



# Justice and Compassion: Empowering Faith Communities in the Prevention and Intervention of Elder Abuse

OCTOBER 3, 2017

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
**ElderJustice**  
INITIATIVE



**OVCTTAC**  
OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME Training and Technical Assistance Center



# TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

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- ▶ If you have technical difficulties during the webinar, contact Danielle McLean, who is providing technical support for this webinar. Her email address is [dmclean@ovcttac.org](mailto:dmclean@ovcttac.org).
- ▶ Today's session will be recorded and made available on the training website.
- ▶ If you have questions, type them in the feedback box. We will address as many as possible throughout the webinar.

# ELDER JUSTICE INITIATIVE

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The **mission** is to support and coordinate the Department of Justice's enforcement and programmatic efforts to combat elder abuse, neglect, and financial fraud and scams that target older adults.

The Initiative does so by—

- Promoting justice for older adults.
- Helping older victims and their families.
- Enhancing state and local efforts through training and resources.
- Supporting research to improve elder abuse policy and practice.



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## ELDER JUSTICE INITIATIVE (EJI)

REPORT ABUSE OR FIND HELP

New on ElderJustice.gov

**EJI launches the MDT  
Toolkit and Guide for  
elder abuse case review  
MDTs**



1 2 3 4



**Elder abuse is a complex issue that intersects with many disciplines.**

Elder abuse can happen to anyone. It affects people of every ethnic background, gender, and financial status.



# PRESENTERS

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**Rev. Dr. Anne Marie Hunter**

Director, Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership  
Against Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse

**Tovah Kasdin**

Director, ElderSAFE™ Center  
and

**Rabbi James Michaels**

Director, Pastoral Care  
Charles E. Smith Life Communities



# JUSTICE AND COMPASSION: EMPOWERING FAITH COMMUNITIES IN THE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION OF ELDER ABUSE

Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic  
Violence and Elder Abuse

ElderSAFE™ Center

Charles E. Smith Life Communities



# The Elder Justice Roadmap

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

“an emerging health,  
justice, financial, and  
social crisis.”

An image of an iceberg floating in a dark blue ocean under a cloudy sky. The small tip of the iceberg is above the water line, while the much larger, jagged mass is submerged below. The text is overlaid on the image, with the number '1' in red above the water and '23' in red below the water.

For every **1** case of elder abuse that comes to the  
attention of a responsible entity. . .

. . . another **23** cases never come to light.

Source: NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study; Weill Cornell Medical College,  
NYC Department for the Aging; Lifespan; (2011) © 2011, M.T. Connolly, Life Long Justice



1 in 10 adults 60+ who live at home suffered abuse, neglect, or exploitation in the past year

Acierno, et al., 2009, Elder Justice Roadmap, p. 3, 2014

47% of older adults with dementia experience abuse

Wiggelsworth et al., Journal of the American Geriatric Society, 2010

Elder abuse triples the risk of premature death and causes unnecessary illness, injury, and suffering

Lachs, et al., 1998, Elder Justice Roadmap, p. 4, 2014





Age	% Faith Affiliated
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65 years and older	88%
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50–64 years	83%
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30–49 years	75%
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18–29 years	64%
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Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study




“Religious affiliation is the most common form of organizational participation among older adults, with 50% reporting attending services weekly.”

American Psychological Association,  
Older Adults' Health and Age-Related Changes:  
Demographic, Economic, and Social Issues.



**“Victims, survivors, and surviving family members  
consistently turn to their faith communities for support  
and safety . . . .”**

Georgia Commission on Family Violence and  
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence,  
2009 Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Annual Report



“Respondents, especially minorities, often indicated that **their ‘first stop’ would be a member of the clergy** if they were to discuss their DV with anyone.”

“Many women felt that **they would be likely to seek the help they need in their places of worship.**”

Richard Beaulaurier, Laura Seff, and Frederick Newman.  
“Barriers to Help-Seeking for Older Women Who Experience  
Intimate Partner Violence: A Descriptive Model,”  
*Journal of Women and Aging*, Vol. 20(3/4) 2008



Respondents over 76: 52%

Respondents under 76: 33%

Elizabeth Podnieks, EdD, RN, and Sue Wilson, PhD.  
“Elder Abuse Awareness in Faith Communities: Findings from a Canadian Pilot Study,”  
*Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 15, No.3/4, 2003, p. 123.



