



RESEARCH REPORT

What Is Elder Abuse?

A Taxonomy for Collecting Criminal Justice Research and Statistical Data

Kamala Mallik-Kane Janine M. Zweig
June 2016



ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. For nearly five decades, Urban scholars have conducted research and offered evidence-based solutions that improve lives and strengthen communities across a rapidly urbanizing world. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector.

Urban strives for the highest standards of integrity and quality in its research, analyses, and policy recommendations. Urban scholars believe that independence, rigor, and transparency are essential to upholding those values. Funders do not determine research findings or influence scholars' conclusions. As an organization, the Urban Institute does not take positions on issues. Urban scholars and experts are independent and empowered to share their evidence-based views and recommendations shaped by research.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

This project was supported by Grant 2010-MU-MU-K072 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. The BJS Project Manager was Rachel E. Morgan, Statistician, Victimization Statistics Unit. Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the US Department of Justice.

Contents

Overview	1
Why Measure Elder Abuse?	2
Using Adult Protective Services (APS) Data to Measure Elder Abuse	3
Key Indicator Statistics Needed by Elder Abuse Stakeholders	4
Defining Elder Abuse: A Multidimensional Taxonomy	6
Offense Characteristics: What Acts Constitute Elder Abuse?	8
Victim Characteristics: What Kinds of People Are Victims of Elder Abuse?	9
Perpetrator Characteristics: What Is the Relationship between Victims and Perpetrators of Elder Abuse?	11
When Is Elder Abuse a Crime?	12
What Does Not Define Elder Abuse but Is Nevertheless Important to Document?	16
Counting Data on Elder Abuse	16
Unit of Analysis	16
When Should an Incident of Reported Elder Abuse Be Counted?	17
Collecting APS Data on Elder Abuse: Potential Limitations and Workarounds	18
Additional Attributes of Elder Abuse to Consider When Assessing APS Data Capacity	19
Appendix: Definitions of Elder Abuse from Federal Agencies, National Stakeholder Groups, and International Organizations	21
References	28
Exhibits	
1. Key Indicator Statistics Needed by Elder Abuse Stakeholders	5
2. Taxonomy of Elder Abuse for Criminal Justice Research and Statistical Purposes	7
3. Supplementary Data Elements to Assess for Crime Classification, Research, and Policy Analysis Needs	20

What Is Elder Abuse?

A Taxonomy for Collecting Criminal Justice Research and Statistical Data

Overview

The Urban Institute has been funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to assess how administrative data from Adult Protective Services (APS) agencies may be used to develop uniform, national statistics about elder abuse, and how APS data may augment currently available crime and victimization statistics.

This report presents a working definition of elder abuse so research and statistical data may be collected uniformly across states and localities with different legal and programmatic definitions of elder abuse. Consistent definitions and counting rules are needed to permit comparisons across jurisdictions and over time.

At present, there is no uniform, national-level definition of elder abuse because the social response to elder abuse has mostly occurred at the state and local levels. However, broadly speaking, “elder abuse” and its many variants¹ are understood to encompass a range of violations against vulnerable older adults perpetrated by individuals whom the victim may be expected to trust. For example, the National Research Council has described elder abuse as “(a) intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder, or (b) failure by a caregiver to satisfy the elder’s basic needs or to protect the elder from harm” (Bonnie and Wallace 2003, 1). Correspondingly, not all victimizations of older adults constitute elder abuse. Similar acts without particular victim attributes or victim-perpetrator relationship dynamics might more simply be characterized as assault, rape, theft, or fraud.

The taxonomy we present here defines elder abuse along three dimensions—(1) the acts that constitute elder abuse, (2) the characteristics of the victim, (3) the relationship between the victim and perpetrator—and incorporates a fourth dimension to distinguish between criminal and noncriminal acts based on their severity. This taxonomy builds on work conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014) to define the acts that constitute elder abuse and is supplemented by extant reviews of states’ APS laws, policies, and practices, as well as information that the Urban Institute gathered directly from state APS

¹For simplicity, this report uses “elder abuse,” but many variants are used to describe this phenomenon including elder mistreatment; elder maltreatment; elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and elder abuse, mistreatment, and neglect. Others use “vulnerable adult abuse” to encompass the victimization of both older adults and younger disabled adults.

representatives. However, APS agencies may have difficulty reporting statistical data according to this taxonomy because (1) their operational scopes often extend beyond elder abuse and (2) they may lack the data system capacity to distinguish between elder abuse and other types of cases. In the coming months, the Urban Institute will be assessing APS agencies' capacity to collect statistical data on elder abuse. Consequently, this report also presents recommendations on aspects of APS operations and data capacity to assess in support of potential future statistical and research data collection from APS agencies.

Why Measure Elder Abuse?

It is unclear how much elder abuse occurs within the United States. While elder abuse is a growing worry as the population of the United States ages, a lack of basic information has impeded policymakers' ability to document the scope of the problem, monitor changes over time, evaluate the effectiveness of system responses, design prevention strategies, and plan effectively for future service needs. A 2011 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report identified only four studies in the past two decades that attempted to estimate the prevalence of elder abuse nationwide. The most recent and frequently cited epidemiologic study of elder abuse estimates that 11 percent of people over age 60 residing in the community experienced at least one form of mistreatment, including emotional mistreatment (4.6%), physical mistreatment (1.6%), sexual mistreatment (0.6%), and current potential neglect (5.1%; see Acierno et al. 2009). Actual prevalence may be higher because the methodology relied on self-reports and did not include residents of long-term care institutions, thus excluding some of the most vulnerable elders. Nevertheless, applying this 11 percent prevalence estimate to the 2010 Census' count of 40.3 million adults ages 65 and older (Howden and Meyer 2011) suggests that more than 4 million older Americans experience this form of abuse each year. The number of victims is expected to increase as the population of the United States ages, in particular the baby boom generation born between 1946 and 1964.

Several federal agencies and national stakeholders have long highlighted the need for uniform national data to establish the prevalence of elder abuse, both known (to APS and criminal justice authorities) and unreported. Such data are also needed to measure system performance, make comparisons across jurisdictions, and monitor trends over time (ASPE 2010; GAO 2011; National Academies Committee on National Statistics 2010; Wood 2006). Policymakers generally have two options for collecting comprehensive national data on elder abuse:

1. Population-based surveys are the "gold standard" for estimating the true prevalence of any condition, both known and unreported. Elder abuse, like other victimizations, is often underreported (Planty et al. 2013; Zweig et al. 2014). One study found that 1 in 14 incidents of abuse were reported to authorities, whereas another found that for every case known by programs,

another 24 went undetected (National Research Council 2003; Lifespan of Greater Rochester 2011). Despite this advantage of population-based surveys, they are complex and costly undertakings—particularly when it comes to measuring elder abuse. In conducting their population-based epidemiologic survey, Acierno and colleagues (2009) noted that the most vulnerable or incapacitated elders may be unable to respond themselves, and proxy reports by family members or caregivers may be unreliable when the reporter may be a perpetrator of abuse. That 2009 study is the most recent prevalence study conducted; to the best of our knowledge, no updates are planned.

2. Administrative data, by their nature, reflect known cases only, but they have the advantage of being ongoing data collections that can be used economically to answer important policy questions. Administrative data are the working records of agencies as they conduct their routine operations. Using administrative records for statistical, research, and policymaking purposes requires a thorough understanding of the underlying data systems and their limitations so the information may be interpreted appropriately (Iwig et al 2013).

