

Meeting Minutes
12/05/17
O'Connor Senior Center

I. Attendance

In attendance: Suzanne Bunton, Peggy Province, Emma Luna, Rhea Ennist, Karen Partridge, Linda Johnson, Margaret Chuinard, Summer Awad, Shelley Clemmons, Christopher Osborn, Teresa Lawson, Heather Majka, Rosie Noriega, Laura Contreras, and Joseph Winberry.

II. The Latino Community, Immigrants, Refugees, & Elder Abuse

In September, the CCR began hearing from representatives of diverse communities so that CCR members could better understand the unique needs of some groups such as the LGBT, faith-based, people with disabilities, and Latino, immigrant, & refugee communities. This knowledge will be helpful as the CCR seeks systems-change for all elder abuse victims in Knoxville. This meeting concluded the series.

Summer Awad with Bridge Refugee Services; Laura Contreras with HomeSource East Tennessee/Children's Hospital; Emma Luna with YWCA; and Rosie Noriega, Chair of the Latino Task Force, led the discussion on how the Hispanic community, immigrants, and refugees are affected by the issue of elder abuse.

Summer gave a description of Bridge Refugee Services, which is the only organization of their kind in East Tennessee, with offices in Knoxville and Chattanooga. Currently they have two clients who are part of elder refugee resettlement efforts for people over the age of 60. The number of older adults among refugee populations can be small due to a number of factors which can end the lives of many would-be refugees including violence and disease. While many refugees can speak 2-3 languages, barriers around learning English as well as cultural barriers have made it easier for refugees to be victims of elder abuse. It can be very difficult to find appropriate interpreters for increasing refugee populations, such as those coming to Knoxville from the Democratic Republic of Congo due to ethnic violence. It can take as much as 5-6 years until Knoxville has the infrastructure to serve such refugees.

Luna shared that the YWCA is working to reach out to diverse communities such as the Latino and African American communities who may face unique barriers in reporting & getting help for domestic violence. Older adults are another diverse community that is often overlooked when it comes to domestic violence—a form of elder abuse.

Luna, Rosie, and Laura spoke more on the Latino and/or immigrant community. Many of the domestic violence victims seen are young mothers with children with 90% of Luna's clients being victims of intimate partner violence. Elder abuse carries a great stigma within the Latino community. Grandparents are a focal point and multi-generational family living is common. However, second and third generation immigrants are adopting more American-style housing situations which is a shift in the placement of older adults. A lack of local Spanish media disconnects these communities further from local news and advocacy opportunities.

III. Supplementary Elder Abuse Meeting – December 12 at O'Connor

In attendance: Patti Tosti, Bob Swan, Kasey Stone, Mandy Scarbrough, Rhea Ennist, Suzanne Bunton, Bari Gerbig, Elaine Wilson, Laura Berry, Katrise Thompson, Karen Partridge, Linda Evans, Peggy Province, Lori Ryan, & Joseph Winberry.

Patti Tosti, program director of Tennessee Adult Protective Services' Administration on Community Living (ACL) grant, spoke to CCR members in a special meeting. The focus of the discussion was the state CCR effort that Patti is leading as part of her ACL responsibilities. Patti's past elder abuse outreach experience included running Memphis' version of the Abuse in Later Life Grant (the grant Joseph manages) between 2004 and 2010, and service as a consultant for the Coordinated Response to Elder Abuse (CREA) in Memphis-Shelby County which worked with Meritan and other partners to tackle elder abuse housing and other issues.

The main two purposes of the ACL grant is (1) to establish a state vulnerable adult coordinated community response [older adults & adults 18+ with physical or mental disabilities who cannot take care of themselves] and (2) contribute to the National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System (NAMRS) data-collection efforts.

The statewide CCR has four main committees which focus on (1) improving coordination between APS & partners via the 1215 form which is used to share appropriate details of elder abuse case with law enforcement and other partners; (2) Streamlining investigations as they relate to prosecution and abuse registry; (3) Improve coordination/communication in relation to serving vulnerable adults (such as new process for how community organizations are made aware of elder abuse cases); and (4) identifying all unlicensed facilities and reduce unsafe/abuse ones.

Patti asked how the state CCR and the local CCRs across Tennessee could best benefit one another. Joseph suggested that keeping the local CCRs up-to-date on state CCR findings via state communication with the local CCR coordinators was essential to maintaining contact and the flow of ideas between both entities.

IV. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Knoxville Elder Abuse CCR will be Tuesday, January 2nd, 2018 from 2-3:30 p.m. at the O'Connor Center.