

# Course Description: Elder Mistreatment: Prevention of Abuse & Neglect

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## **A Joint Certificate Course Offered by the American Society on Aging and the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology**

The University of Southern California is home to the oldest and largest school of gerontology in the world—the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. ASA and USC have joined forces to offer an opportunity—exclusively available to ASA members—to earn a certificate of completion from USC in a convenient and flexible online format.

During this five-week course, USC faculty members will introduce participants to what is known about primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention within the field of elder mistreatment, teaching some options and remedies for protecting existing victims of elder mistreatment and those who have not yet been mistreated. Although it is helpful to take Elder Mistreatment: Understanding Abuse and Neglect prior taking this second course, this current course is designed so that it can be taken either before or after, without posing a detriment to the learning experience.

The course description, below, details what will be covered during the five-week online course. Supplemental readings will help to enhance your understanding of the five modules. Each week's lectures, readings and activities will 2-3 hours to complete. Participants must pass a weekly quiz with a score of 80% or higher and complete a final course evaluation to earn the certificate of completion.

## **Week 1**

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### **Elder Abuse Prevention Overview**

In Week 1, participants are presented with a brief overview about the basics of elder mistreatment: the different types of mistreatment, why elder mistreatment occurs, some risk factors, a few perpetrator profiles, and where mistreatment can occur. This content is a brief summary of Elder Mistreatment: Understanding Abuse and Neglect. Participants are next introduced to the public health frameworks used to describe different forms of prevention. The primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches are highlighted and defined as a prominent frame through which to view prevention. An alternative but complementary approach is introduced by way of the Institute of Medicine's "protractor" approach.

After completing Week 1, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the primary types and etiologies of elder mistreatment.
2. Use a public health framework to describe different forms of elder abuse prevention.
3. Define the objectives for various forms of prevention.

In addition to watching the video lecture and completing the reading assignments, we will engage in an interactive quiz that reinforces these concepts.

## Week 2

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### Primary Prevention: What We Can Borrow from Other Fields

Week 2 describes different efforts that are underway to produce the most challenging form of prevention—primary prevention—as well as the theoretical and empirical grounds for various strategies. These strategies include universal prevention (e.g., public information and awareness) as well as selective/indicated prevention (e.g., targeted information and awareness efforts, family-based interventions, and caregiver interventions). Since evidence-based practice for primary prevention of elder abuse is lacking, however, we turn to other fields of family violence for evidence-based prevention approaches: child maltreatment and intimate partner violence (IPV). This session highlights promising prevention strategies as well as barriers to prevention from these fields, describing how these might be useful for elder abuse practitioners. Finally, we outline what approaches from these fields we might be able to integrate into a future elder mistreatment prevention program.

After completing Week 2, participants will be able to:

- 1) Describe various approaches to primary prevention.
- 2) Explain two key theoretical models that can be applied to elder mistreatment prevention.
- 3) Discuss how other fields of family violence can inform a growing knowledge base on elder abuse prevention.
- 4) Demonstrate knowledge on the potential design considerations that could be implemented for a primary prevention program in elder mistreatment.

In addition to watching the video lecture and completing the reading assignments, we will engage in an interactive quiz that reinforces these concepts.

## Week 3

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### Secondary Prevention: Stopping Abuse

The purpose of Week 3 is to improve practitioner knowledge on secondary prevention, or, in other words, stopping abuse that is already occurring. A first step in stopping existing abuse is reporting abuse that has been identified to first responders. The session lays out some of the core components of the Adult Protective Services system, the primary first responders for elder mistreatment cases, running from case intake to investigation and finally to post-investigative services/intervention. Finally, this session overviews a key multidisciplinary collaborative tool to resolving cases of elder mistreatment: the elder abuse multidisciplinary team (MDT). A cutting-edge MDT model, the elder abuse forensic center, is highlighted as an MDT that is well placed to intervene in some of the most complex cases of elder mistreatment.

After completing Week 3, participants will be able to:

- 1) Discuss key considerations in the reporting of elder mistreatment to first responders.
- 2) Identify the core components of the Adult Protective Services system.
- 3) Describe some characteristics and benefits of elder abuse MDTs.
- 4) Identify some key components of the elder abuse forensic center model.

In addition to watching the video lecture and completing the reading assignments, we will engage in an interactive quiz that reinforces these concepts.

## Week 4

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### Secondary Prevention: Improving Well-Being Immediately Following Abuse

After describing how elder abuse can be stopped during Week 3, in Week 4 we explore ways to reduce the recurrence of abuse and improving older adults' well-being following elder abuse. This session provides recent research findings on elder abuse recurrence, specifically using models from APS data to understand which victims are most likely to experience recurrence of abuse. This session also includes findings on remedies that can be used to prevent recurrence, including convicting perpetrators and establishing guardianships/conservatorships over victims. Drawing on a decade's worth of research on the Los Angeles County Elder Abuse Forensic Center, the instructor describes how this secondary prevention model impacts the three metrics: recurrence, prosecution, and conservatorship. Finally, we overview the range of services available through the Aging Network that can help act to prevent recurrence in elder mistreatment cases.

After completing Week 4, participants will be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge about elder abuse recurrence and the general rate of recurrence within APS.
- 2) Identify the factors that appear to increase the chance of abuse recurrence.
- 3) Explain how prosecution and conservatorship may provide protections against the recurrence of mistreatment.
- 4) Describe how different parts of the Aging Network can contribute to secondary prevention of mistreatment.

In addition to watching the video lecture and completing the reading assignments, we will engage in an interactive quiz that reinforces these concepts.

## Week 5

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### Tertiary Prevention: When We Can't Stop the Abuse

Turning to tertiary prevention, Week 5 covers the challenging cases where practitioners cannot intervene to put a stop to elder abuse. In doing so, we discuss ethical considerations surrounding these scenarios, including the older adult's right to autonomy and concerns with cognitive capacity, as well as reminding participants about why some older adults might refuse interventions. For these cases, we describe what practitioners *can* offer, and why their support may still be valuable in mitigating harm. Moreover, we discuss how those in the older adults' social network can serve as "vigilant observers" to help ensure that any ongoing abuse does not escalate and make a report to the authorities if it does, underscoring the importance of social networks in elder mistreatment prevention.

After completing Week 5, participants will be able to:

- 1) Describe under what conditions practitioners may not be able to intervene to stop abuse.
- 2) Define the ethical considerations involved when resigning oneself to not intervene in a case.
- 3) Identify what kinds of supports can still be offered to older adults who continue to live with elder abuse.

In addition to watching the video lecture and completing the reading assignments, we will engage in an interactive quiz that reinforces these concepts.

## For more information

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Visit <http://www.asaging.org/online-gerontology-courses>.

Questions? See our FAQ at <http://www.asaging.org/frequently-asked-questions> or email [info@asaging.org](mailto:info@asaging.org).

This course is open to current ASA members only. For ASA membership information, visit <http://www.asaging.org/membership>.



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