“Respondents noted that **the linkage between faith and marriage** was particularly important to many women of their generation.”

Richard Beaulaurier, Laura Seff, and Frederick Newman.  
“Barriers to Help-Seeking for Older Women Who Experience  
Intimate Partner Violence: A Descriptive Model,”  
*Journal of Woman & Aging*, Vol. 20(3/4) 2008

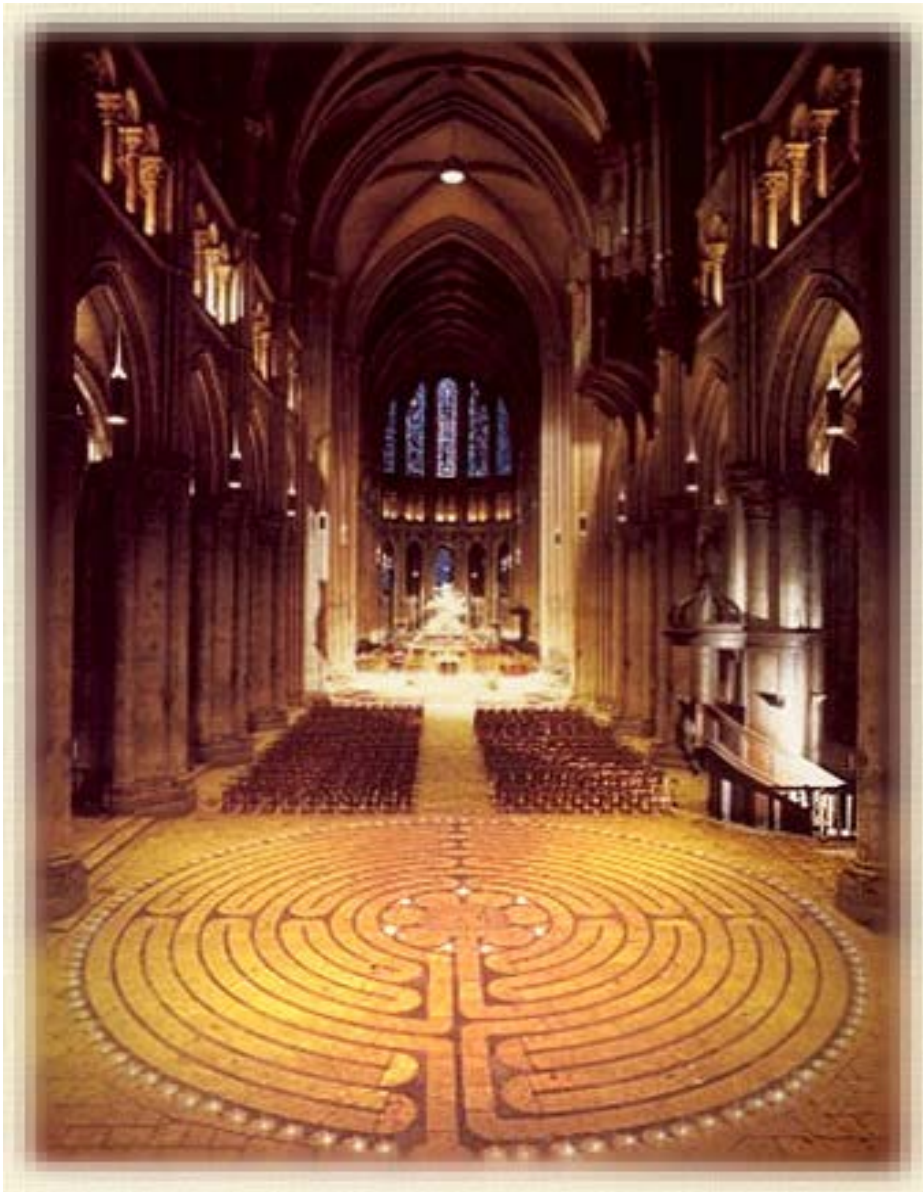




Religion, spirituality, or faith may connect victims and survivors of elder abuse to—

- Community and traditions
- Language and memories
- Family and culture
- History and country of origin
- Creator, God, Great Spirit, Higher Power, Gods . . .





