

Instruments for Assessing Elder Mistreatment: Implications for Adult Protective Services

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Methods:

Part I: Structured review of the literature on instruments for assessing elder mistreatment

The structured review of the literature used pre-determined search terms and search sources to identify research literature on assessing elder mistreatment. Using this search strategy, 19 screening and assessment instruments were located. Because of differences noted in purpose and evaluation criteria, these instruments were divided into two broad categories—*screening instruments* and *assessment protocols and guidelines*. Inclusion criteria for screening instruments included the following: (1) the instrument was developed to assess elder mistreatment, and (2) information regarding its psychometric properties was documented. Inclusion criteria for assessment protocols and guidelines included only the first of the above criteria given that very few have been evaluated.

Part II: Survey describing current practice in APS.

A web-based practice survey was administered in August 2007 to 90 APS workers and supervisors in the Bay Area Counties. A practice survey seeks to capture the perspectives of agency staff with respect to the issues identified in the literature review. The APS survey obtained demographic information (i.e., job classification, education level, field of study, work experience with APS) as well as workers' and supervisors' perspectives on elder abuse assessment items identified in the structured review of the literature.

Findings:

Recommendations for Assessment Instruments:

1. Further investigation of the occurrence of elder mistreatment via population-based surveys is needed.
2. Instrument developers need to clearly state the operational definition of elder mistreatment used in the creation of the tool so that others may assess the value of the instrument for different settings and purposes.
3. It is critical to obtain information directly from the elder, the caregiver, or both.

Recommendations for Adult Protective Services:

1. Increase standardization of assessment processes
2. Implement data management systems
3. Promote multidisciplinary approaches to policy & practice

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