
(Is This What Change Feels Like? The State of Elder Abuse in America)

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Format

- Decade(s)
- Phase
- Major characteristic
- Societal influences
- Illustrative national activities
- Illustrative Ohio activities (and support from grantmakers)
“Although the need to provide protective services for older persons is not a new problem, it is assuming greater magnitude as the character of our population changes.”

Mary L. Hemmy and Marcella S. Farrar
1960 Annual Meeting of the National Committee on the Aging
Decades: 1950s and 1960s
Phase: Discussion
Major characteristic: Scholarly discourse to delineate protective care (services) and its clientele
Societal influences: (1) increase and changes in the older population, (2) geographic mobility of families, (3) economic growth and a more liberal public policy agenda
Illustrative national activities:

- Arden House Seminar on Protective Services for Older People
- Publication of the first book on protective services—*Guardianship and Protective Services for Older People*
- Recognition of the need for a multidisciplinary approach to problem resolution
Illustrative Ohio activities:

• Cleveland’s Welfare Federation convenes agency executives to define protective care and its general goals.

• Benjamin Rose Institute becomes one of the demonstration projects for protective services (A.M. McGregor Foundation).
“Our knowledge about the battered elderly mirrors our knowledge of the extent of child abuse in the early 60s or the extent of our knowledge about wife abuse in the early 1970s...I predict, given the generally increasing concern for the elderly and more specifically concern of abuse of elderly in public institutions, that the 80s will be the decade of the Battered Parent.”

Suzanne K. Steinmetz
1978 “Overlooked Aspects of Family Violence: Battered Husbands, Battered Siblings, and Battered Elderly”, testimony presented to the US House Committee on Science and Technology
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<th>Decade:</th>
<th>1970s</th>
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<td>Phase:</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
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<td>Major characteristic:</td>
<td>Recognition of and initial inquiry into elder abuse</td>
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<td>Societal influences:</td>
<td>(1) economic and social volatility, (2) rights movements, (3) Watergate scandal</td>
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Illustrative national activities:

• Exposés and Congressional hearings on the mistreatment of nursing home residents
• Beginning of long-term care ombudsman programming
• Expansion of adult protective services nationwide with enactment of Title XX of the Social Security Act
• Passage of early state adult protective services laws
• Recognition of the “battered old person syndrome” by Robert Butler
• Earliest federally supported research on elder abuse
Illustrative Ohio activities:

• *Tender Loving Greed* is published on “how the incredibly lucrative nursing home ‘industry’ is exploiting America’s old people and defrauding us all” (grant to the Federation for Community Planning).

• Benjamin Rose Institute’s *Protective Services for Older People: Final Report* is released, suggesting protective services increased the likelihood of institutionalization and risk of death.

• The first research on elder abuse in the United States is conducted at Cleveland’s Chronic Illness Center.
“We are at a critical juncture in the elder abuse field. While [James] Callahan has referred to elder abuse as a dying non-issue that is no longer saleable to politicians, we nevertheless find that an apparatus for responding to abuse has been established in a vast majority of states.”

Rachel Filinson
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<th>Decade:</th>
<th>1980s</th>
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<td>Phase:</td>
<td>Development</td>
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<td>Major characteristic:</td>
<td>Establishing structures to support better understanding and response to elder abuse</td>
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<td>Societal influences:</td>
<td>(1) federalism, (2) moral agendas and the criminalization of unacceptable behaviors, (3) “greedy geezers” and moving away from entitlement programs</td>
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Illustrative national activities:

• Growing public and professional recognition of elder abuse
• Pioneering research on elder abuse
• Enactment of adult protective services or elder abuse reporting laws in most states
• Passage of elder abuse prevention provisions in the Older Americans Act
• Release of the Congressional report--*Elder Abuse (An Examination of a Hidden Problem)*
• Convening the first elder abuse research forum, at the University of New Hampshire
• Passage of 1987 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation provisions on elder abuse
• Publication of the first book on elder abuse-- *Abuse and Maltreatment of the Elderly: Causes and Interventions*
• Formation of the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*
• Identification of older people as a targeted group under the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act
Illustrative Ohio activities:

• The Ohio adult protective services law is enacted.

• The Consortium Against Adult Abuse and Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services are established, the nation’s oldest community and state elder abuse networks (Cleveland Foundation).

• Elder abuse is included in the agenda of the Governor’s Task Force on Family Violence.
• Cleveland Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar leads efforts to introduce the first federal legislation exclusively on elder abuse identification, prevention, and treatment.
“For those of us who have been working in the elder abuse movement for a decade or more, progress toward understanding and prevention of elder abuse has been exceptionally slow. This situation may be attributed as much to the complexities of elder abuse as to the importance given to the problem by national governments.”

Rosalie S. Wolf
Decade: 1990s

Phase: Diversification

Major characteristic: Broadening the concept of elder abuse and the involved systems to address it

Societal influences: (1) global economy and communication, (2) terrorism at home and abroad, (3) OJ Simpson trial
Illustrative national activities:

• Growing involvement across multiple systems in responding to elder abuse, including domestic violence programs and public health departments

• Creation of the National Center on Elder Abuse

• Formation of the National Association of Adult Protective Services Administrators
• Globalization of elder abuse and formation of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
• Completion of the National Elder Abuse Incidence Study
• Research on the meaning and response to elder abuse across cultural groups
• Establishment of the Title VII (Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection) of the Older Americans Act
• Various national forums on elder abuse with resulting recommendations, like National Survey and Panels on Elder Abuse Training Opportunities and Recommended Guidelines for State Courts Handling Cases Involving Elder Abuse
Illustrative Ohio activities:

• Adult protective services receives first time state funding as a result of Ohio’s Eldercare Initiative.

• Professional and public awareness activities abound through the efforts of area agencies on aging and elder abuse networks.

• The Ohio Department of Human Services funds state and county efforts to foster interface between adult protective services and domestic violence programs, including the development of screening tools and a referral protocol.

• The Greater Cleveland Elder Abuse/Domestic Violence Roundtable is formed (Home Instead).