Using Adult Protective Services (APS) Data to Measure Elder Abuse

APS data may be able to contribute to our estimation and understanding of elder abuse. APS agencies, rather than police, are often the first responders to reports of suspected elder abuse (Teaster 2006). Initial reports of alleged abuse are often made to APS abuse hotlines, and APS agencies receive reports from multiple sources, including private citizens, health care personnel, financial professionals, and law enforcement agencies. APS agencies are responsible for ensuring the immediate safety of victims, investigating allegations of abuse, providing emergency and (in some cases) longer-term services, and coordinating with other human services agencies and the criminal justice system (NAPSA and NASUAD 2012). The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has determined that administrative data from APS agencies would form the most comprehensive basis for a nationwide data system on known cases of elder abuse because of APS's central role in responding to, investigating, and serving victims of abuse (ASPE 2010).

Of interest to BJS as a criminal justice statistical agency is whether administrative data from APS agencies can augment current crime statistics about the victimization of older adults. There are many reasons to believe that reporting to APS agencies—which perform needs assessments, service referrals, and civil investigations—may be more complete than reporting to the police and other criminal justice agencies. Many elder care and elder abuse resources, including the US Department of Justice's (DOJ) Elder Justice Initiative website, instruct concerned individuals to contact APS in the absence of an immediate, life-

threatening emergency (DOJ undated-a). Since elder abuse occurs within the context of familial and/or caregiving relationships, victims and other reporters may be reluctant to risk the arrest of the perpetrator by involving the police—either out of affection for or loyalty to the perpetrator, or fear of disrupting a caregiving relationship on which the victim may depend. In comparison with the police, APS agencies may be more likely to be seen as a source of assistance than a source of punishment or getting in trouble. Also, because APS agencies typically investigate reports of self-neglect, they may detect underlying abuse or neglect that were heretofore unnoticed. Finally, APS data can be used to measure victimizations in long-term care facilities and other institutions that house vulnerable adults who are difficult to reach in population-based surveys of victimization. BJS’s National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), for example, is designed to measure victimization in the U.S. civilian household population and so excludes people who live in institutions such as nursing facilities and skilled nursing facilities. This results in an undercount of victimizations among older adults, particularly those aged 85 and above, 11 percent of whom live in nursing homes (Morgan and Mason 2014).

National, criminal justice system-based data collections were not designed to measure elder abuse. They do not contain the level of specificity needed to distinguish elder abuse from other forms of victimization against older adults, and they do not encompass the range of victimization types that comprise elder abuse. Arrest information collected through the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) does not collect the fields needed to ascertain either the vulnerability of the older victim or the relationship with the alleged perpetrator. For example, while NIBRS includes a category of “babysittee” to describe the victim’s relationship to the offender, there is no comparable category for an adult receiving caregiver assistance (FBI 2013). Like the NIBRS, the NCVS lacks sufficient detail to identify victimizations by non-family caregivers and fiduciaries (BJS 2012). Moreover, the population-based NCVS does not collect information on the full range of elder abuse victimizations. The NCVS is designed to measure “nonfatal personal crimes (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and personal larceny) and household property crimes (burglary, motor vehicle theft, and other theft)” but does not collect information on emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, or the misappropriation of an older person’s financial resources (BJS 2013).

Key Indicator Statistics Needed by Elder Abuse Stakeholders

The BJS-funded Urban Institute assessment of APS data specifically focuses on whether APS data systems have the capacity to generate the following key indicator statistics about elder abuse prevalence, victims, and case outcomes (exhibit 1). Collectively, these key indicators measure potential and confirmed

victimizations, characterize the victims of abuse, and measure the progress of cases through both APS and criminal justice investigative processes. These key indicators were developed jointly by the Urban Institute and BJS in conjunction with stakeholders from DOJ and HHS at a meeting of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Elder Abuse in June 2013.

EXHIBIT 1

Key Indicator Statistics Needed by Elder Abuse Stakeholders

- Number of victimizations reported to APS, which represents all potential victimizations known to APS
- Percentage of victimizations reported by the criminal justice system (e.g., police and prosecutors). Other reporting sources of interest are victims, their family and friends, health care workers, social service providers, bank and financial professionals, and other justice system actors (e.g., civil courts, attorneys)
- Percentage of victims who have previous reports to APS
- Number of victimizations investigated by APS
- Percentage of victims with cases investigated by APS
- Number of victimizations substantiated by APS
- Percentage of victims (reported and investigated) whose cases were substantiated by APS
- Number and percentage of victimizations (reported, investigated, and substantiated) that were criminal in nature
- Number of victimizations referred by APS to the criminal justice system (e.g., police or prosecutors)
- Percentage of victims (reported, investigated, substantiated, and criminally victimized) whose cases resulted in—
 - » Arrest
 - » Prosecution
 - » Conviction
 - » An alternative sanction or outcome such as a protective order, loss of licensure, loss of guardianship, or inclusion on an abuser registry
- Percentage of victims (reported, investigated, substantiated, and criminally victimized) by the following eight personal and abuse characteristics—
 - » Age
 - » Gender
 - » Race
 - » Abuse type: e.g., physical, sexual, psychological, neglect, financial exploitation, or abandonment
 - » Abuse location: community (e.g., victim’s home, family member’s home, unlicensed group home) or institution (e.g., nursing home, assisted living facility, licensed group home)

- » Disability type: e.g., hearing, vision, cognitive, or ambulatory limitations, or the inability to perform self-care tasks or activities needed for independent living.
- » Capacity: e.g., ability to make decisions for oneself
- » Relationship to the perpetrator: e.g., intimate partner, family member, caregiver, non-family acquaintance, or stranger

Defining Elder Abuse: A Multidimensional Taxonomy

The first step in generating uniform statistics on elder abuse is to develop a working definition of elder abuse. Because elder abuse is a multidimensional phenomenon, any operational definition must take offense, victim, and perpetrator characteristics into account, as described in detail below. The confluence of these three elements makes a particular victimization “elder abuse.” Absent these victim characteristics and relationship dynamics, the same acts might be described more simply as assault, rape, theft, or fraud.

Legal definitions of elder abuse vary across states. For example, state laws define between 3 and 22 types of abuse (Stiegel and Klem 2007), with disparate names like “general abuse,” “intentional abuse,” and “reckless abuse.” Yet, we find a fair amount of agreement in the broad strokes of how elder abuse is defined across states, and these broad strokes correspond to how elder abuse is popularly conceptualized. Various federal entities and national organizations have developed umbrella definitions of the types of acts that constitute elder abuse, and these categorization schemas are generally similar (see Appendix).

For criminal justice research and statistical purposes, elder abuse can be conceptualized as certain acts with specific behavioral criteria, committed against vulnerable older adults, and perpetrated by individuals who the victim could be expected to trust. This taxonomy is summarized in exhibit 2 and is more fully discussed below. The taxonomy we present here builds on definitions proposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC, like BJS, is a federal statistical agency, with a mission to develop case definitions and collect epidemiologic data. In the interest of avoiding duplication across federal agencies, we recommend adopting the CDC’s detailed, behaviorally based descriptions of the acts comprising elder abuse, and building on the victim and perpetrator attributes identified by the CDC that characterize a given act as elder abuse. As described in the following sections, we find support for these definitions and this taxonomy through a review of the literature and states’ APS laws, policies, and practices. Further, certain acts of elder abuse may be severe enough to warrant criminal justice system intervention; criteria for distinguishing criminal and non-criminal acts of elder abuse are discussed as well.

