

Interview Questions for Neglect or Physical Abuse



When interviewed, Native American elderly persons typically do not report experiencing abuse or neglect when asked directly. However, when using the alternative terms “disrespect” or “bothered” many elderly persons discussed incidents that included abusive acts. It is important to be aware of language, cultural sensitivities and aspects of practice that differ from other ethnicities while working with Native American elderly. It is also important to consider the role of the community and family in Native culture. As an example, Native American elderly feel it is their role to take care of the entire family. Some people may perceive this as a form of exploitation. It is important to consider the elderly person’s willingness, and desire to provide or take care of their family, how this reflects their cultural traditions, and the contributions from other family members to the well-being of the entire family to ensure the elder’s generosity is not being exploited.

The following are examples of interview questions you may use to assess an elderly person’s risk of neglect or physical abuse. When interviewing Native elderly, make sure to allow them time to tell their story. This method is often more effective than direct questions.

Background Information

- What is your name?
- Do you have any close relatives?
 - ❖ (Identify nature of relationship, names, addresses, phone numbers of any relatives.)
- Who are some of your close friends?
 - ❖ (Identify names, addresses, phone numbers, and length and nature of relationship.)
- Are you close to any of your neighbors?
 - ❖ (Identify names and addresses.)
- Does anyone visit you on a regular basis?
- When is the last time you saw a doctor?
 - ❖ Who is your doctor?
 - ❖ Who took you to your last doctor’s appointment?
- Have you been diagnosed with any medical conditions?
- Are you taking any regular medications?
 - ❖ Do you take medications as prescribed?

Housing Questions

- Where do you live?
- Do you own your home?
 - ❖ How long?
 - ❖ Whose name is on the title of the house?
- How long have you lived in your current residence?
- Does anyone live with you?
 - ❖ Identify names and relationships.
 - ❖ Do they pay rent?
 - ❖ Do they provide any services for you in exchange for staying there?

Recruiting Native elderly, who are fluent in the Indigenous language to serve as translators can be effective when interviewing Native elderly.

Native American belief in close interconnectedness with friends, extended family members and other tribal members is very important. The concept of close relatives in the Native American culture is not clearly defined, as it is common practice in Indian country to call a first cousin your brother or sister. A caregiver may be referred to as a daughter or granddaughter even though there is no blood relationship.

For example, an elderly person may refer to a life-long friend as a “sister” or “brother”, although there may not be any blood relation, but this signifies a sense of close relationship and feelings of attachment for the friend.

Caregiver

- Do you have a caregiver?
- How long has your caregiver been involved with your care?
- Does your caregiver get paid? If yes, how much?
- Who pays your bills or manages your finances?
- Who signs your checks?
- Do you drive?
 - ❖ If no, who takes you to appointments, shopping, etc.
 - ❖ When did you stop driving?
- Does anyone other than your caregiver provides any services for you? If so, please describe.

General Finance Questions

- Who handles your finances?
- Who writes the checks?
- Who pays the bills?
- Who does your taxes?
- Do you have a will or trust?
 - ❖ Does anyone have a valid Power of Attorney for you?
- Do you have an attorney?
 - ❖ Name and phone number, if available

Suspect Related Questions

- How long have you known (use name of suspect)?
 - ❖ How did you meet (use name of suspect)?
- Does (use name of suspect) provide any services for you? If so, describe.
 - ❖ Who hired (use name of suspect)?
- How is (use name of suspect) compensated for any services provided?
- Did you ever give (use name of suspect) any loans or gifts (monetary or otherwise)?
- Does (use name of suspect) owe you any money?
- Do you owe (use name of suspect) any money?
- Is there anyone else who can do the things (use name of suspect) currently does for you?

Case Specific Questions

A. Neglect:

- Who is generally responsible for taking care of you?
- How long have they taken care of you?
- Who helps you with the following activities:
 - ❖ Shopping
 - ❖ Preparing meals
 - ❖ General Hygiene (showers, bathing, etc.)
 - ❖ Paying the bills including utilities
 - ❖ Cleaning the residence

- How long have you been in this position (circumstances of neglectful environment)?
 - ❖ If the person is immobile go into details regarding their physical location
- When was the last time that you saw a doctor?
- How long have you had these physical injuries?
 - ❖ Go through each injury

B. Physical Abuse:

- Are you being disrespected or bothered? If so, in what ways?
- Did you have any injuries before this incident?
- Were these injuries reported? If not, why?
- What happened to you during the current incident?
- Who did this to you?
- When did this happen?
- Did you see a doctor about your injury?
- What doctor did you see?
- Will you sign a medical release form so I can talk to your doctor? If yes, then have elder sign the form (If elder has a valid Power of Attorney, then have that person sign the form instead.)

A medical release form is a legal document that allows medical service providers to release confidential records after a patient signs an authorization form. Records must be kept confidential unless the patient submits a signed authorization to release the records to a named person or entity.³

References

1. Santa Clara County Law Enforcement. (2010). *Elder and dependent adult abuse protocol*. Retrieved on May 31, 2017 from www.sccgov.org/sites/ssa/daas/aps/Documents/daas_elder_dependent_adult_protocol.pdf
2. Baker-Demaray, T. B. (2009). *Perceptions of Elder Abuse Among Native American Seniors* (Master's Thesis, University of North Dakota).

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