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The NYC Elder Abuse Center: An Overview

Financial exploitation. Physical abuse. Psychological Abuse. Abandonment. Neglect. All are aspects of elder abuse, increasingly common nationwide, with over 100,000 older adults victimized in their own homes each year in NYC alone.

The cases are heartbreaking and complex, requiring innovative solutions. As a result, the New York City Elder Abuse Center (NYCEAC) was launched to respond to these cases with an unprecedented level of collaboration and coordination. In partnership with many NYC's government and non-profit agencies, NYCEAC provides a streamlined and rapid response to elder abuse cases. In addition, the depth and breadth of expertise and resources of the participating agencies helps to minimize gaps or overlap of services. Additionally, NYCEAC trains professionals across disciplines and systems to detect, assess and intervene in cases of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation; provides technical assistance to other communities seeking to use a collaborative approach to responding to elder abuse; and works to improve legislation to better protect the safety and well-being of NYC's older adults.

Current Operations

NYCEAC commenced operations in November 2009. A concept more than a place, NYCEAC is decentralized and without walls. It efficiently utilizes existing spaces and leverages other extant resources to avoid unnecessary capital expenditures and effectively builds on the strengths of existing NYC elder abuse and elder service networks.

Activities are divided into two "cores": an **Administrative Core**, which oversees NYCEAC's operations, and a **Clinical Services and Education Core**, focused on providing direct services and professional training. This model has built-in elasticity. Existing cores can be expanded as needs arise, and contracted as goals are achieved. Additional cores can be established as new priorities emerge.

- The **Administrative Core** provides leadership to all aspects of the Center. The NYCEAC's Director is Dr. Mark Lachs and its Deputy Director is Risa Breckman, LCSW; both are with Weill Cornell Medical College's Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology.

While the Division has overall responsibility for the project, activities are conducted by numerous organizations, many of which are also making in-kind contributions. Each of these organizations contributes specific expertise in one or more areas; many have experience working together during the planning project and in other NYC elder abuse-focused activities and have volunteered to play an active role on NYCEAC's Steering Committee.*

The Steering Committee develops governance policies and procedures, and builds and maintains an infrastructure comprised of important stakeholders from NYC's many diverse community-based, government, health care, criminal justice, legal and academic institutions. The Steering Committee meets quarterly, provides guidance on future directions and forms subcommittees as needed.

- The **Clinical Services and Education Core** focuses on case consultations through multidisciplinary teams (MDT) and one-to-one assistance with professionals responding to the needs of victims; educational initiatives; and leadership development.

MDTs: NYCEAC utilizes MDTs to coordinate care and create solutions for the growing number of complex cases of elder abuse in NYC.

NYCEAC coordinates and facilitates two teams, one in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn. Both offer a central response point for the agencies and people working on elder abuse cases in the community. The MDTs also serve as an important informational resource for professionals working in the health, mental health, justice/legal, victim assistance and social service systems.

Although the two teams are designed differently, they both utilize a case consultation model to improve the health and quality of life for older adults. This is accomplished through: reviewing, discussing and coordinating cases of elder abuse and neglect; identifying systemic and resource problems that can be brought to the attention of others for strategizing and intervention; and identifying research needs. The following briefly describes the NYCEAC's MDTs:

**Steering Committee members represent the following organizations:* Alzheimer's Association, NYC Chapter, Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging & Longevity, the Carter Burden Center for the Aging, CONNECT, Council of Senior Centers and Services, Fordham University Institute for Women and Girls, Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of NY, Heights and Hills, Indochina Sino-American Community Center, JASA, Kings County's DA's Office, Montefiore Medical Center's Division of Geriatrics, NY County District Attorney's Office, Neighborhood SHOPP, NYC Department for the Aging, NYC Housing Authority, NYC Human Resources Administration Adult Protective Services, New York Legal Assistance Group, United Federation of Teachers, UJA-The Federation of New York, The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Research in Elder Abuse at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale, and Weill Cornell Medical Center's Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology.

- The *Manhattan Elder Abuse Case Coordination and Review Team (EACCRT)* is an interdisciplinary group of over 40 NYC professionals from a broad spectrum of public and not-for-profit organizations. These professionals, representing diverse fields—social work, medicine, law, nursing and psychiatry—meet monthly for 1.5 hours at different locations throughout Manhattan. Usually 2-3 cases are discussed at each meeting and follow-ups on previous cases are also discussed. EACCRT membership is open to any professional representing an organization serving Manhattan elders.
- The *Brooklyn MDT* meets weekly for 1.5 hours at the Brooklyn APS Office and is comprised of selected representatives from the following organizations.