EXHIBIT 2

Taxonomy of Elder Abuse for Criminal Justice Research and Statistical Purposes

Elder abuse occurs when—

- One of the following acts is committed:
 - » Physical abuse
 - » Sexual abuse
 - » Emotional or psychological abuse
 - » Neglect (by others)
 - » Financial or material exploitation
 - » Abandonment;
- Against an adult age 60 or older with a demonstrated vulnerability; and
- By a perpetrator whom the victim could reasonably be expected to trust, such as a family member, financial advisor, caregiver, or another employee of a caregiving institution.

Such an act constitutes elder abuse regardless of—

- Whether the abuse was committed in a community or institutional setting, or
- Whether the act is codified as a crime.

Elder abuse data should be counted—

- At a person-incident unit of analysis, so each victimization a person experiences is counted, and multiple incidents for a given person can be aggregated; and
- At multiple points in the APS investigative process to understand potential prevalence, case processing, and case outcomes. These include:
 - » Initial reports,
 - » Investigations opened, and
 - » Cases substantiated.

An incident of elder abuse may be counted as criminal in nature when—

- APS refers a given report to the criminal justice system for follow-up; or
- Certain specific incident characteristics are present:
 - » Physical force or inappropriate restraint that caused bodily injury or impairment;
 - » Any sexual assault;
 - » Psychological or emotional abuse that caused the victim to seek or receive medical or mental health care;
 - » Neglect, by a person with a defined caregiving responsibility, to provide the necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, health care);
 - » Financial exploitation that resulted in the loss of the victim's property, or when a person without the capacity to consent was coerced to change legal documents or transfer property; or
 - » Abandonment by a person with a defined caregiving responsibility.

Offense Characteristics: What Acts Constitute Elder Abuse?

The CDC (2014) defines six, mutually exclusive categories of interpersonal abuse and a seventh category for self-neglect. These encompass acts of varying severity that may be considered criminal or noncriminal. In this section, we first describe the acts that constitute abuse broadly. Later, we consider which specific acts within these categories might be counted as criminal acts for statistical reporting purposes. CDC's (2014) broad abuse category definitions are as follows:

- **“Physical Abuse** occurs when an elder is injured (e.g., scratched, bitten, slapped, pushed, hit, burned, etc.), assaulted or threatened with a weapon (e.g., knife, gun, or other object), or inappropriately restrained.”
- **“Sexual Abuse or Abusive Sexual Contact** is any sexual contact against an elder's will. This includes acts in which the elder is unable to understand the act or is unable to communicate. Abusive sexual contact is defined as intentional touching (either directly or through the clothing), of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, mouth, inner thigh, or buttocks.”
- **“Psychological or Emotional Abuse** occurs when an elder experiences trauma after exposure to threatening acts or coercive tactics. Examples include humiliation or embarrassment; controlling behavior (e.g., prohibiting or limiting access to transportation, telephone, money, or other resources); social isolation; disregarding or trivializing needs; or damaging or destroying property.”
- **“Neglect** is the failure or refusal of a caregiver or other responsible person to provide for an elder's basic physical, emotional, or social needs, or failure to protect them from harm. Examples include not providing adequate nutrition, hygiene, clothing, shelter, or access to necessary health care; or failure to prevent exposure to unsafe activities and environments.”
- **“Financial Abuse or Exploitation** is the unauthorized or improper use of the resources of an elder for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain. Examples include forgery, misuse or theft of money or possessions, use of coercion or deception to surrender finances or property, or improper use of guardianship or power of attorney.”
- **“Abandonment** is the willful desertion of an elderly person by caregiver or other responsible person.”

Note that CDC (2014) additionally includes a category of **self-neglect**, which “occurs when vulnerable elders fail or refuse to address their own basic physical, emotional, or social needs. Examples include self-care tasks such as nourishment, clothing, hygiene, and shelter; proper/appropriate use of medications; and managing or administering one's finances.” Since BJS, as a criminal justice statistical agency, is concerned with victimizations perpetrated against others, self-neglect should *not* be included under BJS's definition of

elder abuse. Later in this report, we consider other characteristics that may distinguish criminal and noncriminal acts for the purpose of statistical reporting.

Victim Characteristics: What Kinds of People Are Victims of Elder Abuse?

Victims of elder abuse are typically defined by both age and vulnerability. We recommend the following threshold criteria for age and vulnerability based on the CDC’s case definition, the Elder Justice Act, and state APS legislation and practice. Interestingly, other federal agencies and national stakeholder groups have not explicitly defined these criteria (see the appendix).

AGE 60 OR OLDER

In keeping with the CDC and the Elder Justice Act (see the appendix), we recommend defining the age threshold as 60. Similarly, state APS programs most often operationalize the term “elder” as someone age 60 or older (GAO 2011).

DEMONSTRATED VULNERABILITY

While we define age 60 as the minimum age for a victim of elder abuse, in most states, APS’s investigative authority is also based on vulnerability rather than age alone (Stiegel and Klem 2007). Most APS agencies (88%) reported investigating elder abuse within a broader context of vulnerable adult abuse, which includes disabled adults ages 18–59. Very few state APS agencies have the authority to investigate abuse or intervene in the affairs of an adult unless that person demonstrates some vulnerability; only four states use age alone as a factor for determining eligibility for adult protective services. The criteria for deciding when a person over age 60 is vulnerable vary across states. Stiegel and Klem (2007) classify states’ vulnerability along the following dimensions:

- **Condition:** Most states’ APS laws (48) had some requirement related to the physical or mental condition of the individual. Many states list nonlimiting examples of the types of mental or physical conditions or impairments that qualify using language such as “including but not limited to.” Some specifically enumerate advanced age (13 states), substance abuse (4 states), situation of danger or risk (2 states), or a diagnosed lack of capacity (7 states) as alternative qualifying conditions.
 - » In 13 states, advanced age is a sufficient “condition” for APS to provide services. No threshold age is specified in the law, however. These statutes use language about impairment due to “advanced age” or “the infirmities of aging.”
- **Function:** Most states (49) have at least one stipulation regarding an individual’s functional status. The most common stipulations are whether individuals can protect or care for themselves (28 and

29 states, respectively). Other criteria relate to the individual's ability to perform activities of daily living (15 states), capacity to make decisions for themselves (13 states), and ability to manage assets and financial resources (12 states).

- **Lack of Assistance:** In five states an individual must “have no able and willing person available to provide assistance” in order to be eligible for APS services, meaning APS may investigate or intervene only if a person lacks social support.
- **Living Situation:** In 11 states, individuals are categorically eligible for APS services if they reside in a long-term care facility, whereas 5 states specifically have provisions regarding living situation for those who are not in a long-term care facility.
- **Receiving Services:** In seven states, individuals receiving services from a care agency are categorically eligible for APS services.
- **Guardianship/Conservatorship:** In six states individuals who have been assigned a guardian or conservator are categorically eligible for APS services.

