



A Framework for Advancing Missouri's Response to Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation:

Defining a Path
Forward

Prepared in partnership between:



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Table of Contents

Message from VOYCE Director	2
Acknowledgments	3
Common Acronyms	4
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
Guiding Principles	7
Priority Areas	9
Survivor Experience	9
Public Awareness	13
Prevention	16
Service & Resource Needs	17
Coordinated Reporting & Response System	19
Workforce Recruitment & Development	22
Stakeholder Engagement	24
Data Management (Governance)	26
Legislation	28
Next Steps	30

Message from VOYCE Director, Marjorie Moore

For over 40 years, VOYCE has worked with long-term care residents, witnessing clear instances of abuse in long-term care facilities every week. Historically, conversations about elder justice have excluded people in nursing homes, even though they frequently endure mistreatment by both paid and unpaid caregivers.

At VOYCE, we believe everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes, no matter where they live. The alarming reality is that approximately 30,000 Missourians report suffering from or witnessing abuse each year, merely 4% of those harmed. These numbers horrify us and drive us to take action. We know Missouri can change and improve, and the time to act is now.

Missouri's elder justice system needs urgent reform to better protect and serve our aging and disabled population.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant gaps and silos in the many, often unconnected, systems that were working to stop elder and disabled person's abuse, highlighting the urgent need for collaboration to tackle these issues. Jamie Opsal of the Saint Louis City Senior Fund initially brought us together after learning that Missouri's adult abuse and neglect services lagged 30 years behind those for children. This disparity couldn't stand, and soon, we had the support of partners like UMKC-IHD, Adult Protective Services, and the Missouri Office of Prosecutor Services, all ready to address this crisis together.

This initiative isn't just about VOYCE or nursing home residents; it's about protecting every adult in Missouri from scams, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect, and self-neglect. We aim to provide Missouri with the resources to support abuse survivors and equip our state with the tools and policies to serve justice effectively.

We believe in making Missouri safer for all adults by proposing critical changes to our community support systems, laws, and policies. Systems change can feel insurmountable, but as you'll see in the framework, there is something everyone can do to make a difference. We hope you will find a place to jump in.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our partners, those who attended the Summits, and especially those survivors who told their stories. We could not be more grateful to the Missouri Foundation for Health for their funding and insightful thought partnership on this project. And finally, special thanks go to Janice Thomas, VOYCE's Elder Justice Manager, who was handed an idea and built a movement.

Together, we are paving the way for a safer, more just Missouri for all adults. By implementing these changes, we can create a state where every individual lives free from fear and abuse and where justice is accessible to all.

Acknowledgments

VOYCE extends its sincere thanks to the individuals and organizations whose feedback and input were instrumental in developing this framework.

We particularly acknowledge the commitment of the statewide steering committee and the diverse group of stakeholders who participated in the Summit series. Your expertise and insights were crucial to the creation of this comprehensive framework aimed at enhancing the response to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults and adults with disabilities in Missouri.

Thank you to the Missouri Foundation for Health for their generous support that made this document and the actions supporting the content of the document a reality.

Special thanks to the survivors and reporters who courageously shared their personal experiences navigating the abuse response system in Missouri. Your voices are invaluable in creating a more effective and compassionate response to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. These voices are the core of this framework, ensuring that it is grounded in real-world experiences and needs.

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Common Acronyms

AAA - Area Agencies on Aging

ACL - Administration for Community Living

ANE - Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

CIT - Crisis Intervention Team

CJEDA - Coalition for Justice for Elder and Disabled Adults

DHSS-APS - Department of Health and Senior Services, Adult Protective Services

DMH - Department of Mental Health

DRL-SLCR - Division of Regulation & Licensure, Section for Long-Term Care Regulation

LTC - Long-Term Care

LTSS - Long-Term Services and Supports

MCOA - Missouri Council on Aging

MDT - Multidisciplinary Team

MODDC - Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council

Introduction

Older adults and adults with disabilities experience abuse, neglect, and exploitation (ANE) at higher rates than the general population. Abuse can take place in many forms, including verbal, physical, sexual, and financial. At least one in 10 older adults and adults with disabilities who live in congregate care settings experience abuse in any given year. It is estimated, however, that this rate is underreported due to limitations in physical or mental ability, dependence on the abuser for care and basic needs, and feelings of shame or fear of retaliation or institutionalization. Additionally, Missourians experience significant challenges to accessing and navigating needed supports and services due to systemic silos and fragmentation, inaccessibility of appropriate resources—particularly in urban and rural areas, and inadequate state and local funding. Demographic shifts, due to increases in longevity, pose a myriad of additional challenges, amplifying the need for a more coordinated, connected, and accessible reporting and response system.

