Best Practices in Elder Abuse Prevention: A Snapshot of Research Findings

Types of Abuse

- Most programs identified financial exploitation as the most common form of abuse. This includes misusing an elder’s resources for personal or monetary benefit, such as taking Social Security or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) checks, abusing a joint checking account or credit card, or taking property or other resources.
- Other forms of abuse frequently reported included self-neglect and emotional and physical abuse.

Challenges to Addressing Abuse

- Abusers are often family members. As a result, abuse victims or witnesses may be reluctant or too ashamed to report abuse or, in some cases, may not realize that what is taking place is defined as abuse.
- Limited funding and staff numbers mean programs lack the resources to tend to all reported cases in a timely and effective manner.

Recommendations for Establishing Elder Abuse Prevention Programs

- Tribes should work to increase community engagement and improve education and awareness among community members, tribal elders, and service providers through workshops, conference presentations, printed materials, and community events.
- Tribes should create or strengthen tribal codes that specifically address issues of elder abuse among tribal members.
- Tribal elder abuse prevention programs should secure financial support from a variety of resources such as tribal budgets, federal grants, and state funds, among others.
- Tribal elder abuse programs should collaborate with partners in tribal, county, state, and (if necessary) federal government to identify community needs, issues, and appropriate solutions to address tribal elder abuse concerns.
- Tribal elder abuse programs should use culturally appropriate strategies to address reports of abuse. This can include respecting privacy and assuring confidentiality, use of tribal language with elders, and emphasizing traditional values in the program’s day-to-day operations and interactions with family caregivers.
- Tribes should create a Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement (MOU or MOA) with state and county agencies to ensure proper procedures and outcomes for tribal members.