For the purpose of a research and statistical definition of elder abuse, we propose that all these categories, except lack of assistance,² should be defining attributes of vulnerability and, therefore, elder abuse. However, more information is needed to operationalize a definition of vulnerability. Outstanding questions include the following:

- What measures do states use to ascertain physical or mental “impairment”?
- What constitutes “advanced age” in states where that or the “infirmities of aging” authorize APS to investigate alleged abuse?
- Which “conditions” merit inclusion in a definition of vulnerability regardless of the level of impairment?
- How do states measure the ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL)? Is any deficit in ADLs sufficient to define vulnerability, or is there a threshold amount? Further, do states consider only basic ADLs, such as walking, bathing, dressing, toileting, brushing teeth, and eating, or do they consider the instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) that are characteristic of being able to live independently? These IADLs include cooking, driving, using the telephone or computer, shopping, keeping track of finances, and managing medication (Weston 2009).

² All categories, except lack of assistance, define vulnerability in terms of objective individual characteristics rather than social relationships. Employing the lack of assistance criterion would exclude many physically, mentally, or cognitively vulnerable individuals who have a means of social support.

- What types of service eligibility should render a person categorically vulnerable?
- Can APS data conform to the disability categories used in the NCVS? The NCVS defines six types of disability (Morgan and Mason 2014):
 - » **Hearing limitation** entails deafness or serious difficulty hearing.
 - » **Vision limitation** is blindness or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses.
 - » **Cognitive limitation** includes serious difficulty in concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition.
 - » **Ambulatory limitation** is difficulty walking or climbing stairs.
 - » **Self-care limitation** is a condition that causes difficulty dressing or bathing.
 - » **Independent living limitation** is a physical, mental, or emotional condition that impedes doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor or shopping.

Perpetrator Characteristics: What Is the Relationship between Victims and Perpetrators of Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is frequently characterized within a familial or caregiving relationship between the victim and perpetrator. For example, the National Research Council’s description of elder abuse includes “(a) intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder, or (b) failure by a caregiver to satisfy the elder’s basic needs or to protect the elder from harm” (Bonnie and Wallace 2003, 1). Similarly, the CDC (2014) defines elder abuse as “abuse or neglect...by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust.” Since other national organizations do not define the victim-perpetrator relationship as clearly, we recommend adopting the CDC’s language for defining perpetrators of elder abuse.

It is important to note that this “expectation of trust” does not necessarily mean that the perpetrator is known to the victim. While family members would typically be so, others are in a position of trust by virtue of their employment or profession. For example, an employee of a nursing home, even one not directly involved in patient care, is expected to behave in a manner consistent with the best interests of the vulnerable adult. There is an implicit expectation of trust because of his or her professional role. The same can be said of attorneys, financial advisors, and other financial professionals, who may have a professional code of ethics to act in the best fiduciary interests of their clients.

How states operationalize this concept of a “trust relationship” between the victim and perpetrator is varied and unclear. For example, Stiegel and Klem’s 2007 review of APS laws did not analyze requirements around the victim-perpetrator relationship. Some state APS agencies, like Florida, explicitly require there to

be a trust relationship in order to investigate allegations of elder abuse. Most states, however, do not cite the victim-perpetrator relationship as an overt criterion for receiving APS services (GAO 2011).

BJJ may wish to consider that financial exploitation in particular is sometimes conceptualized more broadly to include financial scams by strangers who target older adults. The DOJ's Elder Justice Initiative website, for example, describes a typology whereby the nature of financial exploitation differs according to the relationship between the victim and perpetrator: "family members tend to use theft and misuse of assets; acquaintances, neighbors, service providers, financial professionals, and professional caretakers tend to use theft and fraud; and strangers tend to use fraud/scams" (DOJ undated-b).

However, for consistency with other forms of elder abuse, we nonetheless recommend that the definition of elder abuse, including financial exploitation, be limited to situations in which there is an expectation of trust between the victim and perpetrator. BJJ may wish to consider an alternative definition of financial exploitation of the elderly that focuses on financial crimes alone, regardless of the victim-perpetrator relationship or the demonstrated vulnerability of the victim.

When Is Elder Abuse a Crime?

As noted by the United Nations' Task Force on Crime Classification, there are two conceptions of crime. There is the technical legal definition, codified in law, and there is the "common unacceptable action." The former are often recoded in police crime statistics, while the latter are measured through victimization surveys, which use behavioral criteria to describe unacceptable acts (UNODC 2012). APS data fall between these ends of the spectrum. Cases reported to APS agencies are, by definition, known to the government. At the same time, APS data encompass a range of actions, including crimes as defined by law; unacceptable actions that may not be codified as crimes; and, in some cases, harmful situations in which no one is at fault (such as self-neglect, which the proposed taxonomy excludes from criminal justice statistics).

As a criminal justice statistical agency, BJJ is especially interested in the gap between criminal justice statistics and the victimizations reported to APS. In particular, BJJ would like to quantify the amount of victimization reported to APS that is criminal in nature. However, APS agencies investigate cases from a human services perspective and in a civil capacity. As such, APS agencies and data systems may not explicitly distinguish between acts that are criminal and noncriminal. Further, Urban Institute study interviews with both APS and law enforcement personnel revealed that neither felt that it was appropriate for APS to distinguish between criminal and noncriminal acts; that determination, they felt, should rest with the police or prosecutors, who are trained to do so. APS personnel refer cases that they suspect are criminal to the police or prosecutors. However, relatively few of these cases are prosecuted, and not necessarily because the act was not criminal. Some respondents questioned the value of prosecution with respect to the

well-being of the vulnerable adult, while others perceived a lack of willingness to prosecute for reasons ranging from ageism to the complexity of some cases and the difficulty of collecting admissible evidence.

As part of its APS data assessment, Urban Institute will investigate possibilities for how to operationalize a definition of criminal elder abuse, and how this may differ from other abuse reports to APS. Referrals to and from the criminal justice system constitute one, albeit imperfect, marker. We will explore the following options as markers for when elder abuse is criminal in nature through our planned survey of APS representatives:

- **Referrals from the criminal justice system** are one means of assessing which victimizations do and do not come to the attention of the criminal justice system. Criminal justice practitioners, especially police, are typically mandated to report abuse to APS agencies. However, we must also consider other measures because criminal justice agencies may become involved in a case only after the initial report was made to APS by someone else.
- **Cases substantiated by APS** are the best approximation of “proven” abuse and may serve as one means to estimate criminal elder abuse. A comparison of substantiated and unsubstantiated allegations may shed light on noncriminal reports. However, APS workers anecdotally report that many cases they substantiate do not result in criminal justice system follow-up or prosecution. When our Urban Institute research team interviewed police and prosecutors, they cited a number of reasons why this may be: (1) because APS investigative standards are less stringent than criminal justice investigative standards, and (2) because APS has a lower evidentiary threshold than criminal justice agencies—namely APS considers whether there is a preponderance of evidence, whereas the criminal justice system must provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt.
- **Referrals to the criminal justice system** may be the best marker for criminal acts, and we will assess how these are recorded in APS data systems. When asked how often the police or prosecutors participated in or followed up on an APS investigation—beyond accompanying the APS worker for safety reasons—APS representatives typically felt this occurred less than half the time, but that police involvement depended on the type of abuse present in a particular case. It will be important to establish what “referral to the criminal justice system” and “police involvement” means for each APS agency because of the range of practices in the field. For example,
 - » Some APS agencies refer all substantiated cases to law enforcement as a matter of policy, while others are more selective.
 - » To define criminal elder abuse, we will want to distinguish between circumstances when a law enforcement officer accompanies the APS worker for safety reasons versus participates in an investigation.