JASA

Kings County District Attorney’s Office

Maimonides Medical Center’s Division of Geriatrics

NYC Department for the Aging

NYC Elder Abuse Center

NYC Human Resources Administration Adult Protective Services

The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Research at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale

Weill Cornell Medical Center’s Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology

VA New York Harbor Healthcare System – Brooklyn Campus

The Brooklyn MDT’s representatives are knowledgeable about elder abuse and neglect and collectively represent the fields of medicine, law, social work and social services. Additional consultants from other fields can be brought in on a case-by-case basis.

Professionals helping Brooklyn-residing elders can refer cases to this Brooklyn MDT for expert consultation, review and recommendations. All referred cases are triaged by the NYCEAC’s Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator (MDTC).

One-to-One Case Consultations: Professionals working with older adults might detect elder abuse but are often unsure of how to proceed in assessing and assisting the victims and their family members. NYCEAC’s expert can staff provide consultation to professionals to assist with questions relating to assessment of elder abuse and interventions with victims and their family members, safety planning and a wide range of resources available to victims.

For more information about case consultations or either of the two MDTs, including how to refer a case to an MDT for expert review and recommendations, please contact the NYCEAC’s MDT Coordinator (MDTC), Robin Roberts, LMSW at rroberts@nyceac.com or at 718-722-4839.

Educational Initiatives: NYCEAC provides in-service training to professional across disciplines and systems and also provides information about elder abuse, neglect and exploitation through its bi-monthly eNewsletter.

1. *Training:* NYCEAC’s staff and partnering agencies work together to provide multidisciplinary training to professionals from across disciplines and systems on a wide

range of topics related to elder abuse and aging, including how to present cases to the Brooklyn MDT. These presentations are lively and interactive, utilizing a variety of teaching methods – e.g., didactic presentations, discussions, case studies, DVDs – to appeal to different adult learning styles. Our staff will work to fit the needs of the audience, including physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, bankers, attorneys, caseworkers and students.

For more information about these educational opportunities, please contact NYCEAC's Deputy Director, Risa Breckman at rbreckm@med.cornell.edu or at 212-746-1674.

2. *eNewsletter*: Our no cost, bi-monthly eNewsletter is designed to keep you informed about best practices and resources to help you in your work with elder abuse victims and to promote elder justice. Launched in April 2011, the eNewsletter has the following topics: Overview of the NYC Elder Abuse Center; Coming up: Guardianship/Alternatives to Guardianship; Intimate Partner Abuse in Later Life; NYC's Temporary Shelter Options for Elder Abuse Victims. Upcoming editions will focus on capacity evaluations and forensic accounting.

To register to receive the eNewsletter and to view the archived editions, go to NYCEAC's website at www.nyceac.com.

Leadership Development: NYCEAC has two initiatives focusing on leadership development:

1. *Leadership Education Project (LEP)*: NYCEAC actively engages key decision makers in discussions about elder abuse and neglect to: educate them about the complexities and prevalence of this problem; and inform them of vital NYC elder justice-related programs, including the work of NYCEAC. To this end, NYCEAC, in partnership with the Council of Senior Centers and Services (CSCS) and the Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of NY (GMHA), initiated LEP to further these goals. The aims of this project are to: identify key NYS/NYC decision-makers who should be informed about elder abuse issues and NYCEAC's work; and develop and implement an action plan for engaging them on these issues.

For more information about the Leadership Education Project, contact Kim Williams, LMSW at kwilliams@mhaofnyc.org or Bobbie Sackman at bsackman@cscs-ny.org.

2. *MDT Peer Leadership Initiative*: NYCEAC staff are available to provide assistance to professionals interested in developing a multidisciplinary in their community, including providing information on how to present cases; team protocol development; team membership development; case identification; tracking cases; and other issues. NYCEAC currently holds a monthly meeting with professionals from the five boroughs and Dutchess County to help strengthen existing teams and support nascent ones. In addition, NYCEAC partners have helped Westchester County launch an MDT there.

For more information about receiving technical assistance related to an MDT, please contact NYCEAC's MDT Coordinator (MDTC), Robin Roberts, LMSW at rroberts@nyceac.com or at 718-722-4839.

Future Directions

As it moves forward, the NYCEAC will utilize a collaborative approach to problem solving to overcome obstacles and plan for the future. The Steering Committee is confident that ultimately NYCEAC will improve care for the growing number of NYC elder abuse victims - while also serving as a significant resource for elder abuse technical assistance, innovative best practices, multidisciplinary training, research, and policy development, both locally and nationally.

Support

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For more information about the NYC Elder Abuse Center, please visit www.nyceac.com.