

# Sexual Violence & Older Adults

A Training for MCEAP Elder Abuse Summit

May 19, 2022





Katie Kondrat

.....

Equity & Access Coordinator  
Maine Coalition Against Sexual  
Assault  
she/her



David White

.....

Training Program Manager  
DHHS/Office of Aging & Disability  
Services  
he/him

# Content Considerations & Advocate Support



Discussing sexual violence impacts all of us.

Discussing sexual violence impacts all of us differently.

Do what you need to do to take care of yourself.

Advocates are available today & every day.

\*1-800-871-7741\*

# Learning Objectives

Define sexual abuse in later life & learn the impacts of sexual violence on older adults

Review known stats & prevalence about sexual abuse in later life

Recognize unique barrier for older survivors of sexual violence to seek healing & support

Recognize potential indicators of sexual violence

Considerations to responding to disclosures



# Resources & Appreciation



The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life  
(NCALL) – *ncall.us*



Sue Hall Dreher & the work Dept. of Justice, Office of  
Violence Against Women



APS/OADS & sexual assault support centers across the  
state



All of you

# Definitions - Sexual Violence



Sexual violence is any type of sexual activity committed by one person **without the consent** of the other.



It involves the **use of threats, force, or any other form of coercion** or intimidation.



Sexual contact with a person who is **unable to give consent** is also sexual violence.

# Sexual Violence Includes:

Sexual assault  
Street harassment  
Gender bullying  
Sexual harassment  
Sexual coercion  
Commercial sexual  
exploitation  
Child sexual abuse  
Elder abuse  
Sex trafficking



Unwanted sexual contact  
Sexual abuse by caregiver  
Stalking, in some  
circumstances  
Drug- and alcohol-facilitated  
sexual assault  
A power differential making  
sexual contact unlawful  
Intimate partner sexual  
violence