- » One measure of criminal justice involvement may be the APS data systems' capacity to record criminal justice outcomes or link to criminal justice data sources (such as maintaining police report numbers or prosecution case file numbers in APS data records).
- » In the course of examining APS and police collaboration on cases, it may also be helpful to ascertain the many ways in which these agencies collaborate (e.g., on multidisciplinary teams) and to assess perceived barriers in the relationship between law enforcement and APS.

Additionally, we propose the following elements of criminal elder abuse, based on (1) an understanding of criminal statutes in general, (2) the elder abuse literature, and (3) a review of the language used in BJS's NCVS to operationalize definitions of crimes. Below we provide the general definitions of elder abuse shown earlier and then delineate when an incident may be criminal or noncriminal. Note that the definitions provided are for research and statistical reporting purposes, and are not designed to comport with specific criminal statutes, which vary across the 50 states.

- **“Physical Abuse** occurs when an elder is injured (e.g., scratched, bitten, slapped, pushed, hit, burned, etc.), assaulted or threatened with a weapon (e.g., knife, gun, or other object), or inappropriately restrained” (CDC 2014).
 - » Physical abuse may be considered criminal when it results in bodily injury or impairment (e.g., cuts or lacerations, bruising, dislocated joints, broken bones, or any injury for which the victim seeks or receives medical attention). Inappropriate restraint can also be considered criminal and could include the misuse of medication (e.g., sedatives) to confine an individual as well as physical restraints. On the other hand, some forms of physical force are unlikely to be criminal—particularly scratching, pushing, shoving, shaking, slapping, or pinching that does not result in bodily injury or impairment.
- **“Sexual Abuse or Abusive Sexual Contact** is any sexual contact against an elder’s will. This includes acts in which the elder is unable to understand the act or is unable to communicate. Abusive sexual contact is defined as intentional touching (either directly or through the clothing) of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, mouth, inner thigh, or buttocks” (CDC 2014).
 - » All forms of sexual abuse should be considered criminal.
- **“Psychological or Emotional Abuse** occurs when an elder experiences trauma after exposure to threatening acts or coercive tactics. Examples include humiliation or embarrassment; controlling behavior (e.g., prohibiting or limiting access to transportation, telephone, money, or other resources, or monitoring a person’s actions or behaviors); social isolation; disregarding or trivializing needs; extreme criticism or insults; or damaging or destroying property” (CDC 2014).
 - » Much psychological or emotional abuse, while harmful, may not meet the threshold for criminal behavior. However, such abuse may result in measurable injury, such as depression, anxiety,

PTSD-like symptoms, and somatic conditions like unexplained pain (Hornor, 2012). As such, psychological or emotional abuse that results in a victim seeking or receiving medical or mental health services should be counted as criminal.

- **“Neglect** is the failure or refusal of a caregiver or other responsible person to provide for an elder’s basic physical, emotional, or social needs, or failure to protect them from harm. Examples include not providing adequate nutrition, hygiene, clothing, shelter, or access to necessary health care; or failure to prevent exposure to unsafe activities and environments” (CDC 2014).
 - » Most states include neglect by caregivers in their criminal statutes, and these define neglect as either a failure to provide or willful withholding of the necessities of life, such as adequate food, clothing, shelter, or health care. The key to determining criminal neglect is whether the alleged perpetrator is in a caregiving role. A caregiver relationship can be said to exist if the alleged perpetrator is (a) a paid caregiver, (b) an adult child of the vulnerable adult (as in the 30 states with filial responsibility laws), and (c) if an individual voluntarily assumed caregiving responsibilities (Stiegel, Klem, and Turner 2007).

- **“Financial Abuse or Exploitation** is the unauthorized or improper use of the resources of an elder for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain. Examples include forgery, misuse or theft of money or possessions; use of coercion or deception to surrender finances or property; or improper use of guardianship or power of attorney” (CDC 2014).
 - » Criminal financial abuse or exploitation occurs when an individual’s resources are actually taken for the alleged perpetrator’s gain. This includes money that was borrowed but never repaid; large bank transfers or withdrawals of funds; changing the title of the individual’s home, car, or other property; or changing the payee on an individual’s benefits or direct deposits. (For example, the elder abuse screening instrument developed by Conrad et al. 2013 advises contacting the police if these behaviors are reported.) Other behaviors warrant suspicion but may not be criminal, such as being evasive about how money was spent, demanding money from the older adult, and pressuring an individual to sign documents or change his or her will. However, this latter behavior would be criminal if the older adult lacks the capacity to consent or make decisions.

- **“Abandonment** is the willful desertion of an elderly person by caregiver or other responsible person” (CDC 2014).
 - » The same criteria for identifying criminal neglect may be applied here, as abandonment is an extreme case of neglect.

What Does Not Define Elder Abuse but Is Nevertheless Important to Document?

ABUSE SETTING OR LOCATION

Elder abuse may occur in any type of setting: private residences, group homes, assisted living facilities, or residential nursing facilities, to name a few. Conceptually, both community- and institutionally based abuse should be counted as elder abuse. Community settings include the victim's home, a public place, or an unlicensed group home. Institutional settings include skilled nursing facilities (e.g., a nursing home), assisted living facilities, and other licensed group care settings.

However, APS operations and, therefore, data collection are limited in institutional settings. States differ with respect to APS jurisdiction over institutional settings. Sixteen states (31%) told the Urban Institute team that abuse in long-term care facilities and other such institutional settings is not routinely investigated by APS, but by health departments or licensing agencies. Even when states reported that APS routinely investigates abuse in facilities, respondents noted many exceptions and caveats. Establishing jurisdiction can be complex within a given state, and definitions differ across states. For example, visitor-on-resident abuse in a licensed facility may fall under APS jurisdiction whereas abuse by facility employees may fall under the jurisdiction of the facility's regulatory agency. Sometimes resident-on-resident abuse is also investigated by the facility's regulatory agency, as it relates to the facility's ability to provide a safe environment for all residents.

We will assess the extent to which APS agencies record the location of alleged abuse and its licensing status to gauge the universe of data coverage. A national statistical program may need to report separately on abuse occurring in community and institutional settings. Additionally, BJS may wish to ascertain the number of non-APS agencies that would be needed to achieve full coverage of reported elder abuse in residential institutions.

Counting Data on Elder Abuse

The previous sections considered the attributes of an incident of elder abuse. Here we discuss how incidents of elder abuse may be counted, given how APS services and data systems are organized.

Unit of Analysis

We recommend defining elder abuse in terms of person-incidents, in keeping with the UN Task Force on Crime Classification's 2012 guidance that definitions should be event-based and that the capacity to link

crime events, perpetrators, and victims is important. These goals are in accord with those of federal elder abuse stakeholders, who expressed a need for both person-level and incident-level key indicator statistics, as listed in exhibit 1 (pages 5–6).

Our assessment of APS data systems will examine the extent to which APS agencies maintain data hierarchies and can report both person and incident level statistics. APS agency workloads are defined in terms of reports or cases, and a given incident of abuse could be reported by multiple entities. Minnesota, for example, has addressed this issue by tracking records with separate allegation (i.e., incident), report, and victim ID numbers because there may be multiple reports per allegation and multiple allegations (i.e., incidents) per victim.

It is important to note that a reported incident of elder abuse is likely to represent a single episode of victimization within a larger pattern of ongoing abuse, similar to domestic violence. A particular episode of violence, for example, likely prompts the victim and/or other concerned parties to report abuse, but that further investigation reveals a history of abuse. In such instances, the reporting system should capture the details of the episode that was reported but also record the duration and nature of prior abusive episodes.

