

# 2011 Idaho Summit on Elder Abuse and Exploitation

## Identifying Priority Issues for Idaho

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### INTRODUCTION

The information reported in this document was gathered from professionals who participated in the 2011 Idaho Summit on Elder Abuse and Exploitation. The purpose of the Summit was to examine elder abuse and financial exploitation from a social services, legal, and health care perspective and create a forum for the exchange of knowledge and perspectives. A free Senior Scam Jam, designed to provide consumer information to older adults, was sponsored in conjunction with the Summit.

The Summit, held in Boise, Idaho on June 16, 2011, was attended by approximately 150 professionals from a variety of agencies and organizations. The primary partners for the event were the Idaho Commission on Aging, the Idaho Department of Insurance, and the Boise State University Center for the Study of Aging. Over 20 other sponsors provided financial and/or in-kind support and a registration fee was collected. The resources generated were used to cover expenses associated with the Summit and the Senior Scam Jam. All remaining funds will to be used to support prevention and education activities under the auspices of the Idaho Justice Alliance for Vulnerable Adults (JAVA).

The agenda for the Summit mirrored the process of an investigation from identification of an abusive situation, to reporting, gathering of evidence, determination of competence, and legal proceedings. The final session of the day was a 50-minute facilitated strategic planning activity designed to identify priority issues in Idaho. Participants were informed that the information generated would be used to guide the strategic planning activities of JAVA.

### METHODS

Participants, working in small groups, were asked to discuss and record responses to the following two questions: 1) What do you see as the most critical issues concerning elder abuse and exploitation, and 2) Who should be in attendance at the Summit but is not? Due to lack of time, the groups primarily focused on the first question.

The information generated by the small groups was organized using an ecological perspective, see Figure 1. The ecological model recognizes the complex interplay between the individual, the environment (family and community), and society (policies and norms) and the impact these influences have on health and well-being. The ecological perspective dictates that when identifying action steps and/or designing programs it is essential to recognize the external forces and interdependent systems that shape an individual's behavior.

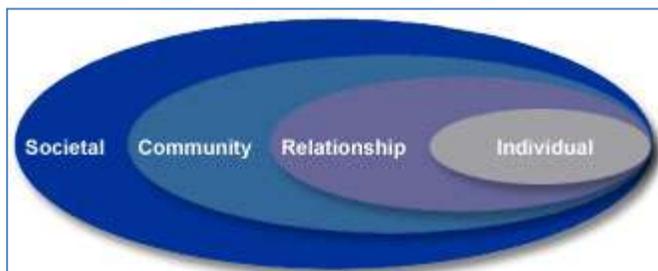


Figure 1. Ecological Model

The four interdependent systems used to organize the critical issues identified during the strategic planning activity were:

- Individual,
- Interpersonal,
- Institutional, and
- Societal Policies and Norms.

## **RESULTS**

The following information identifies the themes that emerged from the group discussions.

### **The INDIVIDUAL Level**

At the individual level resiliency to abuse and exploitation is dependent on many factors including age, gender and physical condition. The person's lifestyle, living situation, financial security, and cognitive abilities also play a role in their susceptibility to abuse and exploitation.

The themes of education and personal empowerment and responsibility emerged as critical issues.

- Education of the individual
  - Identity theft
  - Services
  - Exploitation
  - Social Security
- Personal empowerment and responsibility
  - Health literacy
  - Know their rights and speak up
  - Encourage to develop larger social network aside from children and family
  - Know reliable resources, where to go, who to see, yearly Scam Jam

### **The INTERPERSONAL Level**

At the interpersonal level, family dynamics play an important role as does the environment of the individual in whether they become a victim of violence or exploitation. The lack of social networks and interaction can result in alienation from community and friends.

The priority issues that emerged as themes at the interpersonal level were the need for education in the community and enhancing social support and networks.

- Education of families and communities
  - Education about abuse by family and friends
  - Education on power of attorney
  - Community education on resources
  - Education to first responders

- Social Network and Support
  - Care for caregivers
  - Library programs
  - Intergenerational programs
  - Engage clergy
  - Pair vulnerable adult with peer in the community (like Big Brothers Big Sisters)

### **The INSTITUTIONAL Level**

The ability to age in place (in their own home or community) is the wish of most adults. Making this a reality requires strong institutional and community partnerships and the availability of resources. The themes related to institutional factors reflect a concern for the lack of resources and the need for collaboration, education, and dissemination of information.

