



Elder Abuse and Grandparent Abuse

National Indigenous Elder
Justice Initiative
Billings Montana Title VI Cluster Training
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“Restoring respect and dignity by honoring Indigenous elders”



Objectives

- ❖ What is Elder Abuse and how to recognize the various forms?
- ❖ Traditional View on Grandparents
- ❖ Research on Custodial Grandparents raising Grandchildren.
- ❖ Hand out the custodial grandparent information sheet



Elder Abuse and Neglect: Examples

(Center on Elder Mistreatment, 2016; Mosqueda, 2005)

Abandonment: Willful unattended care or custody by an identified caregiver who has assumed responsibility when a reasonable person in a like situation would not do so.

Elder is left home alone as the caregiver leaves for the weekend

Emotional Abuse: The infliction of mental anguish, pain or distress upon an elderly person.

Threatening, criticizing, debasing, ridiculing, ignoring, yelling at

Financial Exploitation: The illegal or wrongful exploitation of funds, material assets, property, or other resources.

Disparity between assets and condition, improper use of legal documents

Neglect: When a caregiver actively refuses or fails to fulfill the degree of care that a reasonable person in that situation would exercise.

Elder left lying in their own urine or feces for extended periods of time, elderly develops malnutrition and pressure sores due to lack of appropriate care, elder is living in a filthy environment



Elder Abuse and Neglect: Examples

(Center on Elder Mistreatment, 2016; Mosqueda, 2005)

Self-Neglect: An elderly person who lacks capacity secondary to physical, mental, disease, substance abuse, and cognitive reasons to manage the basic activities of daily living of a reasonable person in a similar situation.

Not following medical regimens, failure to acquire needed medicines

Physical Abuse:

Slapping/Hitting/Punching

Throwing items at an elder

Sexual Abuse: Any form of sexual contact or exposure without consent or when a person is incapable of giving consent.

Bruising or tears in genitals, on breasts or inner thigh

Unexplained STD's, Fear of touch

Spiritual Abuse: (Doble, 2006; Duran & Duran, 1995)

Elder is not taken to ceremonies and spiritual events

Ceremonial items taken from elder's home for use or sale without permission



Why is an Elder Vulnerable to Mistreatment?

(University of Southern California- Center on Elder Mistreatment, 2016).

Psychological, social and economic factors, as well as mental and physical conditions of the elder and the perpetrator.

- Cognitive Impairment such as Dementia
- Intimate partner violence
- Living with others
- Social isolation
- May be currently more dependent on others for assistance.
- Fear of losing independence if a report is made



Culturally Appropriate Practice

- ❖ In hospitals, designating a healing room to be used by a spiritual healer can be monumental for abused Native American elders
- ❖ Recruiting Native translators can be effective in allowing victims to communicate in their Indigenous language
- ❖ Ensuring basic needs of elders are met is important, but more importantly is building a society where they are productive and valued
- ❖ It is essential to be aware of cultural sensitivities and aspects of practice that differ from other ethnicities while working with Native American elders
- ❖ Do not assume. Instead, make it a habit of always asking questions in order to clarify what you have understood, in fact, what the client is attempting to convey

Language used when working with elders

- ❖ Baker-Demaray (2005) found that Native American elders when asked about abuse or neglect, indicated that they have not experienced abuse. However, when the term “disrespect” was used instead of abuse or neglect, elders discussed many incidents that could be classified as abuse or neglect.

- ❖ When asking Native American women about sexual abuse, no abuse was admitted, but when the term “bothered” was used, descriptions of rape and sexual exploitation were detailed.

Traditional Views

<http://www.native-art-in-canada.com/ojibwachildren.html>

Ojibwe Values:

- ❖ Ojibwe people refer to themselves as Anishinaabeg, or the good beings.
- ❖ The Anishinaabeg were given seven gifts. These gifts begin and end with knowledge and the ability to know. The seven gifts were:
 - Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth.

Ojibwe Elders:

Gichi-aya’aa are our first teachers, as their knowledge and experience is passed down orally from generation to generation through stories or by example.

- The word “chinshinabe” is a special word for the elders who are responsible for passing on the spiritual traditions.
- Not every elder is a Chinshinabe.