When Should an Incident of Reported Elder Abuse Be Counted?

APS data may be conceptualized as three cohorts corresponding to different points of case processing: reports of potential victimizations to APS, investigations conducted by APS, and cases/allegations substantiated by APS. All three are important to quantifying victimization and the system response.

- Data on **initial reports of suspected abuse** represent the most expansive way of collecting data on potential victimizations. These data represent all potential victimizations reported to APS agencies from a wide range of sources, including the vulnerable adults themselves, their family members, their friends or acquaintances, and professionals such as health care workers, social service providers, and law enforcement officers. These data are roughly analogous to calls for service data in police agencies.
- Data on **investigations opened** represent the subset of reports deemed appropriate for APS agencies to pursue as abuse investigations. Note that state screening practices vary. Some states investigate each report they receive, but others use triaging strategies whereby reports are evaluated against APS eligibility and jurisdictional criteria before APS opens an investigation. Reports that are not accepted for APS investigation may be referred to non-APS social services if abuse is not suspected, while some suspected abuse is forwarded to other agencies for investigation (e.g., regulatory or licensing agencies that have jurisdiction over certain caregiver or facility types).

- Data on **investigation outcomes or cases substantiated** indicate whether the APS agency confirmed the allegations of abuse. This is the closest approximation of whether the initial report of elder abuse was “proven.” APS agencies typically substantiate a case when the preponderance of evidence indicates that abuse occurred.

We suggest that elder abuse can and should be counted at each of these time points within a case. Federal stakeholders have noted that key indicators from each of these cohorts are important for understanding both the prevalence and response to elder abuse. Data on initial reports and investigations opened, in concert with information about APS screening practices, may be used to characterize the number of potential victimizations, and serve as a denominator for measuring the investigative process. Data on substantiated reports reflect “proven” cases and address the question of reported prevalence. Case substantiation rates can be used to evaluate the investigative process and its relative effectiveness for different types of abuse, alleged perpetrators, and victims, thus pointing to differential challenges or successes in the response to elder abuse.

Collecting APS Data on Elder Abuse: Potential Limitations and Workarounds

A potential limitation of using APS administrative records to collect nationwide statistical data on elder abuse is the lack of uniformity in case definitions across states. Cross-jurisdictional operational differences complicate the ability to aggregate statistical information from APS agencies across the nation. State laws and regulations govern APS agencies’ definitions of what constitutes elder abuse, who is a victim, and APS’s authority to intervene. The implication for nationwide statistical data collection is that APS agencies serve, and keep records on, systematically different client populations across, and occasionally within, states (Mallik-Kane et al 2012).

Notably, the scope of APS administrative data may differ with respect to

- the types of abuse investigated,
- the age and vulnerability of clients served,
- the requirement for there to be a “trust relationship” between the victim and perpetrator, and
- the location of the alleged abuse.

The taxonomy presented here creates a standardized definition of elder abuse across these jurisdictional differences. We anticipate that key indicator statistics collected from APS agencies will most likely need to be stratified or subset by these characteristics to account for key operational differences

across states, permit valid comparisons, and reliably aggregate elder abuse data in an “apples-to-apples” fashion across APS agencies (Mallik-Kane et al. 2012).

However, APS agencies’ ability to report data according to this taxonomy depends on their ability to subset data according to these attributes. Past surveys of APS agencies in 2000, 2004, and 2007 revealed widespread difficulties in reporting statistical data: states used varying definitions of the total number of reports received, and a sizable number of APS agencies could not provide counts by abuse type, differentiate between older and younger vulnerable adults, or provide case substantiation outcomes (Otto and Quinn 2007; Teaster 2006; Teaster et al. 2006). The most recent survey of APS agencies conducted in 2012 suggests that states have improved their data collection capacities. The vast majority of states (47) now use computerized data collection systems, but this is relatively new for many; 59 percent of states implemented automated systems within the past 10 years, including some that were implemented within the past 2 years (NAPSA and NASUAD 2012).

Urban Institute’s data assessment will incorporate questions to clarify APS agency operations in order to frame the generation of key indicator statistics and interpret their data correctly. We will ask respondents to confirm the types of victims, perpetrators, abuse, and settings included under the agency’s authority and data collections to determine whether there is a “least common denominator” subset of cases that can be summarized across jurisdictions. In general, APS agencies are likely to collect data on cases that fall outside the definition of elder abuse put forth in this taxonomy. For example, most APS programs (45 states) investigate allegations of abuse against vulnerable adults ages 18–59 in addition to elder abuse, and most states (47) respond to self-neglect, which often makes up the majority of an agency’s caseload. If BJS ultimately proceeds with statistical data collection from APS agencies, we suggest collecting some data on total caseload sizes, including cases that fall outside this taxonomy of elder abuse to (1) establish the extent of elder abuse within APS caseload, as a means of understanding the value added by collecting APS data; and (2) secure agency buy-in, by considering and reporting on their total caseload and workload.

Additional Attributes of Elder Abuse to Consider When Assessing APS Data Capacity

The UN Task Force on Crime Classification’s 2012 report highlighted the need to collect detailed information about each victimization incident to create a comprehensive crime classification. This will allow the crime classification to describe acts in a very granular fashion. Exhibit 3 includes additional descriptors suggested by the UN Task Force’s report and federal elder abuse stakeholders. Assessing APS data systems’

capacity to collect and report on these attributes will both contribute to the creation of a comprehensive crime classification in accordance with UN recommendations and further understanding about elder abuse.

EXHIBIT 3

Supplementary Data Elements to Assess for Crime Classification, Research, and Policy Analysis Needs

- Characteristics of the act, such as the following:
 - » Date, time, and location of the offense
 - » Degree of completion of the event: planned, attempted, or completed
 - » Use of any objects or weapons
 - » Other elements of the “modus operandi” of the act: e.g., whether it was enabled by threats, force, deception or intimidation
 - » Target of the act: e.g., person, animal, property, institution, communal values
 - » Severity of the act in terms of the level of harm to victim (e.g., death, nonfatal injuries sustained, amount of financial loss, institutionalization or other residential disruption) and consequences to the community
 - » Civil and/or criminal justice system oversight: whether the act occurred despite the presence of a protective order, a legal guardian, or criminal justice supervision such as probation or parole
- Characteristics of the victim, such as the following:
 - » Demographics: age, sex, race/ethnicity, nationality, English language proficiency, employment, income, and educational attainment
 - » Vulnerability of the victim as measured by health conditions (e.g., physical, mental, cognitive, influence of drugs/alcohol), disability status, functional ability (e.g., performance of activities of daily living), and categorical eligibility (by virtue of program eligibility, residence, or guardianship)
 - » Dependence on the perpetrator (e.g., for caregiving, housing, or financial support)
 - » Victimization history, in general and with this perpetrator
 - » Perpetration history, in general and with this perpetrator (e.g., did the victim previously abuse the perpetrator in this case?)
 - » Social support: victim’s residence, caregiving needs, and receipt of services.
- Characteristics of the perpetrator, such as the following:
 - » Demographics: age, sex, race/ethnicity, nationality, English language proficiency, employment, income, and educational attainment
 - » Vulnerability of the perpetrator as measured by health conditions (e.g., physical, mental, cognitive, influence of drugs/alcohol), disability status, functional ability (e.g., performance of activities of daily living), and categorical eligibility (by virtue of program eligibility, residence, or guardianship)
 - » Dependence on the victim (e.g., for housing or financial support)
 - » Victimization history, in general and with this victim (e.g., was the perpetrator ever abused by the victim in this case?)
 - » Perpetration history, in general and with this perpetrator (e.g., criminal history)
 - » Social support: residence, caregiving needs, and receipt of services
 - » Intent : purposefulness and motivation of the offender
 - » Degree of co-responsibility, if others were involved, or if the offender acted alone