Stakeholders

University of Missouri-Kansas City's Institute for Human Development

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Adult Protective Services

Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council

Missouri Office of Prosecution Services

Senior Fund

Community Contractors

Significant gaps and barriers within Missouri's adult ANE reporting, and response system became particularly apparent to partners in the St. Louis area post-pandemic. In 2022, VOYCE was awarded a two-year grant by the Missouri Foundation of Health to develop a strategic plan to improve ANE prevention and response in Missouri in collaboration with diverse stakeholders from across the state.

A Note on Language

We recognize that language around aging and disability is frequently in transition and that state statute often lags behind present-day accepted language for the groups this framework aims to support. To prioritize inclusivity in our terms, we defer to person-first language, using “adults with disabilities,” and the reframing aging approach, using “older adults.” In addition, when referring to a person who has experienced ANE we use the term “survivor” which is widely used in victim services. We recognize not everyone who has experienced ANE identifies as a survivor. In line with a person-centered approach, we encourage professionals and others to use the language preferred by the individual they are supporting.

Methodology

The development of this framework took place over two years and was divided into four phases. As grant lead, VOYCE assembled a statewide steering committee to guide the work of the project team in all four phases. As grant partner, University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development (UMKC-IHD) participated in project activities and facilitated the development of this document.

In the **first phase**, the goal was to understand the current systems that respond to adult ANE. Building on the previous work of the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MODDC), the project team expanded the Missouri Adult Abuse and Neglect Investigations Systems (MAANIS) Map to include the reporting pathway for ANE in long-term care (LTC) settings. An environmental scan of national best practices and existing state initiatives seeking to address adult ANE was also conducted.

To understand the survivor's experience with the system, in the **second phase**, the project team conducted interviews with individuals with disabilities, older adults, family members, and reporters. Insights into the systemic gaps and challenges faced were documented.

In the **third phase**, the project team hosted stakeholder summits between July 2023 and June 2024 to collaboratively draft this framework with stakeholder input. Over the four summits, attendees identified key issues through case reviews, gave feedback on drafted priority areas, recommended strategies to address key issues, and discussed how the framework could be leveraged to advance our collective efforts to address ANE.

The culmination of these activities is this framework, which outlines nine priority areas with associated goals and strategies to enhance Missouri's response to ANE of older adults and adults with disabilities. The **fourth and final phase** is the dissemination and implementation of this plan by you, the reader. In the Next Steps section, we discuss ways that you can use this framework to inform your practices, advocate for changes, and collaborate with others to strengthen our state's capacity to both prevent and respond to adult ANE.

Guiding Principles

To implement this plan effectively, efforts should be grounded in foundational guiding principles. These key concepts should serve as the lens through which stakeholders plan and implement the recommended strategies. We organized the principles into three areas.



How We Think About People



How We Practice



Who We Include



How We Think About People

sets the tone for how we perceive and value others, especially those we aim to support through our services and initiatives.

- Embrace the dignity and value of all Missourians.
- Challenge stereotypes about aging and disability.
- Commit to recognizing and addressing our own biases, including internalized ableism and ageism.
- Affirm every person's right to live safely while pursuing the life of their choosing.
- Believe that adults with disabilities and older adults are valuable members of our communities who deserve to lead self-determined lives.
- Assume people can understand, communicate, and participate in their care. Every person has strengths and attributes that can be identified to solve-problems.
- Acknowledge that individual experiences are shaped by the larger systems that we interact with including families, communities, and society.



How We Practice

highlights the approaches we adopt to ensure our services and initiatives are effective and supportive of those we serve.

- Approach the work through a person-centered lens that prioritizes individualized, trauma-informed care.
- We empower individuals by involving them in decision-making processes about their lives.
- Recognize the tension between ensuring safety and promoting personal autonomy.
- Strive to find a balance that respects individual rights while safeguarding against abuse, neglect, and exploitation.



Who We Include

emphasizes the importance of considering who is involved in the planning and action phases, ensuring diverse perspectives and inclusivity.

- Center the voices and experiences of older adults and adults with disabilities in all stages of our work from planning to implementation to evaluation and assessment.
- Ensure that policies, practices, and strategies are genuinely informed by those with lived experience.
- Ensure the representation of diverse perspectives and backgrounds.
- Engage stakeholders from diverse fields, including health care, social services, law enforcement, legal, and advocacy in multidisciplinary approaches to addressing adult abuse.

- Implement practices, such as multidisciplinary team (MDT) approaches, that reduce the need for survivors to retell their stories.
- Utilize trauma-informed interviewing strategies.
- Implement strategies to support survivors with cognitive challenges and memory loss during the investigation.

Promising Practices and Resources:



Interviewing Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities: The following resources provide an overview of barriers, recommendations, and best practices when interviewing older adults and adults with disabilities.