# Definitions - Older Adult Considerations



Hands-On



Harmful Genital Practices



Hands-Off



Institutional Abuse

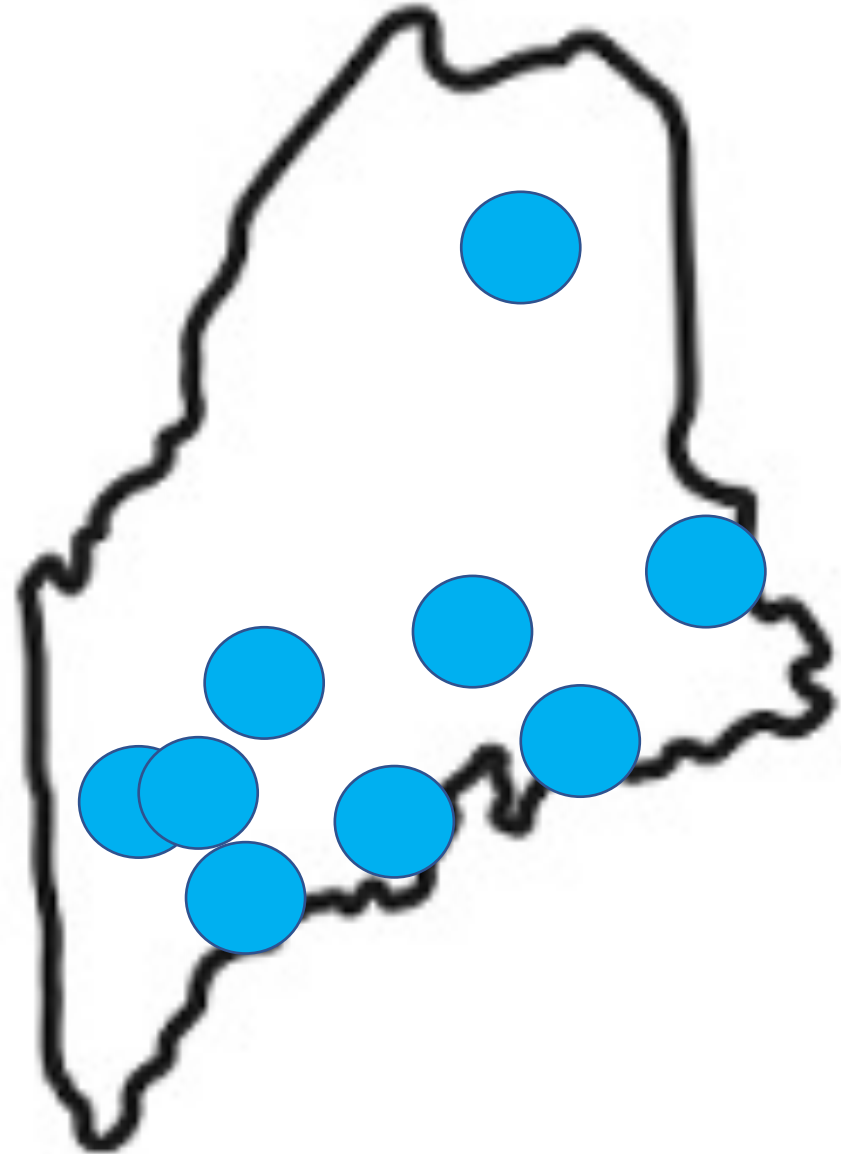


Healing across a  
lifetime





One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime<sup>1</sup> - that's nearly as many people as the combined populations of **Portland, Lewiston/Auburn, Augusta, Rockland, Bangor, Ellsworth, Calais, and Presque Isle.**



<sup>1</sup>Dumont, R & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine

# Data & Older Adults

---

In the community, older victims of sexual abuse were violated most often by spouses/partners.

In facilities, employees responsible for care (**43%**) or other residents (**41%**) were most likely offenders.

Statistics around sexual violence later in life are thought to be serious underestimates, and reliable data is not yet available.

Acierno, et al., (2010).  
Ramsey-Klawnsnik, et al., (2008).  
Teaster & Roberto, (2004).

# Data & Older Adults - Polyvictimization

---

2012 – Massachusetts Elder Affairs Protective Services Study:

- 22 cases of sexual abuse – 86% involved polyvictimization
- 77% experienced co-occurring physical abuse
- 59% experienced co-occurring emotional abuse
- 9% were financially abused

National study of APS caseworkers

- 75% of workers said polyvictims account for more than 25% of cases.

# Data & Older Adults – APS Services

---

- In 2022 there were **369** allegations of some form of sexual abuse made to Maine Adult Protective Services that were investigated.
- That reflects a 24% increase over 2021, but also reflects less than **10%** of actual occurrences.
- We know that adults with any form of disability are victims of crime, including sexual assaults, at a rate 4x that of the general population. 11/2021 DOJ (NCJ 301367)
- An NPR investigation found that 70% of females diagnosed with ID/DD had been sexually assaulted. NPR 1/8/2018