Appendix: Definitions of Elder Abuse from Federal Agencies, National Stakeholder Groups, and International Organizations

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Physical abuse	The use of force or violence resulting in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. Excludes sexual abuse.	Physical abuse occurs when an elder is injured (e.g., scratched, bitten, slapped, pushed, hit, burned, etc.), assaulted or threatened with a weapon (e.g., knife, gun, or other object), or inappropriately restrained.	“Abuse” means the knowing infliction of physical or psychological harm or the knowing deprivation of goods or services that are necessary to meet essential needs or to avoid physical or psychological harm.	May include slapping, hitting, beating, bruising or causing someone physical pain, injury or suffering. This also could include confining an adult against his/her will, such as locking someone in a room or tying him/her to furniture.	The use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. Physical abuse may include but is not limited to such acts of violence as striking (with or without an object), hitting, beating, pushing, shoving, shaking, slapping, kicking, pinching, and burning. In addition, inappropriate use of drugs and physical restraints, force-feeding, and physical punishment of any kind also are examples of physical abuse.	No specific definitional breakdowns listed on website. Instead, they write “Elder abuse can be defined as ‘a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.’ Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.”

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Sexual abuse	Nonconsensual sexual contact of any kind, including sexual contact with any person incapable of giving consent.	Sexual abuse or abusive sexual contact is any sexual contact against an elder's will. This includes acts in which the elder is unable to understand the act or is unable to communicate. Abusive sexual contact is defined as intentional touching (either directly or through the clothing), of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, mouth, inner thigh, or buttocks.	Criminal sexual abuse--Serious bodily injury shall be considered to have occurred if the conduct causing the injury is conduct described in section 2241 (relating to aggravated sexual abuse) or 2242 (relating to sexual abuse) of Title 18, United States Code, or any similar offense under State law.	Includes physical force, threats, or coercion to facilitate nonconsensual touching, fondling, intercourse, or other sexual activities. This is particularly true with vulnerable adults who are unable to give consent or comprehend the nature of these actions.	Nonconsensual sexual contact of any kind with an elderly person. Sexual contact with any person incapable of giving consent is also considered sexual abuse. It includes, but is not limited to, unwanted touching, all types of sexual assault or battery, such as rape, sodomy, coerced nudity, and sexually explicit photographing.	No specific definitional breakdowns listed on website. Instead, they write "Elder abuse can be defined as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.' Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect."

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Emotional or psychological abuse	The infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts. This includes but is not limited to verbal assaults, insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, and harassment.	Psychological or emotional abuse occurs when an elder experiences trauma after exposure to threatening acts or coercive tactics. Examples include humiliation or embarrassment, controlling behavior (e.g., prohibiting or limiting access to transportation, telephone, money, or other resources), social isolation, disregarding or trivializing needs, or damaging or destroying property.	“Abuse” means the knowing infliction of physical or psychological harm or the knowing deprivation of goods or services that are necessary to meet essential needs or to avoid physical or psychological harm.	Emotional abuse involves creating emotional pain, distress, or anguish through the use of threats, intimidation, or humiliation. This includes insults, yelling or threats of harm and/or isolation, or nonverbal actions such as throwing objects or glaring to project fear and/or intimidation.	The infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts. Emotional/psychological abuse includes but is not limited to verbal assaults, insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, and harassment. In addition, treating an older person like an infant; isolating an elderly person from his/her family, friends, or regular activities; giving an older person the “silent treatment”; and enforced social isolation are examples of emotional/psychological abuse.	No specific definitional breakdowns listed on website. Instead, they write “Elder abuse can be defined as ‘a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.’ Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.”

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Neglect (by others)	The failure of a caregiver or fiduciary to provide the goods or services necessary to maintain the health or safety of a person. Includes acts of omission and of commission; includes willful deprivation, etc.	The failure or refusal of a caregiver or other responsible person to provide for an elder's basic physical, emotional, or social needs, or failure to protect them from harm. Examples include not providing adequate nutrition, hygiene, clothing, shelter, or access to necessary health care; or failure to prevent exposure to unsafe activities and environments.	"Neglect" means-- (A) the failure of a caregiver or fiduciary to provide the goods or services that are necessary to maintain the health or safety of an elder; or (B) self-neglect.	Includes failures by individuals to support the physical, emotional, and social needs of adults dependent on others for their primary care. Neglect can take the form of withholding food, medications, or access to health care professionals.	The refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elder. Neglect may also include failure of a person who has fiduciary responsibilities to provide care for an elder (e.g., pay for necessary home care services) or the failure on the part of an in-home service provider to provide necessary care. Neglect typically means the refusal or failure to provide an elderly person with such life necessities as food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medicine, comfort, personal safety, and other essentials included in an implied or agreed-upon responsibility to an elder.	No specific definitional breakdowns listed on website. Instead, they write "Elder abuse can be defined as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.' Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect."

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Self-neglect	A person's inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks including obtaining essential food, clothing, shelter, and medical care; obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health, or general safety; or managing one's own financial affairs. Includes hoarding.	Self-neglect occurs when vulnerable elders fail or refuse to address their own basic physical, emotional, or social needs. Examples include self-care tasks such as nourishment, clothing, hygiene, and shelter; proper/appropriate use of medications; and managing or administering one's finances.	An adult's inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks including-- (A) obtaining essential food, clothing, shelter, and medical care; (B) obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health, or general safety; or (C) managing one's own financial affairs.	Involves seniors or adults with disabilities who fail to meet their own essential physical, psychological, or social needs, which threatens their health, safety, and well-being. This includes failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and health care for one's own needs.	The behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her own health or safety. Self-neglect generally manifests itself in an older person as a refusal or failure to provide himself/herself with adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication (when indicated), and safety precautions. The definition of self-neglect excludes a situation in which a mentally competent older person, who understands the consequences of his/her decisions, makes a conscious and voluntary decision to engage in acts that threaten his/her health or safety as a matter of personal choice.	No specific definitional breakdowns listed on website. Instead, they write "Elder abuse can be defined as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.' Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect."

