



The Elder Justice Roadmap

A Stakeholder Initiative to Respond to
an Emerging Health, Justice,
Financial and Social Crisis

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THE ELDER JUSTICE ROADMAP

Responding to an Emerging Health, Justice, Financial, & Social Crisis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Elder abuse – including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, as well as neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation – affects about five million Americans each year, causing untold illness, injury and suffering for victims and those who care about and for them. Although we do not have a great deal of data quantifying the costs of elder abuse to victims, their families, and society at large, early estimates suggest that such abuse costs many billions of dollars each year – a startling statistic, particularly since just one in 24 cases is reported to authorities. Given the aging population and the widespread human, social, and economic impact of elder abuse, a broad range of stakeholders and experts were consulted on how to enhance both public and private responses to elder abuse.

Among the many priorities identified in this Roadmap, *five* stand out:

The **Top Five Priorities** critical to understanding and reducing elder abuse and to promoting health, independence, and justice for older adults, are:

- 1. Awareness:** Increase public awareness of elder abuse, a multi-faceted problem that requires a holistic, well-coordinated response in services, education, policy, and research.
- 2. Brain health:** Conduct research and enhance focus on cognitive (in)capacity and mental health – critical factors both for victims and perpetrators.
- 3. Caregiving:** Provide better support and training for the tens of millions of paid and unpaid caregivers who play a critical role in preventing elder abuse.
- 4. Economics:** Quantify the costs of elder abuse, which is often entwined with financial incentives and comes with huge fiscal costs to victims, families and society.
- 5. Resources:** Strategically invest more resources in services, education, research, and expanding knowledge to reduce elder abuse.

The Elder Justice Roadmap Process

Developing a Roadmap to set strategic priorities to advance elder justice involved collecting information from numerous sources. The data were collected, with guidance from subject matter experts from around the country, in several phases including:

- Using a concept mapping process to solicit the perspectives of 750 stakeholders who were asked to identify the most critical priorities for the field;
- Convening facilitated discussions with experts on six particularly important topics: (1) diminished capacity/mental health, (2) caregiving, (3) diversity, (4) prevention, (5) screening, and (6) victim services;
- Conducting leadership interviews with high-level public officials, thought leaders, and heads of influential entities regarding how best to gain traction, engage vital partners, and set and implement an agenda to promote elder justice; and
- Compiling a bibliography and list of resources including articles, books, DVDs, curricula and toolkits relevant to the issues and priorities identified in the project.

This process resulted in the identification of the **Top Five Priorities** noted above, and specific recommendations identified by Roadmap contributors, who sorted them into three categories:

- **First Wave Action Items** – Priorities to address first, chosen by subject matter experts based on criteria outlined on page 9.
- **High Priorities by Domain** – A wider range of priorities sorted by the Roadmap’s four domains: *Direct Services*, *Education*, *Policy*, and *Research*, for users interested in a more in-depth list of options, and the reasons those priorities were deemed important.
- **Universal Themes that Cut across Domains** – Vital issues that arose repeatedly.

A Dynamic Document

This Roadmap is intended primarily to be a strategic planning resource *by the field, for the field* to advance our collective efforts to prevent and combat elder abuse. It is a dynamic document that can be adapted and used by grassroots and community groups, multidisciplinary teams, and local, state, and national governmental and non-governmental entities, all of which have critical and complementary roles to play in tackling and implementing the recommendations identified in this document.

While the views and information contained in this document do not reflect or represent the official positions or policies of the federal government, they have already helped to inform certain federal efforts. For example, the Roadmap helped to inform the structure of and subjects addressed at the inaugural meeting of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council¹ in October 2012, and to help target certain federal data collection, research, and training initiatives and projects.

There is much to do to address elder abuse. This Roadmap is just the beginning.