Faith, religion, or spirituality can provide the structure that helps victims and survivors re-orient themselves, find their bearings, stay centered in their values and identity, and heal.

Faith, religion, or spirituality may provide resources that victims and survivors carry with them that no one can take away.

Faith, religion, or spirituality may help victims and survivors grieve the losses and heal.







Not all survivors identify with a particular faith or tradition; however, all survivors need to be heard and affirmed.

All survivors need someone to bear witness to their experience, someone to accompany them on the journey toward safety, justice, and healing.

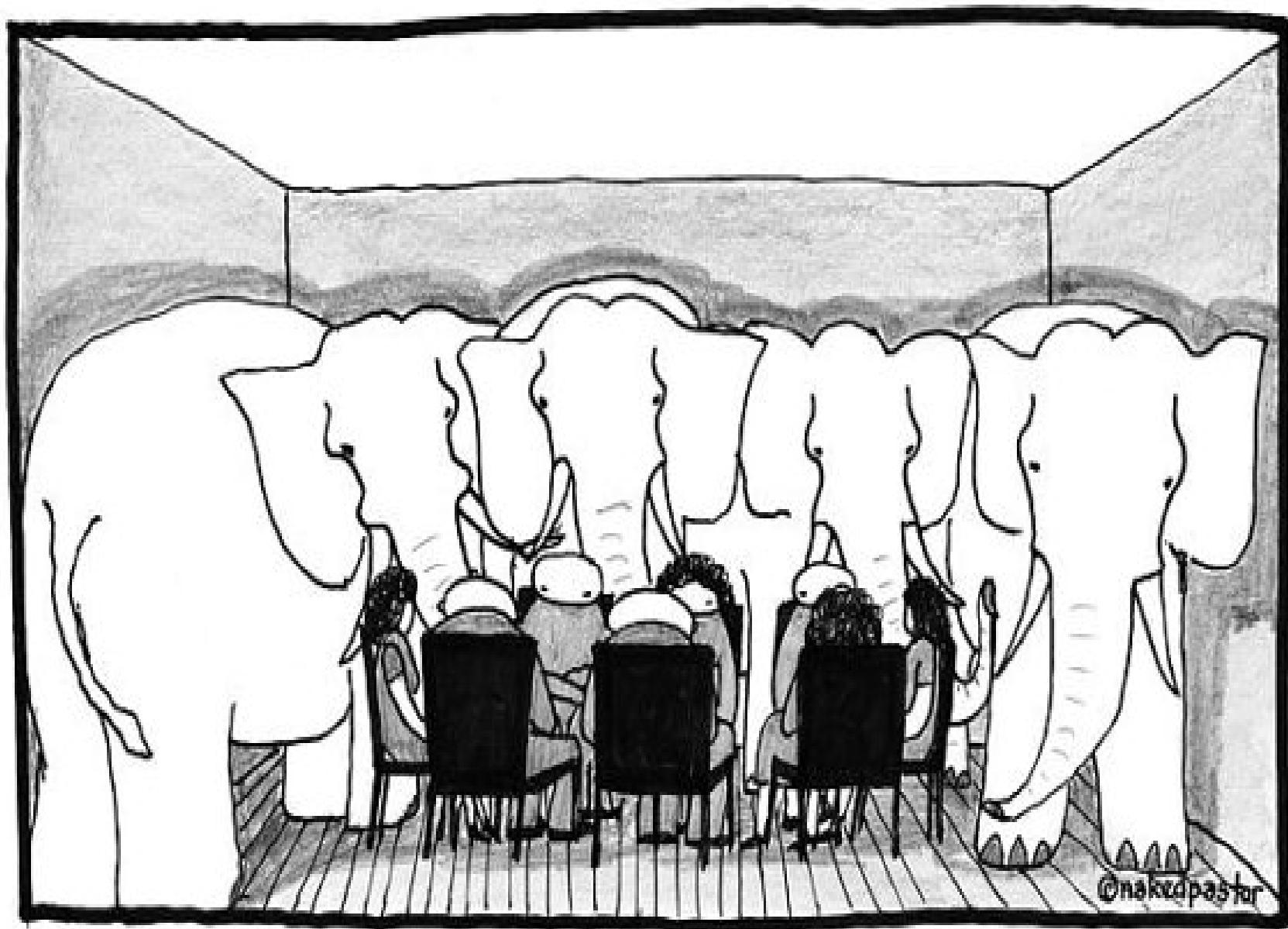


“More than many other formal care providers, faith leaders are in a position to identify, assess, and intervene in abusive situations because they see older people in their own context over time and have ongoing access to their residences.”

