

Inter-Organizational Relationships: LTCOPs & Elder Abuse *Pathways to Effectiveness*

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Georgia Local Long Term Care Ombudsman Summit



Introduction & Overview

This briefing paper provides selected information related to the topic of elder abuse, including: research findings drawn from Georgia local Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) coordinators and other informed respondents, “major issues and concerns” for local LTCOPs, discussion questions, and relevant on-line resources.

The data speak to the importance of collaboration between local LTCOPs and Adult Protective Services (APS), law enforcement, the Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) and legal services

agencies (ELAP and Atlanta Legal Aid).

The paper presents issues related to elder abuse and inter-organizational relationships to help facilitate discussion for local LTCOP’s about pathways to effectiveness in order to better serve the needs of residents in LTC facilities.

[Our biggest challenge with addressing elder abuse is] “Trying to keep in contact with other agencies, keep a list of agencies and build relationships with those agencies.”

Georgia Local LTCOP Coordinator

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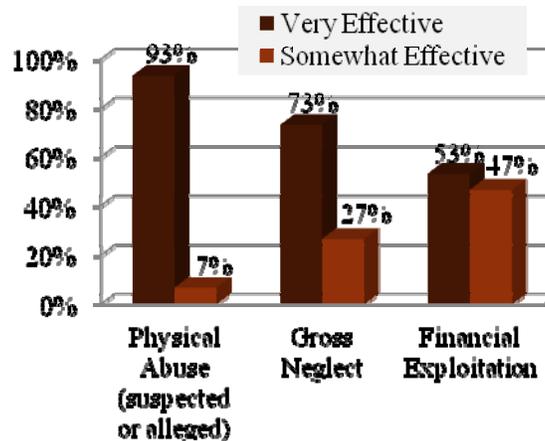
Discussion of Research Findings

Quantitative Findings

In general, Georgia’s local LTCOP coordinators report that their programs are effective in addressing complaints and concerns related to elder abuse, including: physical abuse, gross neglect, and financial exploitation. Coordinators rated their programs as most effective in handling complaints and concerns related to physical abuse (93.3%, very effective), followed by gross neglect (73.3%), and financial exploitation (53.3%) [Figure 1].

Figures 2-4 display dimensions significantly correlated with self-reported effectiveness in handling complaints and concerns related to elder abuse. The associations presented in the figures are positive, that is, “better” training is associated with “higher” effectiveness. It is important to note the reported relationships are correlational, it is not possible to determine whether one factor is

Figure 1: Self-Rated Effectiveness of Local LTCOPs in Addressing Complaints and Concerns Related to Elder Abuse



“In long term care facilities, it is hard unless you have a witness. Most residents are afraid to complain, and be identified. With gross neglect, it is something where you have to keep going back, or move the person out. With financial exploitation, it is difficult, sometimes you don't have all the facts. Nursing homes wait until the family owes \$30k before they do anything and they want to discharge the resident. It is hard to convince them not to take it out on the resident.”

Georgia Local LTCOP Coordinator

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'causing' another. Two factors are uniformly associated with self-rated effectiveness across all types of elder abuse: 1) education about elder abuse for residents and families, facility staff, community entities, and communities; and 2) LTCOP training on investigating and resolving complaints related to abuse and neglect, and financial exploitation. Coordinator's reported effectiveness in addressing gross neglect is statistically related to the length of time in coordinator position, and having established relationships with elder abuse agencies. The higher a coordinator rates their LTCOP's effectiveness in addressing financial exploitation, the more likely they are to report having established relationships with elder abuse agencies; receiving legal assistance from a private attorney (non-ELAP), having more than 4 FTE paid staff, and being able to (a) perform routine visits to nursing homes; (b) monitor federal, state, and local laws, regulations, government policies and actions; (c) perform legislative and administrative policy advocacy; (d) perform volunteer recruitment; and (e) perform volunteer training and supervision. The more likely a coordinator is to report that their LTCOP is affected by high staff turnover (paid or volunteer/unpaid staff), the lower they rate their LTCOP's effectiveness in addressing financial exploitation. The higher a coordinator's budget, the more likely they are to report that their LTCOP is very effective in addressing financial exploitation.

