

Multidisciplinary Team Approach on Elder Abuse

**The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Warm Springs, Oregon**

Wilson Wewa – Senior Wellness Program Coordinator



The Warm Springs Indian Reservation is located within the state of Oregon

- 164, 000 acre land base
- 98% of reservation is tribally owned
- 2 % is allotted land



The Warm Springs Indian Reservation was formed by a treaty negotiated with the federal government in 1855.

The Warm Springs bands and the Wasco tribe were signatory to the treaty

In 1882, the Paiute were transferred to the reservation after internment on military posts as prisoners of war.



The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs consists of 3 Tribes

- Warm Springs
- Wasco
- Northern Paiute



Population

- Current tribal enroll just topped 5000
- Tribal Elders number 460
- Non-tribal elders number is approximately 250



The Warm Springs Senior Citizen program became a formal program in the 1970's.

- The program was initially a congregate lunch site under Title VI, Part A.
- Later, the Caregiver program Title VI, Part C was included.



In my community there was virtually no indication of elder abuse prior to 1980.

- So, there were no laws to address it.
- Abusive behaviors were dealt with by the family.
- Tribal members respected one another.



Throughout Indian Country there is very little information on elder abuse.

- In 2004, it was reported by the National Indian Council on Aging that, “only three of the more than 567 federally recognized tribes and one urban population have been the subject of scientific study...”



In a most recent announcement by the U.S. Administration of Aging it was reported that, “the problem of elder abuse and the growing body of evidence of the negative impacts of abuse, there is a significant lack of evidence and data about effective methods and practices to prevent elder abuse.”



In 2001, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson established the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

- \$113 million funding was appropriated
- \$5 million was earmarked for tribes.



In 2002, the National Indian Council on Aging facilitated a meeting to hear testimony on elder abuse

- “Restoring the Sacred Circle” was premiered. A film on elder abuse.



In the same year, the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs and the US Department of Justice funded a 14 minute training video in Oregon.

- Narrated by Gary Farmer
- In cooperation with NICOA.



In 1999, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs implemented what we call the Multi-disciplinary Team on Elder Abuse (MDT)



MDT Identified Needs

- Lack of training
- Lack of Trust
- Stereotypes
- Lack of communication and coordination among agencies
- No resources
- Denial of elder abuse
- No standardized protocol/response



There was a need to include various types of programmatic, policy and advocacy activities.

- Service delivery level: improving services
- Systems level: create policies that build community wide networks, change policy, rules and regulations.



The Multidisciplinary Team concept

- A group of professionals from diverse disciplines
- Comprehensive assessment & consultation
- Provide assistance to client or victim



- Provide information & coordinate evidence gathering for law enforcement
- Civil, criminal and administrative process
- Community crime prevention

Most important,

Provide confidentiality within system
balanced with need to adjudicate.



Formation of Multidisciplinary Team

- Define responsibilities and function
- Criteria of membership and affiliation
- Purpose of the MDT meeting
- Definition of roles & responsibilities of members
- Community awareness



Define responsibilities and function

- How often we meet
- Where
- Who chairs
- Record meeting - notes



Criteria of membership and affiliation

- Attend meeting
- Agree to protocols
- Report sharing
- **CONFIDENTIALITY!**



Purpose of the MDT meeting

- Case review
- Prevention
- Intervention – senior program & others
- Intervention – law enforcement or court



Definition of roles & responsibilities of members

- What will they do – response protocol & mandatory reporting
- Training needs
- Jurisdictional issues
- Signed protocols



Community awareness

- Press conference
- Community outreach



The first order of business as a result of a
Elder Abuse workshop at our resort was to
develop a mission statement.



MISSION STATEMENT

“To work as a team to acknowledge, respond and stop elder abuse; and, to improve respect for elders through education, prevention, advocacy and case review; and, to hold tribal members responsible for their actions.”



FUNCTION

- We meet once a month
- Meetings are at the Senior Wellness Center
- Senior Wellness Director & WSPD share chairship
- Each department keeps own records



Membership & Affiliation

- Departments select representative
- Participants agree to protocols
- All participants sign confidentiality agreement
- Each representative shares follow-up

CASE REVIEW

- Each department reports potential abuse issues to team
- Discussion of issues
- Lead department responsibility
- Need to file legal action or resolve in-house

Confidentiality Agreement

1. Information shared by chairperson of confidential nature of meeting
2. Cannot discuss with any non-member of MDT
3. Legal ramifications for breach of agreement
4. Removal from team or employment termination
5. Removal from discussion; due to relationship to elder.

Tribal Code

After many years of research and writing, Chapter 331, Domestic Relations, Tribal Elder and Adult Protection Code was formally adopted.



The Warm Springs Multi-disciplinary Team

- Senior Wellness Center
- Tribal Police
- BIA/Tribal social services
- Housing
- Indian Health Service



- Community Health Representatives
- Victims of Crime office
- Assisted Living
- Oregon Adult Protection Services



State & Tribal Agreement

A Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the State of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.



GOALS

1. Enhancing abuse awareness education
2. Improve communication, cooperation and collaboration



The state & tribal agreement allows the tribe to utilize the state powers of the Adult Protective Services to investigate and make recommendations to the MDT to resolve abuse outside the boundaries of the reservation.



Public Law 280

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is exempt from PL-280.

So, for us, the agreement is a good tool to use to work with the state of Oregon.



Off Rez Needs

- Nursing Home investigation
- Social Security scams
- Bank transactions
- Non-tribal member offenders
- Business transactions



Successes

- In closing, the MDT model has been successfully used to avert further abuse
- Educated tribal membership
- Lessened expense of litigation
- Connected elders with needed services
- Made participating programs aware of potential needs.



Contact

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