Elizabeth Podnieks, 2003

## **Faith community members and leaders—**

- Know the older members of the faith community
- Visit in hospitals, long-term care and assisted living facilities, rehabilitation hospitals, and nursing homes
- Visit shut-in members of the community in their homes
- Provide ongoing worship/spiritual practice opportunities in nursing homes and assisted living facilities
- Are often the only person outside the family who visits an older adult
- Have been through other crises with the older adult and are trusted



# Without Training and Resources

- Denial
- Silencing
- Blaming and judging
- Minimization
- Unsafe solutions and “quick fixes”
- Manipulation by abuser
- Couples or marriage counseling
- Dead end



# Real People, Real Families, Real Suffering

Mary,

Theresa,

Others . . .



“What has been most violated . . . are intangibles: love, faith, trust, and hope. The result is spiritual suffering and a serious sense of loss and powerlessness.”

Elder abuse survivor,  
2009



# **The Faith Leaders Elder Abuse Pilot Project**

ElderSAFE and Safe Havens

Partnering to Build Community Capacity

## ElderSAFE Center Model

- Established in 2014, the ElderSAFE Center provides safe, temporary shelter, community education, and advocacy for abused and neglected older adults (60 years of age and older).
- The Center is located within the long-term care campus of Charles E. Smith Life Communities, Rockville, Maryland.
- A language-accessible Helpline is operational Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. for agencies throughout Maryland, Washington D.C., and Northern Virginia to make referrals to our Center.

# ElderSAFE and Safe Havens



# Building a Partnership

- October 2015: Safe Havens presents at the ElderSAFE community education event to a capacity crowd; event includes interfaith panel.
- November 2016: ElderSAFE budgets funding to support the growing partnership, and the Faith Leaders Elder Abuse Pilot Project is born.
- January 2017: Safe Havens provides training for community faith leaders.
- November 2017: Safe Havens will present at the ElderSAFE community education event to feature progress of pilot project.





Partnerships and cross-referrals between faith leaders and service providers, such as ElderSAFE, can help to—


- Provide safe and confidential opportunities for disclosure
- Provide more holistic care
- Recognize and respond to the spiritual as well as the physical, emotional, sexual, and financial effects of abuse
- Provide the spiritual care and healing environment that so many survivors want and need

Partnerships with ElderSAFE, Adult Protective Services, and other local service providers can help faith leaders—

- Recognize “red flags” of elder abuse
- Prioritize safety
- Respond to spiritual crises
- Support older victims spiritually and materially
- Refer, refer, refer to community services


Partnerships with ElderSAFE can help local faith leaders—

- Break the silence about abuse
- Talk about elder abuse in the congregation and community
- Invite elder abuse experts to teach in the congregation
- Make resources available (fliers, posters, brochures, palm cards)
- Use the building to provide a conduit for information to flow into the community
- Build trust in ElderSAFE and other service providers



“The thing we most want clergy to do is listen. It takes so much energy, strength, and courage to speak up. When a victim is ready to speak, clergy HAVE to listen. Clergy shouldn’t say, ‘we’re out of time,’ or ‘I have a meeting.’”

Older survivor, 2009



Rabbi Jim Michaels shares reflections of how faith leaders make a difference in the lives of our shelter clients.

# QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

# Contact Information

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[www.eldersafe.org](http://www.eldersafe.org)

Our heartfelt thanks to the focus group participants in San Francisco, California, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Lynn, Massachusetts; to the victims and survivors, service providers, and clergy who shared their time and wisdom so generously with us; to Bonnie Brandl, Executive Director of the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life; and to Janice Green, Program Manager, Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice.

It has been an honor to share the journey with you.

Q & A



# QUESTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

can be emailed to

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