- **Elder Abuse Guide for Law Enforcement (EAGLE)-** Tip sheets for law enforcement when interviewing older adults <https://eagle.usc.edu/law-enforcement-resources/interviewing-older-adults/>
- **Supporting Crime Victims with Disabilities Online Training Toolkit:** Online training for interviewing individuals with disabilities developed by the Vera Institute. <https://www.reachingvictims.org/resource/supporting-crime-victims-with-disabilities-online-training-toolkit/>
- **National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life Training Resources:** Resources for older adults abuse investigations. <https://www.ncall.us/resources/training-handouts/>

➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Improve system accountability and transparency to the survivor, reporter, and the community.

- Make information about state investigative systems publicly available and in accessible formats, including plain language.
- Clearly outline the process to make a report, including the authority and responsibility of the investigative entity.
 - Provide specific instructions on reporting ANE based on the individual's situation, considering factors such as where the individual lives, what services they receive, and how their services are funded.
 - Clarify any additional actions needed, such as when a report must be made directly to law enforcement, especially in cases where DMH or DRL-SLCR are the primary investigative entity.
- Communicate case information to survivors and reporters, including the expected response times to reports, how to make inquiries about the report, and the resolutions or outcomes of the report.

Promising Practices and Resources:



APS Final Rule, § 1324.402(c) says that state entities must inform potential APS clients of their rights at first contact, ensuring that information is provided in the preferred language and format. This includes accommodations for those with limited English proficiency and disabilities. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) provides best practices for APS programs to provide information to clients.



Missouri statute § 210.145.18: State law outlines a process for the Children's Division to inform mandated reporters of their right to know the outcome of their child abuse or neglect report and provide the general disposition and findings if requested. RSMo §210.150 outlines additional persons with a right to investigation records.



After Abuse: Resources for Missourians with Disabilities: This online resource can help people with disabilities learn about abuse and what happens when it is reported. The After Abuse map focuses on four phases – each with a toolkit that includes a printable guide, video, and easy reader to help survivors understand their rights, their choices, and where they can go for help. Each tool uses accessible language and is available in Spanish and American Sign Language. <https://www.afterabusemguide.com/>



Strategy 3: Enhance quality of life beyond reporting and investigations.

- Prioritize the least restrictive environment for the individual when considering their safety and well-being.
- Address the impact of ANE on multiple aspects of the individual's life, including housing assistance, caregiver/staff support replacement, and facility transfer assistance.
- Explore alternatives to guardianship and conservatorship, such as nationally recognized strategies like supported decision-making (SDM), to promote choice and autonomy.

Promising Practices and Resources:



MO Supported Decision Making: The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Network provides resources for SDM which is recognized as a national best practice for supporting individuals with cognitive disabilities. www.mosdm.org



Supported-Decision Making Resources: Learn about alternative options to guardianships and gain confidence in making informed choices related to health, employment, housing, and more. <https://moddcouncil.org/resources/supported-decision-making/>

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 4:** Prioritize input from individuals with lived experience at every stage of the response system.

- Ensure individuals with lived experience, people with disabilities, and older adults are meaningful participants in task forces, advisory groups, and governing boards for all entities addressing adult ANE.

Building Awareness and Prevention

The following priority areas focus on understanding the scope of the problem, educating the public about the signs of ANE, and taking proactive action to stop ANE from happening.

Public Awareness



Key Issues

The public lacks awareness about the prevalence and signs of ANE for older adults and adults with disabilities. There is a lack of comprehensive, accessible information on how to report abuse for mandated reporters, professionals, and the public.



Goal

Empower the public to recognize, report, and prevent adult ANE effectively, ensuring that every adult, regardless of disability or age, can live safely with dignity.

➔➔➔➔➔ **Strategy 1:** Make information on the prevalence of ANE for older adults and adults with disabilities publicly available.

- Expand the data available via the Missouri Senior Report.
- Publish annual reports with trends and statistics on ANE to keep the public informed about progress and ongoing challenges.

Key Implementers

Community-based Organizations:

social service agencies, disability organizations, mental health services, Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), Coalition for Justice for Elder and Disabled Adults (CJEDA)

Community Stakeholders:

caregivers, families

Healthcare: doctors, nurses, medical assistants, emergency medical services, coroners

Law Enforcement: prosecutors, police, police academies

Post-secondary Education:

academic institutions, university extensions, professional schools

State Agencies: DHSS-APS, LTC Ombudsman Program, DMH, DRL-SLCR

Other key professional roles:

mandated reporters, direct support professionals, LTC professionals

Promising Practices and Resources:



Missouri Senior Report: The Missouri Senior Report provides essential data and insights on issues affecting the older adults, allowing advocates, policymakers, and the public to understand and address concerns, including ANE of older adults.

<http://www.missouriseniorreport.org/>



It's Happening and We Can Stop It: Learn how to help stop abuse against people with disabilities through staggering statistics, signs of abuse, and real stories from survivors. <https://www.andwecanstopit.org/>



Strategy 2: Help the public and professionals identify types of ANE, including physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, and sexual abuse, as well as financial exploitation and self-neglect.

