

# **POLICY STATEMENT**

**AREA: SOCIAL SERVICE**

**TOPIC: ELDER ABUSE IN THE COMMUNITY**

## **I. DEFINITION**

Elder abuse includes physical, financial and psychological harm or threat of harm, or neglect, of older adults age 60 years and older by family members, significant others, formal and informal caregivers, acquaintances, and predatory strangers.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Compared to child and younger spouse abuse, elder abuse was the last form of domestic violence to be identified as a serious social problem. The problem of elder abuse is especially complex because of the diversity of older adults in terms of physical and mental capacity, the growing ethnic diversity, and the increasing longevity of older adults.

Prevalence studies have found that between 4 - 10 percent of older adults living in the community may be victims of elder abuse and neglect.

## **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To address the problem of elder abuse in the community, the New York Citizens' Committee on Aging recommends the following public policies (federal, state, and city) that will guarantee, to the greatest extent possible, a broad range of options that can ensure the empowerment and protection of older adults at risk of victimization, while encouraging self-determination and cost-effectiveness.

### ***1. Professional education and training:***

- a. Provide access to and incentives for protective service workers to obtain professional education in order to enhance their ability to serve at risk older adults in the community.
- b. Provide ongoing training for law enforcement, judges, prosecutors and attorneys serving older adults on elder abuse, including financial exploitation.
- c. Provide training to home healthcare workers and others who provide medical services in an older person's home to enable them to identify suspected abuse and financial exploitation.
- d. Provide training on elder abuse to discharge planners in the hospital, long term care, mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, and criminal justice systems. This is to ensure that workers take the potential vulnerability of older persons into account when planning for placements of their clients (an older person or her relative) into a shared living setting in the community.

- e. Provide public educational activities, such as multilingual public service announcements through network and ethnic programming, to promote public awareness of elder abuse and services available to victims

**2. Services:**

- a. Fund demonstration projects to test innovative approaches for preventing elder abuse in the community.
- b. Provide specialized elder abuse shelter services.
- c. Expand in-home crisis services to elder abuse victims unable or unwilling to pay for services even though at risk of further abuse, neglect or self neglect.

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*Approved February 2004*