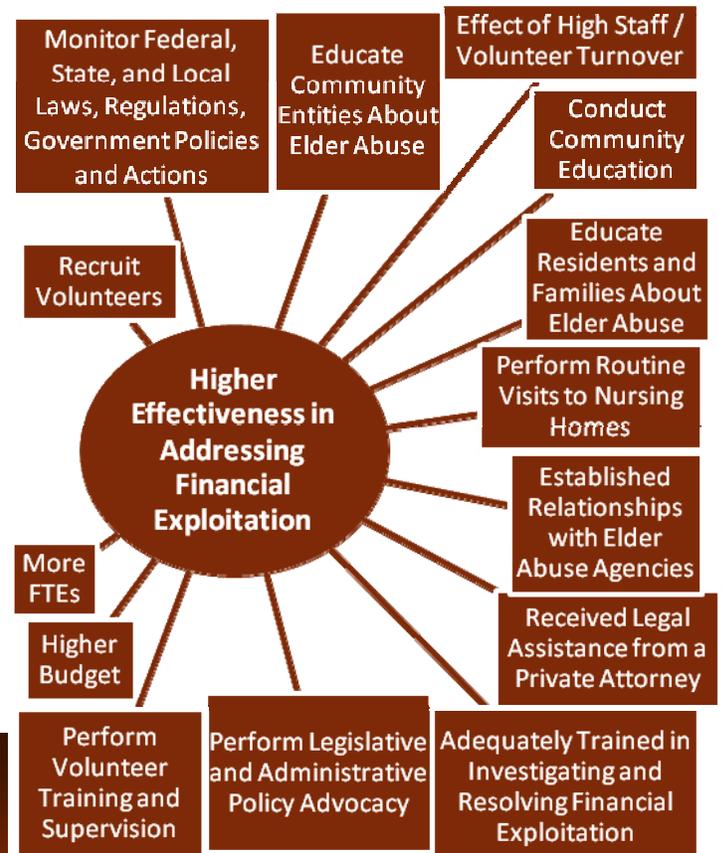
Figure 2: Factors Related to Perceived Effectiveness in Addressing Physical Abuse



Figure 3: Factors Related to Perceived Effectiveness in Addressing Gross Neglect



Figure 4: Factors Related to Perceived Effectiveness in Addressing Financial Exploitation



"We provide the elder abuse awareness training for all law enforcement. We are in partnership with them in our area. We are a team and we come together through our SALT council to discuss abuse and neglect."

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Tables 2-4: All associations are based on Spearman Rank Order Correlations > .40, and with a significance of p < .1

The majority of ombudsman coordinators report that they either “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” that they have positive working relationships with ORS (93.3%) and ELAP (93.3%) [Figure 5]. Relationships with APS (80%), and law enforcement (71.4%, n=14), had the lowest ratings among LTCOP coordinators.

Qualitative Findings

Coordinator’s perceptions of their working relationships with ORS, ELAP, APS, and law enforcement varied.

ORS:

“We work well with them and provide valuable information to them and they respond very quickly and very timely.”

“ORS doesn’t always substantiate and cite complaints that we refer to them. They make it where they have to see something themselves in order to cite an issue. There is a problem with them enforcing the facilities.”

ELAP:

“Part of it has to do with the fact that I have been here for 13 and a half years, and I do know all of the attorneys, We do get together, we used to do a quarterly meeting, just to sit down and talk about things. We don’t get to do it that much anymore because of the workload that they carry...

We do the referrals to them and they come back to the ombudsman program if they need more information. We have a really good working relationship with them and I think that has to do with that the managing attorney and supervising attorney have a high regard for the ombudsman program. We do good in our area, you probably won’t hear that from all the other areas.”

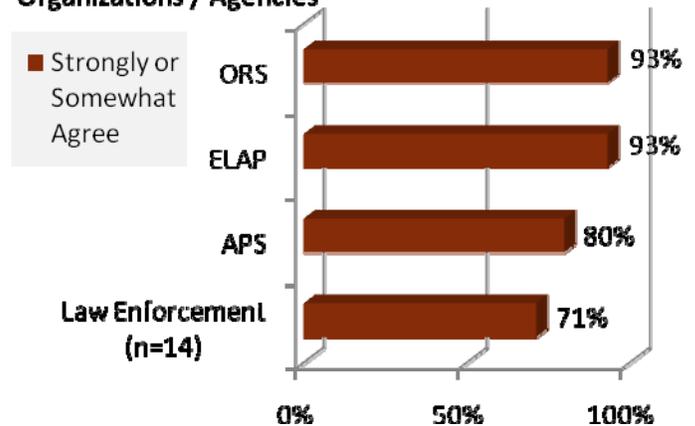
“They don’t take cases, they’re slow.... They did a good job helping people establish Miller Trusts. All other interactions were poor.”

