

## **Reaching Underserved Older Women Victims**

*A project of SeniorLAW Center and CARIE*

### **Domestic violence and sexual violence know no age limits.**

As many as five million elders are abused each year in the United States. Thousands more suffer in silence: it is estimated that 84% of elder abuse cases are never reported.

Abuse in later life is often *long-term abuse*: elder abuse is often called “domestic violence grown old.” Older victims may be more isolated and dependent upon their abusers due to challenges of aging, poverty, dependence, disabilities, and, in some cases, dementia. Many victims rightly fear losing their independence if they report and are less likely than younger women to call a domestic violence program. Perpetrators may be a spouse, an adult child, or a caregiver.

*Sexual abuse is the least reported form of elder abuse.* It is estimated 18% of women who are raped each year are age 60 or over. Many rapes and other sexual abuses of older women occur in long term care facilities: recent studies concluded that nearly 71% of older victims were assaulted in nursing homes.

**SeniorLAW Center** and **CARIE** are joining forces to focus attention on older victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, some of the most vulnerable victims of violence against women. SeniorLAW Center and CARIE will combine their decades of victim services experience to:

- **Create a Senior Domestic Violence Team of leaders** in the domestic violence, victim services, law enforcement, legal, aging and human service sectors to work collaboratively to promote cooperation, identify victims, assess unmet need and develop best practices, strong partnerships
- **Provide protection, advocacy and enhanced direct, holistic services for older women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault**, including services in court and community settings, and counseling, advocacy and information and referral services through two state-wide telephone resources: the *Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine* 1-877 PA SR LAW and the *CARIE LINE* 1-800-356-3606
- **Train law enforcement, prosecutors, healthcare and allied professionals, and the general public about domestic violence/sexual assault and older women** to educate seniors, professionals and families about rights and increase access to services



**SeniorLAW Center**  
Protecting The Rights of Older Pennsylvanians

**SeniorLAW Center** is a nonprofit organization which improves the lives of older Pennsylvanians and protects their rights through legal representation, education and advocacy. SeniorLAW Center’s multi-faceted services and legal programs address wide-ranging areas of law critical to the lives of diverse communities of seniors, including protection from abuse, violence and exploitation, housing, consumer protection, economic security, family law, kinship care and health care. Founded in 1978, SeniorLAW Center serves over 10,000 older Pennsylvanians each year and serves as a leader on legal services, victim services, aging, and immigrant organizations, and has strong working relationships with well over 100 other service providers throughout our community. SeniorLAW Center has more than 30 years of serving and advocating for victims of violence and addressing holistic legal needs. Through community-based legal clinics, outreach and services, its statewide SeniorLAW HelpLine, home and hospital visits, and multilingual multicultural services, SeniorLAW Center has developed creative methods of reaching, identifying and serving elders, and providing innovative methods of accessing services. SeniorLAW Center focuses on the most underserved populations – elders who are low-income, minorities, limited English speakers, and other vulnerable populations.



**CARIE** is an advocacy organization for seniors founded in 1977, has been active in the area of elder abuse since the early 1980’s. In 1984, as an outgrowth of a CARIE conference devoted to elder abuse, the Philadelphia Elder Abuse Task

Force was formed to focus on increasing community awareness of elder abuse and creating a unified response. In 1986, CARIE implemented a statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Project, funded by the Administration on Aging. Project staff created a statewide public awareness campaign, collected and analyzed data about elder abuse, and facilitated inter-agency efforts to intervene in cases of elder abuse. CARIE’s work was instrumental in the passage of Pennsylvania’s first protective services legislation in 1987. In 1989, CARIE developed an abuse prevention training program called “Competence with Compassion” for long term care staff. This award-winning program has been replicated nationally and presented internationally. In addition to work in training and education, the CARIE LINE, a free, telephone advocacy and problem solving service, handles hundreds of problems related to various forms of elder abuse and crime each year. In 1987, CARIE established a fund to help secure the homes of victims of elder abuse and crime and in 2002 it took over the work of advocating for elderly crime victims in court and assisting with crime victim’s compensation. Through its long-term care ombudsman program, CARIE serves victims who are in a variety of residential settings and has directly advocated for victims of violence and sexual assault.

**Join us in our work to serve older women facing violence.** Become a partner, refer a victim, provide a site for education or training, help raise awareness, volunteer.

**Contact:**

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**PA SeniorLAW HelpLine 1-877-PA SR LAW**

**CARIE**

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