# Data & Older Adults – MECASA

---

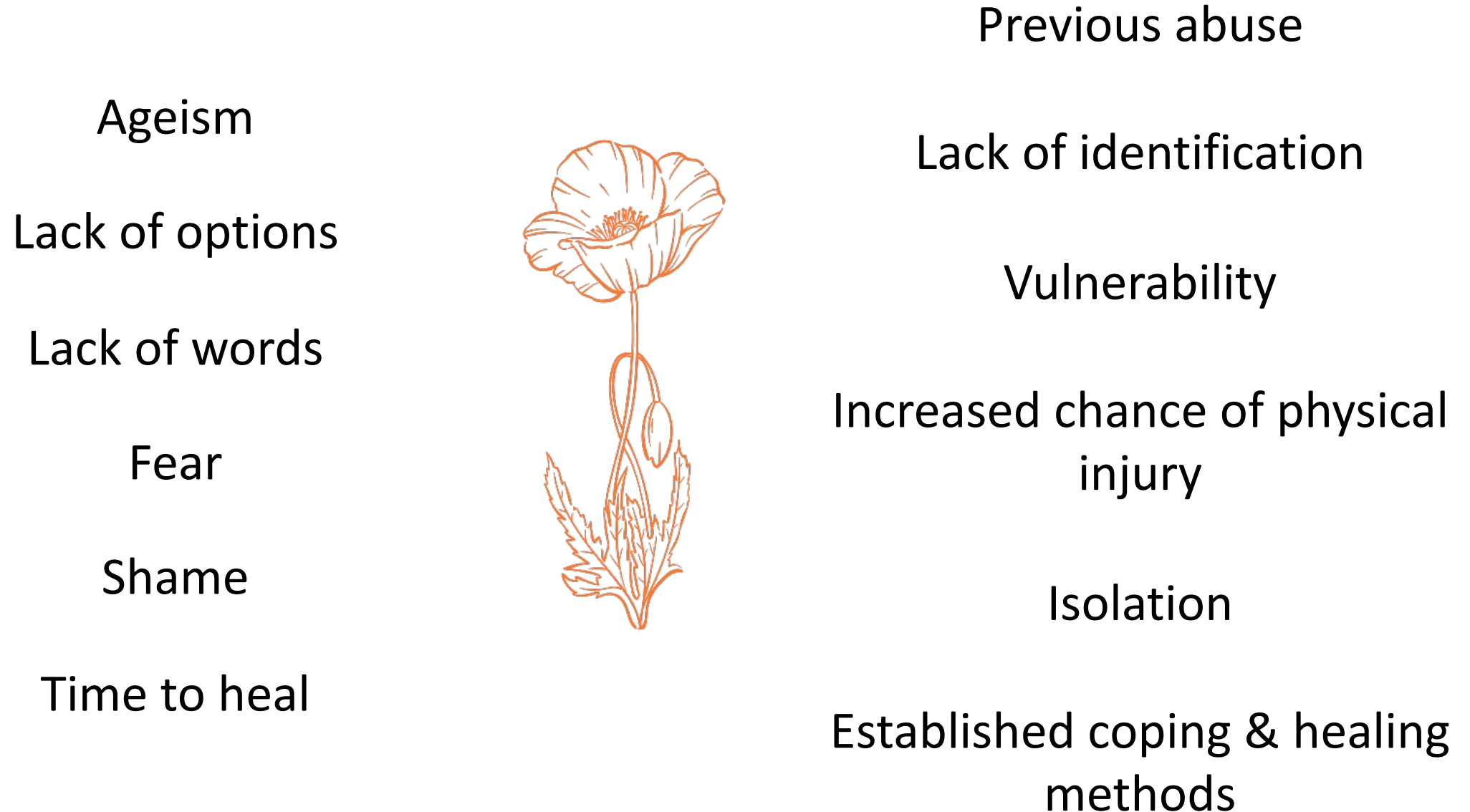
- Censuses data estimates people over 65 make up **20.6%** of Maine's population
- In 2021 sexual assault support centers statewide worked with **72** clients over the age of 65
- That reflects **2%** of overall clients
- 9 recorded reports to APS – only 2 of which were for people older than 65

# Sexual Abuse in Later Life



The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)

# What makes sexual assault different in later life?



# Impacts of Sexual Violence in Later Life



- Elders who experienced abuse, even modest abuse, had a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who had not been abused. <sup>(1)</sup>
- Victims of elder abuse are three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital. <sup>(1)</sup>
- Elder abuse is predictive of later disability among persons who initially displayed no disability and is associated with increased rates of emergency department utilization, increased risks for hospitalization, and increased risk for mortality. <sup>(2)</sup>



# Possible indicators of sexual abuse



## Physical Signs

- Mouth sores or signs of oral infection
- Unexplained/inadequately explained oral and/or perioral injury
- Signs/symptoms of anogenital infection
- Signs/symptoms of sexually transmitted infection
- Bite marks

## Behavioral Signs

- Change in mood or temperament.
- Change in personal hygiene.
- Suddenly avoids or is fearful of specific people.
- Change in sleeping patterns/behavior.
- Resists care or certain types of care like, bath rooming and oral care.
- Decreased socialization
- Sexually inappropriate behavior
- Visits to doctor or hospital with vague complaints

## Perpetrator Behavior

- Older adult being kept in an overmedicated state.
- Caregivers' refusal to allow the older adult to be alone with visitors.
- Refusal or delays in allowing visitors to see the older adult.
- Inappropriate boundaries between older adult and caregiver.
- Caregiver is aggressive regarding providing personal care.

# Responding to disclosures

- Consider the nature of the disclosure –
  - Current or past incidents
  - Coded or direct
- Believe
- Support
- Clarify
- Next steps & connecting with supports



# What You Can Do!

**Build relationships**  
with your local APS  
team and sexual  
assault centers for  
**support,  
collaboration, and  
education.**

**Refer & utilize!**  
To the state's **24-  
hour statewide  
sexual assault  
helpline** and your  
**local sexual assault  
support center.**

**Talk to each other.**  
We want to hear  
about trends, needs,  
& lessons learned  
from our partners.



Helping, being of service, and giving are important, meaningful, supportive, and an inherent part of being connected to others and to humanity as a whole.

And... those things do not determine your worthiness, goodness, and enoughness.

---

Lisa Olivera