordination among state and local agencies, organizations, and law enforcement who are combating elder abuse. Additionally, the Task Forces can evaluate complaints, investigate scams, and provide training centered on federal criminal actions. To find your Elder Justice Coordinator, contact your federal district office.

Learn More: [Elder Justice Task Forces](#)

## Judicial System

The courts provide a means for older adults who have experienced abuse to obtain important relief, such as obtaining orders of protection, recouping stolen funds, and seeking prosecution of perpetrators of abuse. Some court systems have specific elder justice courts or elder justice centers within the courthouse. Additionally, some judicial systems have formed elder justice committees or task forces.

### Learn More:

- [Center for Elders and the Courts](#)
- [National Center for State Courts](#)

## Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The Older Americans Act requires every state to have a Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) program that addresses complaints and advocates for improvements in the long-term care system. Ombudsmen advocate for residents of nursing homes, board and care homes, assisted living facilities, and other adult care facilities. Because LTCO are often a first point of contact for long-term care residents, they may be the first to notice the warning signs of financial exploitation or be the first person a resident confides in regarding financial exploitation. LTCO are a key community partner in preventing and identifying financial exploitation.

Learn More: [The National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center](#)

## Multi-Disciplinary Teams

One of the most notable forms of collaboration on elder exploitation cases is through multi-disciplinary teams and enhanced multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs and E-MDTs). MDTs are partnerships among public, private, and non-profit organizations with the goal of improving outcomes for victims of elder financial exploitation. Most teams include a prosecutor, adult protective services, civil legal services, financial institutions, forensic accountant, and other members. The collaboration on these teams fosters accountability and improved cooperation among agencies.

Learn More: [Department of Justice MDT Guide & Toolkit](#)

## Victim Specialists and Advocates

Victim specialists work to ensure that survivors of elder abuse know their rights and understand proceedings in the criminal justice system. They help with navigation of the criminal justice system by providing support, determining needs, developing safety plans, and connecting to resources and services.

Learn More: [National Center for Victims of Crime](#)

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

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