- Provide education in community spaces and events such as Medicaid/Medicare enrollment events and senior centers.
- Use digital platforms like webinars, podcasts, and interactive social media campaigns to reach a broader audience and keep the community engaged and informed.
- Provide relevant and engaging information on financial exploitation by updating and expanding the Missourians Stopping Adult Financial Exploitation (MOSAFE) website.
- Partner with healthcare providers to share awareness materials during routine health check-ups.
- Partner with local law enforcement agencies on awareness campaigns and training sessions focused on recognizing and responding to ANE.
- Develop an online portal with resources and training modules specifically targeting professionals in fields interacting with older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Ensure that awareness materials and educational events on ANE are culturally responsive and accessible to all populations, including individuals with disabilities, such as those with visual and hearing impairments. This includes offering materials in multiple languages, utilizing accessible formats like plain language, Braille, large print, sign language, captions, and audio descriptions, and incorporating diverse cultural perspectives.

Promising Practices and Resources:



National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) – What is Elder Abuse?: NCEA provides well-informed resources based on research, policy, and best practices on preventing and responding to elder mistreatment. Learn about types of elder abuse, how to recognize signs, and how to report the abuse. <https://www.ncea.acl.gov>



MOSAFE: The MOSAFE website educates financial institutions and consumers on how to prevent and stop attempted or ongoing financial exploitation of older adults and adults with disabilities. <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/mosafe/>



Section 508 Compliance: A federal resource offering guidelines and best practices to ensure electronic and information technology meets accessibility standards for individuals with disabilities. <https://www.section508.gov/>



LifeCourse Nexus – Abuse Awareness and Prevention Guide: People with disabilities experience higher rates of abuse than people without disabilities. Learn about how to recognize and report abuse in Missouri. <https://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/abuse-awareness-and-prevention/>



Strategy 3: Educate professionals and the public about legal authority processes to ensure they are understood and used appropriately.

- Implement comprehensive training programs for health care, legal, and social services professionals. These programs should cover circumstances when guardianship, conservatorship, and power of attorney are necessary, explore the potential risks, and consider ethical dilemmas. Provide clear, accessible information to the public on when and why these processes might be used. Highlight the potential for misuse and offer resources for those considering or currently involved in these processes.



Strategy 4: Raise awareness about what is reportable and where to make a report.

- Create and share statewide and local service announcements about how and when to contact the Missouri Adult Abuse and Neglect Hotline and local law enforcement or both. *See Survivor Experience Strategy 2 for more information.*
- Increase training and publicly available information for mandated reporters. This should include clear expectations aligned with state statutes on who is required to report, what to report, and where to report it.

Promising Practices and Resources



APS Outreach, Education, and Awareness Project: In collaboration with National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA), Missouri APS created materials to communicate APS improvement efforts in public outreach, distribution planning, and service announcements. <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/abuse.php>



RADAR Card: RADAR stands for Recognize, Ask, Document, Assure, and Refer. This informational card includes quick tips on recognizing adult abuse and how to act.

Prevention



Key Issues

Evidence-based interventions, best practices, and promising practices that address individual, community, and societal risk factors for abuse perpetration are underutilized.



Goal

Increase utilization of evidence-based interventions, best practices, and promising practices that address individual, community, and societal risk factors for ANE.

➔➔➔➔➔ **Strategy 1:** Address individual risk factors.

- Provide comprehensive education to adults with disabilities and older adults that includes sexual health, financial literacy, mental health, and other types of abuse prevention.
- Initiate community-based programs that offer mediation and reconciliation between perpetrators and survivors through a Restorative Justice model.

Key Implementers

Advocacy: LGBTQIA+, disability, and aging advocacy groups

Community-based Organizations: social service agencies, disability organizations, AAA, victim services

Community Stakeholders: community organizers

Healthcare: community health workers

Post-secondary Education: university extension, research and evaluation experts

State Agencies: DHSS-APS, DRL-SLCR, DMH

Other key professional roles: ombudsman, direct support professionals, LTC professionals

Promising Practices and Resources



Elevatus - Training Curriculum on Sexual Health and Disability: For people with disabilities, comprehensive sexual health education can help prevent ANE. Elevatus is a nationally recognized, trauma-informed curriculum focused on sexual self-advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It also includes education for professionals, educators, and family members. <https://www.elevatustraining.com/>



Paraquad's Disability and Intimacy Classes: Paraquad, a St. Louis area Center for Independent Living, delivers the Elevatus curriculum in its healthy relationship classes for youth and adults with disabilities. <https://paraquad.org/blog/relationshipclasses>

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Address community risk factors.

- Establish mechanisms to reduce the fear and risks around reporting.
- Implement initiatives that recognize and enhance the value of direct care workers, such as LTC staff and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).
- Provide ongoing support, professional development around ANE, and living wages (See Workforce Recruitment and Development for more information).
- Ensure compliance with state regulations to maintain high standards of care in facilities.
 - Hold LTC facility owners accountable to meet state standards through regular audits.