Way before colonization...

- ❖ Children received their education from their parents, grandparents, and other family members.
- ❖ Children were taught appropriate life skills which would assist them in life.
- ❖ Learning life skills in such a manner that it does not harm the environment or interfere with the health and well-being of those around them.

Everyone had a role to play within the tribal community:

- ❖ Men
- ❖ Women
- ❖ Elders

Clan or Dodem

The child was would be raised to hold specific qualities and responsibilities within their tribal society, for example:

- ❖ Bear Clan was gifted with strength, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually to stand for the good of the community.

According to the American Community Survey- U.S. Census Bureau (2010), 5.7 million children under the age of 18 are living in a household headed by a grandparent. Factor contributing to an increase in grandparents raising their grandchildren include:

- Alcohol and Substance abuse
- Neglect, abuse and abandonment
- Death of a parent, or divorce
- Parental Incarceration

Housing: Difficulty accommodating children in their residence

Legal: Grandparents may not have legal custody or guardianship of grandchildren

School Enrollment: Grandparents may face obstacles with the child's school system

Health: The elderly person may be dealing with personal health problems. Some children may come with their own severe physical, emotional and behavioral problems

Respite Care: Is vital to help strengthen the family, to help prevent abuse, and support the efforts of the caregiver(s).



Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren

(Henderson, Stevenson, & Teaster, 2009)

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census of the Children living with their Grandparents **general** population:

- 52% of grandparents raising grandchildren are below the age of 55 years.
- 31% of grandparents are between 55 and 64 years.
- 17% of grandparents are 65 years or older.
- 51% of grandchildren are under the age of 6 years.
- 29% of grandchildren are between the age of 6 and 11 years.
- 20% of grand children are between the age of 12 and 17 years.

According to the 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census, around 10% of **Native American** children live with their grandparents.

Reasons grandparents raise their grandchildren include; providing a home for the child, to help shape the child's personal and cultural identity, and preventing placement in a foster home.

Rewards for grandparents rearing grandchildren includes; preservation of family history, culture, and values, maintaining contact with child(ren), Love and Affection.



Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren

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Challenges for Grandparents

- **Health**- health problems such as: depression, insomnia, back and stomach problems, and hypertension.
- **Social Isolation**- busy schedules = less time for other family members and friends, leaving very little time for community activities.
- **Financial**- grandparents may quit their jobs, reduce their work hours, or make other financial sacrifices in order to care for the grandchildren.

Considerations when going to court

The court rulings may differ from state-to-state or in tribal courts as grandparent rights are different.

- Burden of Proof
- Custody/Adoption/Guardianship
- Financial Strains/Court Costs



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Key Practice Issues

This course found at <http://www.netce.com/coursecontent.php?courseid=1023>

There are many reasons why grandparents chose to raise their grandchildren, the authors of this course indicated the following as main reasons;

- Parental Substance Abuse- the most common reason for assuming custody of grandchildren.
 - Data by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (from 2002 to 2007) indicated that 11.9% of children live with at least one parent who have a substance abuse problem. Child abuse or maltreatment estimates indicate that 9.2 of every 1000 children in the U.S. are victims of child abuse or neglect (Children's Bureau, 2014).
- Parental Incarceration- 1.5 million adults in the U.S. were incarcerated in 2009, and half of these inmates were parents of children under the age of 18 years.
- Parental Deployment- approximately 1.5 million children have a parent in the military.
- Parental Mental Health Problems- more than 5 million children in the U.S. have a parent who is diagnosed with a serious mental illness (Marsh, 2009). The most common mental illness is major depression and affects 6.7% of adults in the U.S (CDC, 2014).
- Divorce- the divorce rate in the U.S. is around 49%,



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Key Practice Issues Continued...