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Financial or material exploitation	The illegal or improper use of an individual's funds, property, or assets.	Financial abuse or exploitation is the unauthorized or improper use of the resources of an elder for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain. Examples include forgery, misuse or theft of money or possessions, use of coercion or deception to surrender finances or property, or improper use of guardianship or power of attorney.	"Exploitation" means the fraudulent or otherwise illegal, unauthorized, or improper act or process of an individual, including a caregiver or fiduciary, that uses the resources of an elder for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain, or that results in depriving an elder of rightful access to, or use of, benefits, resources, belongings, or assets.	Financial or material exploitation includes the misuse, mishandling, or exploitation of property, possessions, or assets of adults. Also includes using another's assets without consent, under false pretenses, or through coercion and/or manipulation.	Financial or material exploitation is defined as the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets. Examples include but are not limited to, cashing an elderly person's checks without authorization or permission; forging an older person's signature; misusing or stealing an older person's money or possessions; coercing or deceiving an older person into signing any document (e.g., contracts or will); and the improper use of conservatorship, guardianship, or power of attorney.	No specific definitional breakdowns listed on website. Instead, they write "Elder abuse can be defined as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.' Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect."
Other abuse types	The desertion of a person by an individual who has assumed responsibility for providing care for that person, or by an individual with physical custody of another person.	Abandonment is the willful desertion of an elderly person by caregiver or other responsible person.		Isolation involves restricting visits from family and friends or preventing contact via telephone or mail correspondence. Abandonment involves desertion by anyone who assumed caregiving responsibilities for an adult.	Abandonment is the desertion of an elderly person by an individual who has assumed responsibility for providing care for an elder, or by a person with physical custody of an elder.	

Abuse element	Administration on Aging (AoA)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Elder Justice Act	National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)	National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)	United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Age of victim	N/A - collect data from state APSs who each serve different populations	"Age 60 or older"	"The term 'elder' means an individual age 60 or older."	Not specified	"Elderly person"	Not specified
Victim's level of vulnerability	N/A - collect data from state APSs who each serve different populations	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Victim's relationship to perpetrator	N/A - collect data from state APSs who each serve different populations	Elder abuse is any abuse and neglect of persons age 60 and older by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust	See "neglect" definition above	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Source	http://www.aoa.acl.gov/AoA_Programs/Elder_Rights/NAMRS/index.aspx See "Definitions of Code Values"	http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/elderabuse/definitions.html	http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/Resources/Publication/docs/ELDER_JUSTICE_ACT_2010.pdf	http://www.napsa-now.org/get-informed/	http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/FAQ/Type_Abuse/index.aspx	http://www.un.org/en/events/elderabuse/background.shtml http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/

References

- Acierno, R., Hernandez-Tejada, M., Muzzy, W. and Steve, K. 2009. *National Elder Mistreatment Study*. NCJ 226456. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice.
- Bonnie, R., and Wallace, R., eds. 2003. *Elder Mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation in an Aging America*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, as cited by the National Institute of Justice Elder Justice Initiative website. Accessed June 24, 2015, from <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/elderabuse/Pages/welcome.aspx>.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). 2012. Crime Incident Report: National Crime Victimization Survey. Accessed July 7, 2015, from http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ncvs2_2012.pdf.
- . 2013. Data Collection: National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Accessed July 7, 2015, from <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245#Questionnaires>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2014. "Elder Abuse: Definitions." Accessed June 11, 2015, from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/elderabuse/definitions.html>.
- Conrad, K. J., Iris, M., Riley, B. B., Mensah, E., and Mazza, J. 2009. *Developing End-User Criteria and a Prototype for an Elder Abuse Assessment System*. NCJ241390. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice.
- Department of Justice (DOJ). undated-a. "Elder Justice Initiative: Resources by State." Accessed June 29, 2015, from <http://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/support/resources.html>.
- . undated-b. "Elder Justice Initiative: Types of Financial Exploitation." Accessed June 29, 2015, from http://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/practitioner/types-of-financial-exploitation_.html?print=1.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI]. 2013. "National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Methodology." Accessed June 24, 2015, from <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/nibrs/2013/resources/methodology>.
- Government Accountability Office (GAO). 2011. *Elder Justice: Stronger Federal Leadership Could Enhance National Response to Elder Abuse*. GAO-11-208. Washington, DC: GAO.
- Honor, G. 2012. "Emotional Maltreatment." *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* 26 (6): 436–42.
- Howden, L.M. and Meyer, J.A. 2011. "Age and Sex Composition, 2010." C2010BR-03. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau.
- Iwig, W., Berning, M, Marck, P. and Prell, M. 2013. "Data Quality Assessment Tool for Administrative Data." White paper prepared for the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM). Accessed July 8, 2013, from <http://www.bls.gov/osmr/datatool.pdf>.
- Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc., Weill Cornell Medical Center of Cornell University, and New York City Department for the Aging. 2011. *Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study*. New York: Authors, as cited by the National Center on Elder Abuse's Statistics/Data web site. Accessed August 29, 2013, from <http://www.ncea.noa.gov/library/data.asp>.
- Mallik-Kane, K., Rossman, S.B., Raja, D., and Capehart, A. 2012. "Characteristics of State Adult Protective Services Agencies and Data Systems." Presentation to the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, November 12.
- Morgan, R.E., and Mason, B.J. 2014. "Crimes against the Elderly, 2003–2013." NCJ 248339. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- National Academies Committee on National Statistics. 2010. *Meeting on Research Issues in Elder Mistreatment and Abuse and Financial Fraud*. Meeting report. Washington, DC: National Academies Committee on National Statistics.

- National Adult Protective Services Association and National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NAPSA and NASUAD). 2012. *Adult Protective Services in 2012: Increasingly Vulnerable*. Springfield, IL: NAPSA; Washington, DC: NASUAD.
- National Research Council. 2003. *Elder mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation in an Aging America*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, as cited by the National Center on Elder Abuse's Statistics/Data web site. Accessed August 29, 2013, from <http://www.ncea.noa.gov/library/data.asp>.
- Otto, J.M., and Quinn, K. 2007. *Summary Report: Adult Protective Services Programs State Administrative Structures*. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse.
- Planty, M., Langton, L., Krebs, C., Berzofsky, M., and Smiley-McDonald, H. 2013. "Female Victims of Sexual Violence, 1994–2010." Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Stiegel, L. and Klem, E. 2007. "Information about Laws Related to Elder Abuse." Washington, DC: American Bar Association. Available at <http://www.abanet.org>.
- Stiegel, L., Klem, E., and Turner, J. 2007. "Neglect of Older Persons: An Introduction to Legal Issues Related to Caregiver Duty and Liability." Washington, DC: American Bar Association. http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/aging/about/pdfs/neglect_of_older_persons.authcheckdam.pdf.
- Teaster, P. B. 2006. *A Response to the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults: The 2000 Survey of State Adult Protective Services*. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse.
- Teaster, P.B., Dugar, T.A., Mendiondo, M.S., Abner, E.L., and Cecil, K.A. 2006. *Abuse of Adults Age 60+: The 2004 Survey of State Adult Protective Services: Abuse of Adults 60 Years of Age and Older*. Washington, DC: National Center on Elder Abuse.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2012. *Principles and Framework for an International Classification of Crimes for Statistical Purposes*. Report of the UNODC/UNECE Task Force on Crime Classification to the Conference of European Statisticians. Brussels: UNODC.
- US Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), Office of Disability, Aging, and Long-Term Care Policy. 2010. *Congressional Report on the Feasibility of Establishing a Uniform National Database on Elder Abuse*. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services.
- Weston, M. 2009. "ADL's and IADL's: What's the Difference?" Accessed June 26, 2015, from <http://asourparentsage.net/2009/12/17/adls-and-iadls-whats-the-difference/>
- Wood, Erica F. 2006. "The Availability and Utility of Interdisciplinary Data on Elder Abuse: A White Paper for the National Center on Elder Abuse." Washington, DC: American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging.
- Zweig, J.M., Newmark, L., Raja, D., and Denver, M. 2014. *Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exams and VAWA 2005: Payment Practices, Successes, and Directions for the Future*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.



2100 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

www.urban.org