Promising Practices and Resources



ACL Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center: A repository of resources, training, and technical assistance to state systems and providers to improve workforce quality and retention. <https://acl.gov/DCWcenter>



Supports and Tools for Elder Abuse Prevention: Free materials to engage and educate your community about their role in preventing elder abuse. <https://ncea.acl.gov/supportsandtoolsforelderabuseprevention>

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 3:** Address societal risk factors.

- Educate the public on the impacts of ageism and ableism and promote positive perceptions of aging and disability.
- Enhance the availability and accessibility of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) programs to provide comprehensive care for older adults and adults with disabilities in their communities.

Promising Practices and Resources



NCEA Reframing Elder Abuse: These resources provide a communications strategy to address ageism and enhance public understanding of elder abuse. It aims to shift public perceptions of aging and encourage community responsibility for care of older adults. <https://ncea.acl.gov/reframing-elder-abuse#gsc.tab=0>

Enhancing Service Delivery

This section emphasizes the importance of improving the systems and resources that respond to and support survivors of abuse. It focuses on enhancing the accessibility and availability of supportive services and creating a coordinated approach among entities that receive reports and investigate cases of ANE. This section acknowledges that to accomplish the strategies in this framework, a skilled workforce dedicated to addressing abuse is essential. These priority areas work together to ensure that individuals impacted by ANE receive timely and effective support.

Service & Resource Needs



Key Issues

There is a lack of knowledge of services and supports available to respond to the effects of abuse and reduce the risk of future victimization, including mental health services, safety planning, and financial support. Service entities are often unaware of each other and unprepared to meet the varying needs of older adults and adults with disabilities. Families, caregivers, and perpetrators are also in need of services.



Goal

Establish a well-coordinated and responsive network where service entities are informed, prepared, and actively engaged, while also being interconnected, to meet the diverse needs of older adults and adults with disabilities.

Key Implementers

Coalitions: CJEDA, Missouri Council on Aging (MCOA)

Community-based Organizations: social service agencies, disability organizations, mental health services, AAA, victim services, Ombudsman, long-term care facilities

Community Stakeholders: caregivers, MDTs

Healthcare: nurses, medical assistants, first responders, emergency medical services, coroners

State Agencies

➡➡➡ **Strategy 1:** Improve awareness, access, and utilization of services and resources available.

- Develop and implement a centralized mechanism for accessing resource information tailored to local service providers and the public.
- Increase the availability and accessibility of specialized counseling and therapeutic support tailored to the needs of ANE survivors.

- Strengthen engagement and collaboration among service agencies.
 - Facilitate regular opportunities for agencies to engage and collaborate, improving mutual awareness and streamlining referral processes.

Promising Practices and Resources



No Wrong Door: A network built to support individuals in need of person-centered coordination and collaboration across the Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) system, regardless of age, income, or disability. <https://nwd.acl.gov/>

- Missouri participates in the No Wrong Door Initiative. <https://mofamilytofamily.org/no-wrong-door/>



APS Initiative with AAAs: Missouri APS piloted a referral stream to AAAs for community resources and service needs identified during investigations. This successful practice could be sustained with further funding

➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Implement and enhance training programs for service providers.

- Provide relevant, engaging, and continuous training for professionals on topics, such as financial exploitation, mandated reporting, and person-centered responses to ANE.

➡➡➡ **Strategy 3:** Support and educate caregivers and families and develop specialized services for perpetrators.

- Offer comprehensive educational resources and information for caregivers and families, helping them understand the complexities of ANE and the reporting and response system.
- Establish programs aimed at addressing the behaviors of perpetrators of ANE, including educational and rehabilitative services.

Promising Practices and Resources



After Abuse: Resources for Missourians with Disabilities: This online resource can help people with disabilities and their supporters learn about abuse and what happens when it is reported. The resources provide families, caregivers, and supporters with information on how to be a good ally to a person who has experienced ANE. Each tool uses accessible language and is available in Spanish and American Sign Language. <https://www.afterabusemoguide.com/>

Promising Practices and Resources



MAANIS Map: This tool shows the possible paths that reports of ANE can take through four state entities that receive and investigate complaints.

<https://www.afterabusemoguide.com/mapping-missouri-adult-abuse-and-neglect-investigation-system/>

- ➡➡➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Implement and enhance standardized training programs for mandated reporters to understand the statutory requirement to report. See *Survivor Experience, Strategy 2* for more information.

- ➡➡➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 3:** Develop a seamless, integrated response system that is consistent, regardless of the entry point, and is centered around the needs of the individual.
 - Refine statute and procedural guidance on communication and coordination between state agencies, prosecutors, police, and community partners like CIT, behavioral health, and victim services.
 - Enhance collaboration between state agency ANE investigators and local jurisdictions, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and other criminal justice system entities.
 - Utilize an MDT approach to provide comprehensive wrap-around services.

