



December 19, 2019

**To: Elder Justice Coordinating Council**

**RE: ACL Request for Public Input regarding Elder Justice Coordinating Council Future Activities**

The American Society on Aging (ASA) appreciates the opportunity to provide our thoughts and ideas on the activities of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council (EJCC) over the next two years. ASA represents a diverse group of professionals across the field of aging, including practitioners, educators, administrators, policymakers, businesspeople, researchers, and students. This group is bound together by a common goal of supporting the commitment and enhancing the knowledge and skills of those who seek to improve the quality of life of seniors and their families.

Elder justice is among the top public policy priorities for ASA, as improving the quality of life for seniors can only be achieved when they are free from elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. ASA is also a member of the Elder Justice Coalition, a 3000-member organization which seeks to increase awareness of and advocate for policies combating elder abuse and neglect.

To respond to this request, we conducted a survey of ASA’s members related to the questions outlined by ACL in the public input invitation. We received 91 responses. First, we asked members to review the EJCC’s eight recommendations. We asked members to identify the top three areas where should EJCC prioritize its efforts over the next two years. The table below shows the ranking of EJCC’s recommendations according to which were selected most frequently.

Recommendation 1: Support the Investigation and Prosecution of Elder Abuse Cases	46%
Recommendation 8: Improve Screening for Dementia and Cognitive Capacity, Financial Capacity, and Financial Exploitation	43%
Recommendation 2: Enhance Services to Elder Abuse Victims	42%
Recommendation 5: Develop a Broad-Based Public Awareness Campaign	41%
Recommendation 6: Cross-disciplinary Training on Elder Abuse	41%
Recommendation 7: Combat Elder Financial Exploitation, including Abuse by Fiduciaries	33%
Recommendation 3: Develop a National Adult Protective Services System	27%
Recommendation 4: Develop a Federal Elder Justice Research Agenda	14%

**Resources to Address Elder Abuse, Neglect, and/or Exploitation**

As you know, elder justice activities are woefully underfunded by the federal government. For example, the programs created by the Elder Justice Act almost ten years ago have received a total of less than 10 percent of the four years of funding authorized under the Act—and budgets from both previous and current Administrations did not ask for any levels higher than those appropriated. This is a failure of

ASA is the go-to source to cultivate leadership, advance knowledge and strengthen the skills of our members and others who work with and on behalf of older adults.

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both Congress and the Administration to fund programs that would make a significant impact on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

In response to this direct question about resources, many respondents to our member survey mentioned the need for more funding for their activities to combat elder abuse. Funding also came up as a popular response to a question we asked about topics that are missing from the EJCC's eight recommendations.

Other respondents discussed the need for a public awareness campaign to bring attention to this serious issue. Further, 41 percent of survey respondents identified this as one of the top three recommendations that the EJCC should prioritize over the next two years. Some specific suggestions for EJCC related to education and awareness include:

- Developing tool kits, templates, and guides for local elder justice organizations.
- Executing a national and local media campaigns to raise awareness about elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Outreach to seniors about scams and especially online scams – both training on how to keep their finances safe and also what to do after seniors are scammed.
- Elder abuse research to identify the prevalence of the problem and sharing of best practice strategies to combat elder abuse.

Similarly, many respondents discussed the need for broad-based elder abuse training, and 41 percent of survey respondents also identified this as a top recommendation to prioritize. Some specific suggestions related to training for elder abuse professionals include:

- Outreach and training resources, summits, workshops, and other opportunities for state and local coalitions to explore common issues and areas of need, build consensus, and alert federal policy makers about barriers to justice and their needs.
- Best practice guidelines to standardize APS investigations.
- Support for investigations, prevention, and workforce development for aging services.
- Training for service providers to educate clients about how to detect, intervene in, and prevent elder mistreatment.
- Tools and resources such as working documents, program "tool-kits", webinars, printed Info-grams/Fact Sheets, PSA's for broadcasting, social media alerts, short videos that could be downloaded on phones to show families and clients, on line trainings, talking points, and strategies used in other states for working with community partners for reporting.

