

Elder Abuse Public Policy and Programming in Ohio: Impetus and Evolution

Elder abuse is a major problem for older Americans.

- 1 in 10 community-dwellers age 60 plus report experiencing some form in the past year.
- Elder abuse by paid caregivers is many times more common in nursing homes than either assisted living or home care.
- Just 1 in 5 situations are reported to authorities.
- Victims are more likely to die sooner than non-victims.
- The estimated annual cost of financial abuse alone is \$2.6 billion.

Ohio has been a leader in efforts to understand and respond to elder abuse across six decades.

Decade: 1950s

Select relevant national events:

- growing impaired older population living alone without family support at risk of neglect and exploitation
- community planning to galvanize professional interest and identify problem solutions

Illustrative Ohio activities:

- Cleveland's Welfare Federation convenes executives of agencies serving older clients to examine frustrations in serving this population and interest in establishing a protective care demonstration.

Decade: 1960s

Select relevant national events:

- national forums held to delineate adult protective services and its clientele
- funded demonstration projects on adult protective services, including evaluation of effectiveness, in several locales

Illustrative Ohio activities:

- Cleveland's Benjamin Rose Institute (BRI) is one of the demonstration projects and perhaps the most provocative in its findings.

Decade: 1970s

Select relevant national events:

- expansion of adult protective services under Title XX and criticism of it for rights violations
- exposure of mistreatment and poor conditions in nursing homes
- “discovery” of elder abuse as a medical concern and aspect of family violence

Illustrative Ohio activities:

- Most county welfare departments establish adult protective services programs.
- Mary Adelaide Mendelson authors Tender Loving Greed as a consultant for Cleveland's Federation for Community Planning.
- The Ohio Nursing Home Bill of Rights becomes law.
- The first research on elder abuse is conducted at Cleveland's MetroHealth Medical Center's Chronic Illness Center.
- Nursing Home Ombudsman programs are established in Ohio's Planning and Service Areas.
- The Ohio Commission on Aging introduces the first state legislation to protect community-dwelling elder abuse victims.

Decade: 1980s

Select relevant national events:

- increasing public awareness of elder abuse
- pioneering research on the nature and scope of elder abuse
- passage of adult protective services laws in most states, focused on elder abuse
- numerous Congressional elder abuse hearings
- establishment of the National Aging Resource Center on Elder Abuse (NARCEA), National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Clearinghouse on Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly, and Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect

Illustrative Ohio activities:

- The Council on Older Persons (of the Federation for Community Planning):
 - drafts and gets enacted Ohio's Adult Protective Services Law
 - provides professional training on elder abuse and the Law locally
 - establishes the Cuyahoga County Protective Services Consortium for Older Adults and the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services, the nation's oldest continuous elder abuse networks
 - helps secure state funding for Law implementation through the Ohio Department of Aging's Eldercare Initiative - successfully advocates for a separate adult protective services unit at the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services
 - develops a statewide plan on Adult Services for the Ohio Department of Human Services

- Ohio Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar is instrumental in introducing the first federal legislation on elder abuse identification, prevention, and treatment.
- Ohio Department of Aging hosts the Protective Services Roundtable, facilitated by Metropolitan Chicago Coalition on Aging.
- Various other Ohio elder abuse-related laws are passed, including:
 - protective services for persons with mental retardation/developmental disabilities
 - criminal penalty for resident abuse or neglect
 - criminal penalty for abuse or neglect of older persons or disabled adults

Decade: 1990s

Select relevant national events:

- increasing involvement of criminal justice, domestic violence programs, and Aging Network in elder abuse initiatives
- globalization of elder abuse as a human rights issue and formation of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
- interest in cultural variation regarding the meaning and response to elder abuse
- creation of a National Research Agenda for Elder Abuse and Neglect by a panel of the NARCEA

Illustrative Ohio activities:

- There is a proliferation of professional education and public awareness activities by area agencies on aging and local elder abuse networks.
- Ohio Family Violence/Adult Protective Services/Elder Abuse Roundtable and Greater Cleveland Elder Abuse/Domestic Violence Roundtable are created.
- Ohio State University evaluates the state's adult protective services system, only the second state to do a comprehensive evaluation.
- Ohio screening tools/referral protocol for elder abuse/domestic violence in later life and A Model Intervention for Elder Abuse and Dementia are developed through BRI.
- State funding for adult protective services is eliminated (later to be reinstated as a result of advocacy efforts and then eliminated again).

Decade: 2000s

Select relevant national events:

- holding first National Policy Summit on Elder Abuse
- declaring World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and completing World Elder Abuse Environment Scan
- introducing Elder Justice Act, regarded as the first comprehensive federal elder abuse legislation, and forming the Elder Justice Coalition
- publishing Elder Mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation in an Aging America by the National Research Council
- increasing the funding for elder abuse research through the National Institute of Justice and National Institute on Aging

Illustrative Ohio activities:

- Ohio Post-National Summit on Elder Abuse begets the Attorney General's Elder Abuse Task Force, which begets the Elder Abuse Commission.
- Ohio Supreme Court establishes the Subcommittee on Adult Guardianship.
- Ohio Family Violence Prevention Project is initiated under the Health Policy Institute of Ohio.
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services establishes an Adult Protective Services Core Curriculum.
- A planning grant is secured to form a Family Justice Center in Cuyahoga County.