Promising Practices and Resources



MDT Technical Assistance Center: The Elder Justice Initiative through the U.S. Department of Justice offers an MDT Technical Assistance Center that provides resources and quick-start guides for establishing and funding MDTs to address abuse of older adults. These resources can be leveraged to support legislative action to support MDT expansion in the state. <https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt>



MO DHSS-APS MDT Expansion Project: In 2023, MO DHSS-APS hired a statewide MDT Coordinator to support the establishment of local MDTs across the state. MDTs are a widespread practice used in child abuse cases that reduce re-traumatization and allow for multiple agencies across disciplines to investigate and provide support for the survivor. This effort was supported by American Rescue Plan Act funds.



Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation Response Coordination (EAFEC):

EAFEC focuses on improving multidisciplinary teams across the state to respond better to elder abuse and financial exploitation through evaluating legislation, networking professionals, and creating training opportunities.

➡➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 4:** Establish a clear and consistent system for providing reporters and survivors with timely updates on the status of their cases, including expectations for the process, regular investigation updates, and notification of case closures. See *Survivor, Experience Strategy 2* for more information.

➡➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 5:** Provide community advocates with specialized knowledge of disability and aging to assist survivors in navigating the system.

- Employ a similar model to the victim advocacy in domestic/sexual violence or child advocacy, such as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

Promising Practices and Resources



DEAFLead: DEAFLead provides victim advocacy to survivors who are deaf or hard of hearing. This is an example of accessible advocacy services that meet the specific needs of services that individuals with disabilities. <https://deaflead.org/>

Workforce Recruitment & Development



Key Issues

High staff turnover rates in the adult abuse reporting and response system stem from compassion fatigue, job difficulty, lack of preparation, and low compensation. There is a shortage of ongoing professional development opportunities and resources to effectively carry out job duties, as well as difficulty attracting professionals to this field, particularly candidates with adequate post-secondary education or experience in human services fields.

Key Implementers
Academic Institutes: research and evaluation experts, law schools
Law Enforcement: police academies
State Agencies: DHSS-APS



Goal

Enhance the workforce by providing ongoing professional development opportunities, resources, and incentives, aiming to attract and retain qualified professionals, and to ensure effective and sustainable delivery of services.

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 1:** Promote career opportunities across disciplines in fields responding to adult ANE.

- Conduct informational sessions and workshops to promote career paths in LTSS and disability fields. These sessions could specifically target social work, health care, psychology, law, and criminal justice degree programs.
- Partner with two- and four-year colleges, high school career centers, and job fairs to promote careers in adult ANE.
- Utilize social media and other digital platforms to highlight career paths in adults ANE fields.
- Partner with educational institutions to offer more paid practicum and internship opportunities in state agencies, social service organizations, and criminal justice sectors.

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Recruit a qualified workforce.

- Partner with two- and four-year colleges to provide courses that specifically explore adult ANE and careers in this field.
- Align minimum requirements for education and experience with national standards when available. For example, APS Consensus Guidelines recommends field staff and supervisors have an undergraduate degree.

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 3:** Strengthen professional development and specialized training programs around recognizing and responding to adult ANE.

- Provide comprehensive training programs for LTC staff, DMH staff, and other direct care workers on their role and responsibility to report and respond to adult ANE.
- Provide training to law enforcement on recognizing adult ANE and their role in investigating, particularly when it applies to individuals receiving services and or living in LTC settings.
- Promote continuous learning opportunities to keep staff updated on best practices and emerging trends in adult ANE.

Promising Practices and Resources



Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center: Provides resources and training to improve workforce recruitment, training, and retention. <https://acl.gov/DCWcenter>



National Process Evaluation of the APS System: Offers recommendations for workforce education and training.

https://pfs2.acl.gov/strapib/assets/APSTARC_Evaluation_Long_7315e2724d.pdf



EAGLE: Free training for first responders and law enforcement on elder abuse and other types of abuse. <https://eagle.usc.edu/>



Institute on Disability Awareness: Provides customized training for first responders and professionals on responding to crises involving people with disabilities.

- MODDC partnered with Niagara University to offer free online training for Missouri emergency medical services (EMS) personnel. <https://moddcouncil.org/first-responder-disability-awareness-training-available-online-free-of-cost-for-missouri-emergency-medical-services/>



Missouri Office of Prosecution Services (MOPS) Training: Offers education and resources on ANE through statewide, regional, and local training for prosecuting attorneys.

<https://www.prosecutors.mo.gov/>

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 4:** Develop an equitable and comprehensive compensation plan.

- Increase the wages of the direct care workforce.
 - Designate a percentage of Medicaid funding to be spent on direct care work in LTC and other communal care settings, which can be used to hire more staff and increase wages.

- Implement a combination of compensation strategies, including merit-based, performance-based, and retention bonuses.
- Introduce seniority-based incentives to reward long-term service.
- Provide career development incentives, such as tuition reimbursement, training stipends, and opportunities for advancement.