APS:

“They used to be housed with DFCS, and you could call them directly and get help quicker. Now, since they are in the DAS... we thought it would help. To me, you can’t call the APS worker anymore. You have to call the complaint number. I would say 50% of the time, they have gone home. I have to keep calling or figure out how to take care of the complaint myself... We don’t have time to keep calling. The LTCOP especially should be able to work directly with APS without having to go through the complaint line. We were put in the pot like everybody else, and we’re not like everybody else.”

“APS workers serve on our committee which gives us a chance to explore and exchange work and ideas together on issues to resolve those issues. They have their own office, they have satellite offices and one of them is located here in town, two of them serve on our committee.”

Figure 5: Extent to Which local LTCOP Coordinators Perceive a Positive Relationship with Other Organizations / Agencies



“Our biggest challenge with addressing elder abuse is [Other agencies response or lack thereof. Sometimes it just means they don’t know what they’re doing, it’s not necessarily negative. Particularly when it comes to law enforcement, they want to do it right, but they just don’t know what to do.”

Georgia Local LTCOP Coordinator

Law Enforcement:

“We provide the elder abuse awareness training for all law enforcement. We are in partnership with them in our area. We are a team and we come together through our SALT council to discuss abuse and neglect.”

“We set up multi-disciplinary task forces, it is hard to get them involved and to come to meetings.”

“We cover many counties, all of those counties have a sheriff’s department. In those counties there are many small cities with police departments and they are just not familiar with the ombudsman program until we have direct contact with them. They don’t really understand the ombudsman program. Some of our bigger counties are like that... we come in contact with them for case work or SALT councils and community educations, but none of them really know what the ombudsman program is. This is part of our FY 2008 goals, to identify all of the players and take them a packet of information.”

“The challenge of getting law enforcement involved and getting prosecutions to happen. Also, the frustration level that ombudsmen have with ORS around this. There is a sense that they’re not timely enough or thorough enough and the ombudsmen get frustrated about that.”

Georgia Informed Respondent

Major Issues & Concerns

A number of significant issues and concerns were raised relating to local LTCOP effectiveness in the area of elder abuse and inter-organizational relationships, some of which include:

- Shortage of Resources in all agencies - overextended and underfunded
- Education of Law Enforcement – Recognizing elder abuse, taking responsibility for residents in facilities, investigating and prosecuting
- Responsiveness of ORS – Timeliness, thoroughness, validating LTCOPs abuse referrals
- APS – Availability, responsiveness
- Legal Service – Uneven ELAP and Atlanta Legal Aid resources for LTCOPs throughout the state
- Unregulated and unlicensed personal care homes
- Different regulating agencies in ICF/MRs and CLAs require expanded relationships and LTCOP knowledge of other systems

Informed Respondents

Informed respondents were asked to identify two issues Georgia LTCOPs encounter in addressing elder abuse. We list some of their responses below:

- All agencies are overextended and underfunded
- Lack of communication with other involved entities, including law enforcement, licensing and certification, legal services and facilities
- Proving that abuse has occurred
- Discharges from facilities
- Guardianship issues, availability of guardians

Discussion Questions

- What does effectiveness in meeting the Elder Abuse mandates look like for local LTCOPs?
- What specific short- and/or long- term goals can be identified to enhance the effectiveness of local LTCOPs in the area of elder abuse? Identify specific steps you would implement to monitor progress toward achieving these goals. Are any of these goals low cost to local LTCOPs? What goals (and/or steps) are achievable at the local program level (i.e.: without OSLTCO direction or assistance)?
- What specific resources are necessary to enhance the effectiveness (for example, specific computer software, training, materials) of local LTCOPs in the area of elder abuse?
- What types of assistance from and/or coordination with other organizations or agencies is necessary to achieve these goals?
- How can local LTCOPs help enhance their working relationships with other organizations or agencies in order to encourage more effective elder abuse prevention, identification, investigation, and prosecution?
- What is needed of other organizations or agencies to enhance the local LTCOPs effectiveness in serving residents? How can local LTCOPs help other organizations or agencies better serve residents?

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Online Literature Sources

National Center on Elder Abuse

http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/ncearoot/Main_Site/index.aspx

Nursing Home Abuse Resource

http://www.nursing-home-abuseresource.com/care_center/nursing_home_statistics.html

Atlanta Legal Aid

<http://www.atlantalegalaid.org/elderabuse.htm>

National Citizen's Coalition for Nursing Home Reform

http://www.nccnhr.org/public/50_156_450.cfm