Based on these responses, ASA recommends that EJCC member agencies (the departments and agencies that comprise the EJCC) request more funding for elder justice activities through the annual budget proposal process. We also recommend that member agencies should prioritize activities related to public awareness and multi-disciplinary trainings.

### **EJCC's Prior Activities and Their Benefits**

We also asked our members directly about the EJCC's prior activities and if and how they benefitted the members and their programs. The results to this question were mixed. Some members did not feel that the EJCC has made much of an impact on their daily work, or that it has impacted their work very indirectly. Others felt that the EJCC has been important in raising awareness among local and state

governments and among community aging service providers about the issue of elder abuse. Members also felt that the information provided by the EJCC's member agencies was useful and relevant. Some specific feedback from our members included:

- Broadcasts of meetings provide information about government activities and priorities; EJCC hearings generate dialogue at the state and local level.
- EJCC activities support local training and education efforts.
- EJCC's research and resources are used for clients as well as program staff with questions on elder justice issues.

Based on these responses, ASA recommends that the EJCC member agencies promote their activities and resources more directly to both local and state governments and community aging services providers.

### **EJCC's Potential Benefits to the Larger Elder Justice Community**

Similar to earlier questions, many ASA survey respondents felt that the EJCC could be more effective through raising awareness of both its existence and its current programs. Many also responded that they would like to see even more coordination among federal agencies. Specific suggestions from our members include:

- EJCC should adopt a definition of elder justice that goes beyond abuse prevention to include individual rights, anti-discrimination, and parity, and establish linkages with networks that promote them.
- EJCC should do more to promote awareness among law enforcement.
- EJCC could provide targeted, evidence-based recommendations for programs and policies that can reduce or eliminate elder abuse.
- EJCC should provide more cross-disciplinary training, including for counselors, nurses, doctors, and other providers.

As before, ASA recommends that the EJCC publicize its member agencies' activities more broadly, since many agencies are already performing excellent work in this space such as trainings, public-facing materials, and websites and hotlines for consumers to report elder fraud. For example, it would be useful to have a central website hub containing links to the public resources that each agency provides to combat elder abuse. Further, agencies within the EJCC should continue to recruit fellow agencies to join the EJCC to provide their perspectives on elder justice and share their own work in combatting elder abuse.

### **Measuring the EJCC's Impact and Effectiveness**

Our survey respondents' answers varied widely to this question. Some respondents recommended that member agencies should establish elder justice goals and benchmarks. Others suggested measurements such as determining public awareness of elder abuse, broad participation from federal agencies in the EJCC, and visible and coordinated efforts by member agencies. Specific suggestions from our members include:

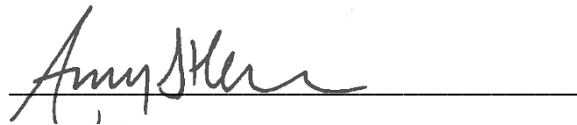
- Conduct a systematic evaluation of the activities of the EJCC.

- Establish elder justice goals and benchmarks for states and systems for reviewing progress, then publish information on actions taken to meet goals and the outcomes.
- Conduct a survey of the public and seniors specifically.
- Review complaints and outcomes of actions concerning those complaints.
- Collect and report data on the number verified allegations of abuse and neglect by state and nationally.
- Contact victims regarding their experience and outcomes.

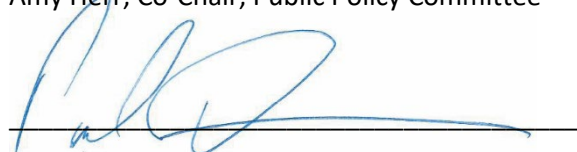
ASA recommends that the EJCC should measure its impact by creating elder justice goals for member agencies to meet, perhaps based off the EJCC's original eight recommendations. These goals for agencies could include items such as creating an increased public awareness of elder abuse, increasing the visibility of actions already being taken by member agencies, and advocating for increased funding for agencies' elder justice activities.

The American Society on Aging looks forward to working with you and your colleagues on this important issue. For more information, please contact Robert Lowe, Chief Operating Officer, at [rlowe@asaging.org](mailto:rlowe@asaging.org) or (415) 974-9624.

Sincerely,



Amy Herr, Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee



Paul Downey, Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee