

NATI RESOURCES

THE FEAR OF CRIME AND THE SENIOR

A single senior victimization can frighten a community of seniors. They abandon patterns of visiting friends, going to worship, shopping, and other social interaction. According to the American Nurses Association, "Secondary Victimization" can lead to a condition of hyper vigilance, suspicion and paranoia. This becomes more acute with violent crimes.

The U.S. Department of Justice states that among victims of non-lethal violence, persons 65 or older were about 6 times more likely than younger persons to never go out at night.

For the isolated or incapacitated senior, perception of the outside world is based on, and often skewed by, media reports, who often sensationalize senior crime.

What are targeted Crimes?

Frauds and scams, purse snatching, pick pocketing, theft of checks from the mail and crimes in long-term care settings –more often happen to, or target, older victims according to AARP studies. Elder abuse always happens to seniors, of course.

The elderly fear the possibility of crime, even if they have not been victims. Often, seniors take precautions and continue with their lives. Others acutely alter their lifestyle or withdraw, debilitating the senior.

Impact

Elder victimization has far-reaching consequences, such as slower injury recuperation-Physical and emotional trauma can lead to incapacity.

Income

According to the Department of Justice, robbery accounted for a quarter of the violent crimes against persons age 65 or older. Financial loss can do irreparable damage to a limited budget as well as emotional well being.

Independence

Victimization may destabilize an older person's sense of security. It can compromise the will to cope with future problems.

Combating Vulnerability

Address seniors often unwarranted fear of crime. Develop programs helping seniors to realistically assess/reduce victimization risk.

Implement or expand senior sensitive crime prevention programs with the following factors in mind:

- Prepare crime statistics for elderly victimization. Explain to seniors what, when and where crimes are occurring.
- Dispel unwarranted or exaggerated fears. Surveys can indicate whether statistics and actual criminal activity are consistent.
- Plan a crime prevention education campaign to reach seniors – briefly, clearly, and frequently.
- Where other agencies sponsor crime prevention programs for elderly citizens, expand those efforts.

Senior Safety Tips

Three reasons seniors are targets of violence :

Lack of Awareness—Know where you are and what is going on around you. Look alert.

Body Language—Keep your head up, swing your arms, stand straight.

Wrong Place, Wrong Time—Don't walk alone or in unfamiliar neighborhoods. If you sense something is wrong, get away quickly.

Home Safety Tips

- Lock your doors and windows, use deadbolt locks, install a good security system, get a noisy dog, pin your windows.
- Join a Neighborhood/Apartment/Window Watch, a Triad, or a Citizen Patrol.
- Never hide a key outside your home. Make sure your keys are readily available as you approach your house.
- Use a timer to turn on lights, radio or TV while you are away to give the impression that someone is home.
- Keep the outside of your home well illuminated at night.
- Install a panoramic peephole and use it when answering the door.
- Ask for ID from workmen. If you remain suspicious, call the company.
- Never let people know that you live alone. Record answering machine messages in the plural, use initials on your mailbox and in phonebook listings.
- If you arrive at home and suspect a break-in, DO NOT go into the house. Call police from a cell phone or neighbors home.
- Trim plants away from windows and doors. Plant prickly bushes under windows and never leave a ladder or chairs outside the home that can be used to gain entry.
- If you live in an apartment building, avoid going into the laundry room or garage alone.

Resources:

National Crime Prevention Council

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202)466-6272
(202)296-1356 (fax)
www.ncpc.org

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs
Juvenile Justice / Delinquency Prevention
810 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531
(202)307-5911
www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

1230 West Peachtree Street NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404)815-5700
(404)815-5789 (fax)
www.bgca.org

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

PO Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
(800)851-3420
(301)519-5212 (fax)
www.ncjrs.org

Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

1010 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901
(203)323-8987
(203)325-9199 (fax)
www.kab.org

Form Number NATI-04-06



1450 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
800-424-7827 phone • 703-519-8567 fax
terrih@sheriffs.org • www.nationaltriad.org