- Lack of resources related to:
  - Transportation
  - Day care
  - Home care
  - Caregivers
  - Mental health
  - Pro-bono support by attorneys and accountants
- Collaboration
  - Continuity between organizations
  - Collaboration between local, county and state entities
  - Religious
  - Multidisciplinary teams
  - Outreach to businesses, agencies and schools
- Education
  - More pro-bono education
  - Physicians
  - Law enforcement
- Dissemination of information
  - 211 call line for seniors
  - Use of existing mailings (Idaho Power, Intermountain Gas) for distribution of educational materials
  - Wider distribution of senior resources at assisted living and long-term care facilities, senior centers

### **The SOCIETAL POLICY and NORMS Level**

Critical issues that emerged at the societal level were primarily related to lack of funding for services and the need for changes in regulations and policies. Several groups also identified a need to address social norms related to older adults and vulnerable populations.

- Funding
  - Mental health funding
  - Mobile crisis unit funding
  - Gap between Medicaid and Medicare
  - Lack of funds or limited funds for services
  - Resources for prevention
- Regulatory
  - Mandatory reporting
  - System to check on vulnerable adults (Adult Protection Services)
  - Regulation of caregivers (Home Health – non-CAN, LPN)
  - Investigation and prosecution of perpetrators when there is a lack of reliable witnesses
  - Banking regulations
  - Financial planning regulations
  - Stronger, clearer laws
  - Definition of vulnerable adult
  - Monitoring of power of attorney
  - Penalties for abuse/fraud/misuse
- Social Norms
  - Education regarding “blame the victim”
  - Differences between medical and social models
  - High school family living curriculum

**Who’s missing from the Summit?**

Only one group recorded responses related to the question of the types of organizations or professionals who should be involved in the Summit. Responses included:

Who’s missing from the Summit?		
Clergy	Medical professionals	Schools
Fire Departments/EMT’s	Senior organizations	Transportation agencies
Land Use Planners and Developers	Cross Generations	Agency for New Americans

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The priority issues identified by Summit participants complement JAVA’s vision and action plan (Appendix A) and mission statement of: *To strengthen community partnerships and resource networks to ensure dignity, safety, and quality of life of vulnerable adults through advocacy, education, intervention, prevention and policy development.*

The findings underscore the importance of JAVA’s focus and also identify some key next steps. For example, there is an ongoing need to expand awareness of abuse and exploitation to a broader audience and support the development of strong multi-sector voices in the policy arena. Finally, the importance of approaching prevention of abuse and exploitation from a systems or ecological perspective must be recognized. As identified by this report, there are critical issues to be addressed within each of the levels of influence that impact behavior and quality of life.

## Appendix A: JAVA Vision, Mission, and Action Plan

**Vision:** Every vulnerable adult is visible and valued.

**Mission:** To strengthen community partnerships and resource networks to ensure dignity, safety, and quality of life of vulnerable adults through advocacy, education, intervention, prevention and policy development.

Action Plan (12/2010 – 6/2011)	Project Status
<b>Needs Assessment / Gap Analysis</b>	
Conduct Environmental Scan to identify services available to vulnerable adults.	
<b>Policy</b>	
Monitor 2011 Legislative Session Policy: potential changes to Adult Protective Services Statutes	Complete, 4/2011
<b>Education / Outreach</b>	
Network with existing organizations to enhance educational opportunities.	In progress, statewide trainings with POST, ICPA
Education /trainings for families, caregivers, professionals	In progress, statewide trainings with POST, ICPA
Develop guidebook of elder law rights and options [Idaho Legal Aid Services]	Complete, 6/2011
Promote/support Idaho Summit on Elder Abuse and Exploitation, June 16 & 17, 2011	Complete, 6/2011
Education and Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social workers</li> <li>• Church groups</li> <li>• Senior centers</li> </ul>	In progress
<b>Systems</b>	
Partner with Nampa Family Justice Center to expand services available to older adults	Pending
Assist in the promotion of Idaho's Aging & Disability Resource Connections (ADRC)	
Create information conduit between organization and agencies: development of website, listserv.	
<b>Awareness / Public Relations / Sustainability</b>	
Establish relationships with local news and media outlets	In progress
Submit information for publications, radio and TV spots	In progress