



# How to Talk About Elder Abuse



# Opening Activity

## Introductions:

- Julie Schoen, Deputy Director NCEA
- Aly Neumann, Project Assistant Frameworks
- **How would you solve the problem of elder abuse?**



# Reframing Elder Abuse Project Overview

## Short-term Goal:

1. Understand the public's current perceptions on elder abuse
2. Devise and disseminate communication strategy that reframes their understanding of elder abuse and its impact

## Long-term goal:

To build a society that makes informed choices on policies and practices that address elder abuse based on valid and reliable information

# Our Committee

To ensure the nationwide implementation and impact of the new communication strategy on elder abuse, the NCEA facilitates a reframing elder abuse committee.





How do you think the  
public conceptualizes elder  
abuse?



# How does the public think about elder abuse?

*What's in the Swamp of...*

## Elder Abuse

### *Elder + Abuse*

- Elder abuse is unacceptable
- Neglect doesn't qualify
- Sexual abuse doesn't compute

### *Deterioration*

- Dependency = vulnerability
- Paternalism

### *Solutions*

- Nothing can be done
- Surveillance and prosecution
- Awareness and education
- Support for caregivers

### *Modern Life Is the Problem*

- Caregivers pushed to limit
- Cultural devaluation of older people
- Nursing homes as unfortunate necessity

### *Spotlight on Individuals*

- Greed and laziness
- Moral character
- Sickos
- Payback
- Older people are difficult
- Everyone's responsible/no one's responsible



# How do we reframe how the public thinks about elder abuse?

*Structure of Justice* narrative:

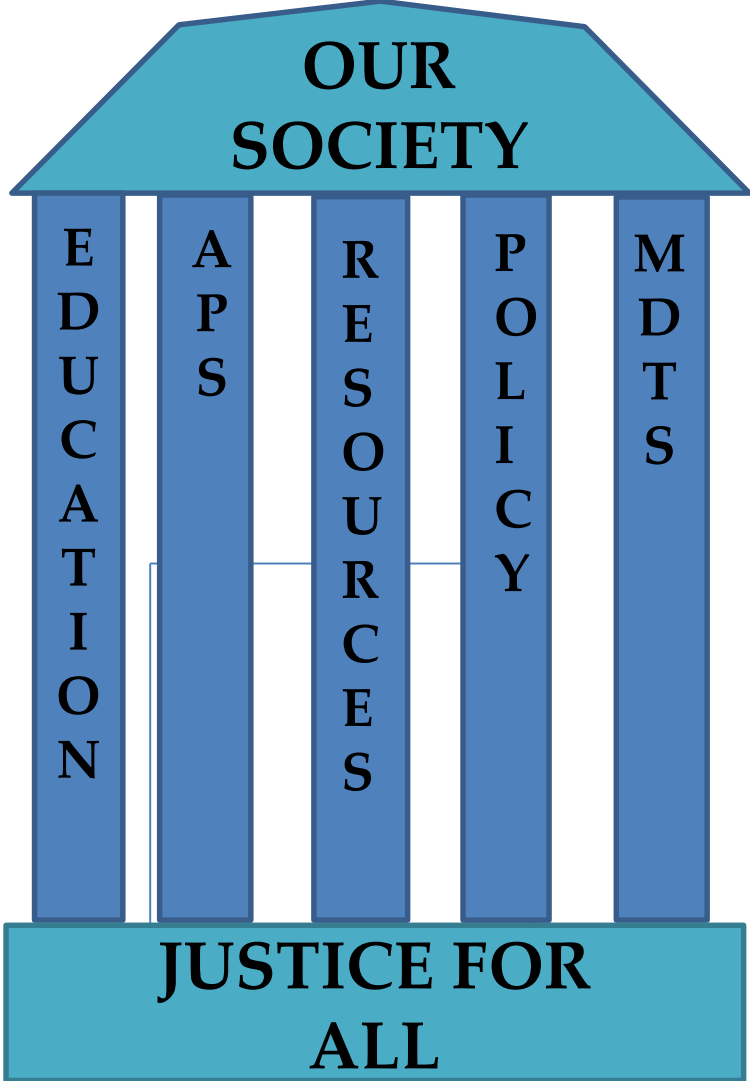
“Our society is like a building: It needs strong supports and secure beams to remain strong. We need solid “social” beams in our society so that we can all participate fully in our communities as we age and live free from abuse.”



# Narrative Steps

1. Why does it matter?
  - Use value of Justice
2. What this about? How does it work?  
Why isn't this working?
  - Metaphors, examples, explanations
3. What can we do?
  - Policy based or collective solutions







Do	Don't
Appeal to justice	Appeal to sympathy
Talk about the importance of social connections to empower older people and reduce risk factors	Talk about vulnerable populations and dependent victims
Demonstrate collective solutions	Use crisis-laden or emotional rhetoric
Explain the underlying social conditions that increase these risk factors	Focus on the individual perpetrators or victims
Use the social structure metaphor: "Society is like a building. Let's improve it with support beams that can keep everyone safe."	Use data and expert jargon to explain the causes and consequences of elder abuse
Provide solutions that emphasize collective responsibility and systemic/policy changes	Provide solutions that emphasize individual responsibility

# Before



2016

**WORLD ELDER ABUSE  
AWARENESS DAY**

# After



**WORLD ELDER ABUSE  
AWARENESS DAY**

Building Strong Support for Elders



# Before

Fake handyman charged an elderly Dallas woman \$39,000 for a \$100 duct tape job. Beware of these scams!

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/crime/headlines/20160828-fake-handyman-charged-elderly-dallas-woman-39000-for-a-100-duct-tape-job-police-say.ece>

# After


Supportive communities and resources are essential to engaging older people and preventing [#elderabuse](#)! Check out what San Jose is doing to encourage aging in community:

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/03/10/teens-spend-monday-afternoons-speaking-with-isolated-seniors/>



# Let's Reframe!

- What communication traps are there?
- How can we reframe this brochure?



# What can you do to promote this strategy the public?

- Be mindful of our language and messages
- Cultivate thinking about older people as agents of their own lives, not objects of care
- Connect the role of social structures and systems to the causes and solutions of elder abuse
- Emphasize structural solutions (healthcare, research, awareness, training) and connect that to aging in community and preventing elder abuse.
- Use the *Talking Elder Abuse* toolkit for reference
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Look out for and share our reframed trainings, materials and campaigns from the NCEA, FrameWorks Institute and the reframing elder abuse committee



[eldermistreatment.usc.edu](http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu)



How can you utilize this communication strategy in your workplace?





# Survey

Tell us what you think!

Any questions?



# Thank you!

**National Center on Elder Abuse**  
**1-855-500-3537 (ELDR)**  
**[ncea-info@aoa.hhs.gov](mailto:ncea-info@aoa.hhs.gov)**



**NCEA, USC Center on Elder Mistreatment Website :**  
**<http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/national-center-on-elder-abuse-ncea-usc/>**

Keck School of  
Medicine of **USC**

**Training Resources on Elder Abuse :**  
**[www.trea.usc.edu](http://www.trea.usc.edu)**