Cross-cutting Areas

This section focuses on collaborating with stakeholders and building system infrastructure, which are critical to the success of all the previously outlined Priority Areas. Legislation can provide the framework and sustainability that makes previous recommendations possible. Data governance establishes real-time information to make data-driven decisions about our approach, while stakeholder engagement leverages the existing expertise within the state to carry out the work effectively.

Stakeholder Engagement



Key Issues

Numerous state and local task forces, coalitions, and workgroups addressing adult abuse exist, but they often lack awareness of each other and may operate in isolation. This results in a lack of coordination, collaborative solutions, and shared resources. These groups often do not include the voices of older adults and adults with disabilities.



Goal

Establish an efficient and well-connected network of task forces, coalitions, and workgroups addressing adult abuse at the local and state levels. This network fosters collaborative solutions, encourages shared resources and knowledge, and promotes the inclusion of older adults and adults with disabilities, valuing their lived experiences as integral in shaping community-driven approaches that respond effectively to the needs of the community.

Key Implementers

Community Stakeholders: state and local workgroups, coalitions, task forces, project advisory committees, MDTs, CJEDA

➡➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 1:** Identify the major stakeholders in the aging and disability fields to ensure representation from these groups.

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Increase awareness of local, regional, and statewide workgroups already working to address adult ANE.

- Create and distribute a survey to discover group purpose, members, priority areas, and contact information.
- Publish and share results on a publicly accessible website that stakeholders can use to connect with groups working on similar priority areas. Identify an organization that can host and update the website.

Promising Practices and Resources



National Center for State and Tribal Elder Justice Coalitions: Supports the development and enhancement of elder justice coalitions with training, technical assistance, and a resource repository. <https://www.elderjusticecenter.org/>



Missouri Adult ANE Stakeholder Groups: Several statewide and regional groups are currently addressing adult ANE issues.

- **CJEDA:** A multidisciplinary, statewide coalition educating and training legislators, conducting symposia, and promoting public awareness on elder justice.
- **EAFFEC:** Enhances multidisciplinary teams to respond to elder abuse and financial exploitation, evaluates legislation, and provides training.
- **MCOA:** Supports policy priorities around financial exploitation, economic security, workforce policies, and funding for essential services and family care providers.
- **Missouri Master Plan on Aging:** State-led initiative focusing on aging needs through cross-sector collaboration and strategic planning, covering areas like safety and security.

➡➡➡➡ **Strategy 3:** Strengthen professional development and specialized training programs around recognizing and responding to adult ANE.

- Provide opportunities for others to interact through likes, shares, reposts, and tagging.

Promising Practices and Resources



Social Media Toolkits: Provide strategies for effective audience engagement and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

- **Federal Social Media Accessibility Toolkit by Digital.gov:**
<https://digital.gov/resources/federal-social-media-accessibility-toolkit-hackpad/#>
- **National Association of County & City Health Officials Social Media Toolkit:**
<https://www.naccho.org/blog/articles/social-media-toolkit-a-primer-for-local-health-department-pios-and-communications-professionals-1>

➔➔➔➔ **Strategy 4:** Value stakeholders' time by acknowledging stretched capacity across disciplines.

- Engage and foster collaborations with new partners, particularly community-based organizations who can drive change at the local level.
- Identify existing opportunities, such as statewide conferences on ANE, aging, and disability, to gather representatives across working groups to share resources, create collaborations, and identify emerging trends and new priorities.

Data Management (Governance)



Key Issues

Underreporting has led to a limited understanding of the scope of the problem. There is a lack of data standards and ineffective data-sharing agreements between agencies responding to older adult abuse. Limited data is collected on service quality and outcomes. Inadequate data is a barrier to informed decision-making on policy, practices, and research priorities.



Goal

Establish data standards and effective data-sharing agreements among state agencies, enhance data collection on service quality and outcomes, and ensure informed decision-making on policy, practices, and research priorities.

Key Implementers

Post-secondary Education:
academic and research institutes

Community-based Organization:
victim services, advocacy groups

Healthcare: hospitals and healthcare systems, geriatric care units, ER units

Law Enforcement: prosecutors, police

State Agencies: DRL-SLCR, DHSS-APS, DMH

➔➔➔ **Strategy 1:** Adopt a data governance framework to facilitate effective and secure data sharing between state agencies responding to ANE, including DRL-SLCR, DHSS-APS, DMH, and law enforcement.

- Create comprehensive policies defining how data is handled and who has access to it that correspond to legal requirements and individual agency objectives.

- Develop a mechanism for intergovernmental data sharing, primarily between law enforcement and APS. This can be established through agency policy and statutes.
- Develop a standardized data collection process by executive order or legislation.
- Define who is responsible for various aspects of data management.
- Establish intergovernmental sharing agreements that establish what data to share and how it will be protected.
- Establish a common data dictionary that allows for consistent data indicators to be collected.

➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Develop data-sharing mechanisms that increase interoperability between agency data systems and provide real-time data to the public.

- Adopt a common data dictionary that standardizes data formats across all systems.
- Determine rules and protocols for how agency software applications will request and exchange data.
- Create a portal, dashboard, or similar channel to increase public transparency and accountability.

➡➡➡ **Strategy 3:** Leverage data to guide strategic planning, policy development, and resource allocation across all Priority Areas.

Promising Practices and Resources



Guidance for Establishing APS Data Dashboards: ACL's 2021 guidance covers key metrics, data privacy, and technological infrastructure for APS data dashboards.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7Yy098R4HE>



Missouri Integrated Justice Information Systems (MoIJIS) Technical Working Group: Part of the Missouri Criminal Records and Justice Information Advisory Committee (CRJIAC), MoIJIS is well positioned to lead a statewide data sharing initiative due to its expertise and statutory authority under RSMo § 43.518.



Missouri DHSS-APS System Enhancement Project: From 2020-2024, DHSS-APS invested in IT (information technology) enhancements to improve data collection, consistency, and access in their case management system.

Legislation



Key Issues

There is a lack of legal framework that addresses adult abuse risk, protection, and prevention. In addition, there are inconsistencies in how criminal law is implemented by local prosecutors. Current gaps in adult abuse legislation may have unintended consequences for survivors. There is not currently a coordinated process to vet new and existing legislation with stakeholders in the field to ensure it effectively meets the unique needs of older adults and adults with disabilities.



Goal

Establish a comprehensive legislative structure to enhance consistencies in criminal law implementation, mitigate unintended consequences, and institute a coordinated process for vetting legislation to effectively meet the unique needs of older adults and adults with disabilities.

➡➡➡ **Strategy 1:** Improve the legal framework that addresses adult abuse.

- Enhance legal categorization and penalties for crimes targeting older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Implement stricter penalties for LTC facilities that fail to meet required standards to ensure accountability and improve protection of residents.

➡➡➡ **Strategy 2:** Allocate resources to expand and sustain county MDTs that can facilitate a coordinated approach involving various stakeholders, including law enforcement, social services, and healthcare providers, to effectively protect older adults.

Key Implementers

Academic Institutions: research and policy institutes

Advocacy: legal advocates, policy advocates, aging advocates, disability advocates, victim advocates

Law Enforcement: prosecutors, elder law attorneys

Policymakers: legislators, local government officials

Promising Practices and Resources



MDT Technical Assistance Center: The Elder Justice Initiative's center offers resources and guides for establishing and funding MDTs to address abuse of older adults. These resources can be leveraged to support legislative action to support MDT expansion. <https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt>

➔➔➔ **Strategy 3:** Create a process for vetting new and existing laws to reduce the potential harm and unintended consequences of ineffective legislation.

- Comprehensively review and update existing laws to improve outcomes for survivors, ensuring that legal protections effectively serve their intended purpose without causing additional harm or barriers.
- Establish an expert review process for proposed legislation to identify and address potential unintended consequences.

Promising Practices and Resources



Policy Priorities in Aging and Disability: Regional and statewide groups set policy priorities and educate on issues affecting older adults and adults with disabilities.

- **MCOA:** Hosts weekly/bi-weekly policy discussions during the legislative session. Current priority areas drafted around financial exploitation. <https://www.missouricouncilonaging.org/>
- **VOYCE:** Hosts weekly/bi-weekly policy discussions that follow current legislation, proposed legislation, and their potential consequences. <https://www.voycestl.org/how-help/policy-advocacy/>
- **MODDC:** Sets policy priorities to advocate for budget and legislative items that impact individuals with developmental disabilities. <https://moddcouncil.org/our-work/public-policy/>

Next Steps

Where do we go from here?

The primary goal of this initiative was to engage and mobilize a diverse network of stakeholders in charting a path forward. The nine priorities identified by our dedicated stakeholders were deemed critical in understanding the collective adult abuse response in Missouri and further enhancing the services to older adults and adults with disabilities. As a promising framework, we hope you take action by leveraging this plan to support new partnerships and innovative solutions.

How You Can Use this Plan



Education and Awareness

This plan serves as a valuable resource for increasing education and awareness about adult abuse. It provides tools and strategies to inform and engage the public, professionals, and policymakers about the importance of recognizing and addressing abuse.



Funding and Resources

Utilize the plan to identify and secure funding and resources necessary to support your services and initiatives. It offers a roadmap to strategies that require financial and operational resources to ensure sustainable support for the plan.



Practices and Policy Framework

The plan outlines promising practices and policy recommendations designed to enhance service delivery and policy effectiveness. It can be used to refine existing procedures and develop new policies that better meet the needs of those impacted by adult abuse.

By implementing the strategies outlined in this framework, you play a vital role in driving the change needed to maintain the safety and well-being of those at risk. The next steps are in your hands—let this plan guide your actions in education, resource allocation, and policy reform to create a safer and more just Missouri for all.