Grandparenting in a cultural context:

- In Native American families, the family is the foundation of social relationships. Grandparents are viewed as the families' roots, and are necessary teachers of cultural traditions and practices to the younger generation.
- In interviews with 28 Native American grandparents, grandparents reported taking on cultural roles to insure that their traditional practices and beliefs are passed on, in addition to their emotional roles for their biological and non-biological grandchildren (Welbel-Orlando, 1990).
- Native American grandparents served as models of appropriate ceremonial behaviors and took on the responsibility for exposing their grandchildren to tribal ways of life in order to reinforce and extend the traditional culture and practices. This belief that grandparents have "enculturative responsibilities" is echoed in other studies with Native American grandparents (Robbins, Scherman, Holeman, & Wilson, 2005).
- Use of storytelling as a way of teaching younger family members, teachings are done orally or visually with items passed down through the generations. Grandparents' also saw themselves as family facilitators, ensuring that the family is kept together.



Native American Grandparenting Styles

(Weibel-Orlando, 1997)

The author developed six grandparenting styles based on her encounters while working with American Indians. Through her work and her observations of 26 grandparents interactions with their grandchildren the following six styles were identified by the author:

- 1) Cultural Conservator- Grandparent as primary caretaker of 1st or 2nd born grandchildren. This grandparent asks for the grandchildren to live with them for extended periods of time. The purpose is to exposing them to the Native American ways of life
- 2) Custodian- occurs in cases of unanticipated trauma which separate the parents and child such as; divorce, death, unemployment, abandonment, illness, abuse and neglect.
- 3) Ceremonial- these grandparents lived a large distance from their grandchildren, and make regular trips to visit the grandchildren. Visits are celebrated and are of great importance to the community, which holds a cultural value.
 - The Ceremonial grandparent is an ideal model- during these limited time visits the grandchildren learn the appropriateness of respect of elders, and how elders are displayed respect and love in old age.



Native American Grandparenting Styles

(Weibel-Orlando, 1997)

- 4) Distanced- the grandparents in this style lives to far away from the grandchildren to have regular visits. The distance between the grandparents and the grandchildren were geographical, psychological, and cultural in nature.
- 5) Fictive- an alterative to the lack of biological grandchildren. These grandparents often have taken in foster children for a variety of time, and they later adopt the youth as kin.
- 6) Care-needing- This final grand parenting style is when the children and grandchildren are expected to care for their elders in their homes. Fixing their meals, run errands, and handle paperwork involved with Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other personal finances.
 - The culturally expected interactions and caretaking between the elder and the grandchildren illustrates the core values in Native American family life which is respect for the elderly and the interdependence of all family members.



Information for Grandparents Handouts

A grandparent wishing to take on the caregiving of a child should consider their own health, financial situation, and their home environment to evaluate the best solution for the child(ren).

- **Terms to Remember**
- **Areas to Consider:**
 - Emotional stress, family/community supports, social supports, health insurance, legal concerns, financial assistance



Custody of Grandchildren Information for Grandparents

A grandparent wishing to take on the caregiving of a child should consider their own health, financial situation, and their home environment to evaluate the best solution for the child(ren).

Terms to Remember



Checklist and Tips

The checklist was designed to accompany the Grandparent Information handout. The topic areas are suggested for a grandparent to consider before taking on a young grandchild. Such as:

- ❖ Info about the child, their health, enrollment in school, etc..
- ❖ Financial ability
- ❖ Health and physical ability
- ❖ Support systems
- ❖ Transportation

Grandparent Preparedness Checklist

Assessing your capacity to take on grandchildren, and ability to transition from grandparent to parent.

Category	Topic Area/Event	Yes	No
About the child(ren)	Do you know the age of child(ren)?		
	Do you know the number of children you want to take on?		
	Do you know how to contact the child's school?		
	Do you have access to child's school records?		
	Are you able to enroll the child(ren) into school?		
	Does the child(ren) have any special needs?		
	Does the child have and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan?		
	Does the child(ren) have health insurance?		
	Are they eligible for: Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIPs)?		
	Does the child(ren) have any medical health concerns?		
	Do you have a signed Medical Authorization Form?		

Create a binder or folder for important documents. Include copies of:

- ❖ Birth certificates, death certificates (if the child's parent(s) are deceased), social security cards or the number for each child, and medical and dental records
- ❖ Power of attorney, custody, guardianship, adoption or other legal papers
- ❖ Consent forms signed by parents for medical care and education
- ❖ Proof of your grandchild's income and assets (child support payments, etc.)



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Thank You!
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