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Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Kathleen M. O'Toole
Secretary
Executive Office of Public Safety

Jonathan Petuchowski
Executive Director
Programs Division
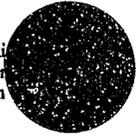
ELDERLY PROTECTION PROJECT
FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Rhiana Kohl, Ph.D.

Diana Brensilber

William Holmes, Ph.D.

NCJRS

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ACCUISITIONS

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Statistical Analysis Center
Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to a report by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), by the year 2030, persons 65 years and older will represent approximately 66 million Americans, up from 31 million in 1989 (AARP, 1990). A World Bank report predicted a global aging explosion resulting in the number of people over sixty years old tripling by the year 2030 (Shapiro, 1994). The U.S. was ranked second in the world with a 17 percent share of the population over sixty in 1990 rising to 28 percent. In Massachusetts this trend has already been evident (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Over 65 Population, 1970-2010
AGES 65-84 AGES 85+
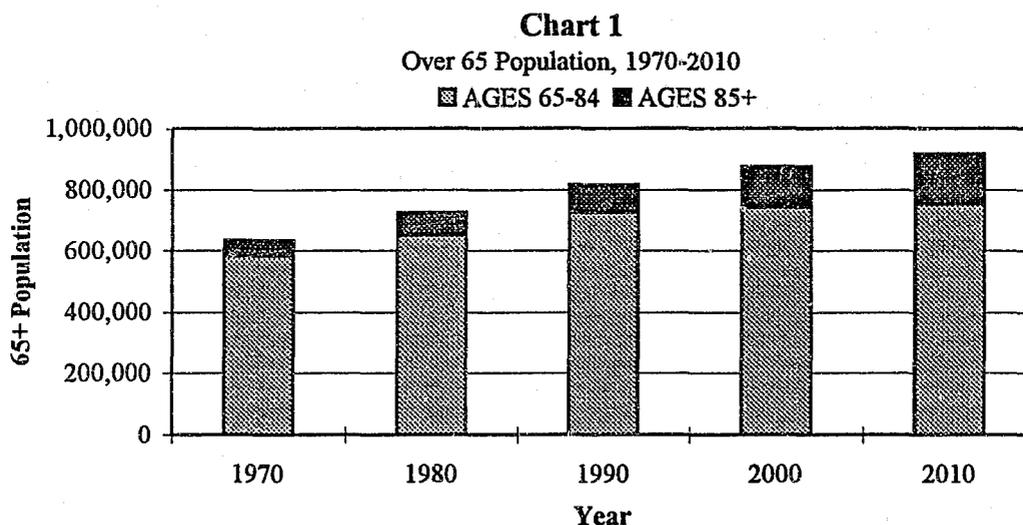
Source: Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, 1994

With this demographic shift, law enforcement has focused increasing attention on the issues and problems faced by elders. Even though persons age 65 or older are the least likely of all age groups to experience violent crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994), "patterns of victimization of the elderly are not identical to those of other adults" and "the level of fear of crime among the elderly is not only higher than it is among other age groups but it is also disproportionate to the volume of actual victimization suffered by senior citizens" (Fattah & Sacco, 1989). Estimates of the prevalence of elder abuse nationwide vary from 700,000 to 2.5 million incidents per year (National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, 1994). Yet, it is believed that anywhere from only one in 6 to 16 cases are ever reported. What remains clear is that a vast number of vulnerable older adults are abused, neglected, or financially exploited each year and a large portion of these victimization's go undetected. A 1990 survey of all state human service departments found that elder abuse increased 50 percent from 1980 (National Aging Resource Center on Elder Abuse, 1992). Clearly, elder abuse is not only widespread, it is also a problem that will continue to grow.

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Domestic violence is a problem within what is legally defined as elder abuse. The issue has been salient for both law enforcement professionals and the public. Elderly citizens can be violated by someone they know, such as care givers or family members, as well as strangers. Abuse can even occur as the result of the adult's limited ability to care for themselves. Given the potentially confusing nature of the problem and the overlap with domestic violence, law enforcement personnel have been particularly unclear as to the laws concerning elder abuse and the role that police can and should play. A Police Executives Research Forum (PERF) study, sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons, found that "law enforcement is unclear about its role in responding to all forms of domestic elder abuse, is largely unaware of legislative reporting requirements, and is not trained in the detection of different forms of abuse" (Plotkin, 1998).

Informal questioning of police executives in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts also revealed a need and desire for more training on the issue of elder abuse. This is a particularly critical finding, for in 1983 a mandatory reporting law (M.G.L. Chapter 19A, sec. 14-26) regarding elder abuse went into effect in Massachusetts. This law requires certain professionals, including police officers, to report all cases of suspected elder abuse (which may be one or a combination of financial, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect) to a local protective service agency. Although this law has been in effect for over ten years, and Massachusetts is recognized nationally as having one of the most active elder abuse programs in the country, according to a 1988 study, only 1 in 14 (7%) cases of elder abuse was reported (Pillemer & Finkelhor, 1988).

Because elder abuse is often "hidden," law enforcement and protective service agencies are dependent on those abused and others aware of the abuse, to notify them. Victims of elder abuse often are ashamed, in denial about their abuse, blame themselves, are loyal to the abusive care giver, fear retaliation (physical or verbal), are physically unable to take recourse, or have negative perceptions of criminal justice and/or social service agencies. This last point addresses the need to improve ties between the elderly community and police, particularly to facilitate elders' willingness to report victimization. Results from a Milwaukee Police Department study, where trainings focused on the elderly community, found that community relations improved following the trainings, along with increased knowledge of law, department policies, and awareness of elder abuse (Zevitz & Gurnack, 1991).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Elder Protection Project, "The Project", was sponsored by the Attorney General's Office and funded by the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice. Its mission was to train "police officers to be aware of the changing demographics of our elderly population and to communicate effectively and sensitively with our elder citizens so that officers can effectively intervene, report and investigate instances of elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation." To that end, the Project emphasized the laws applicable to elder abuse and focused on increasing interaction between law enforcement and protective service workers.

To fulfill this mission, the Project created a training curricula for recruit, in-service, and advanced trainings. Training was implemented in FY94 for both recruit and advanced training sessions. The Project did not pursue in-service training until FY95. Project personnel designed these trainings to reach as many Massachusetts law enforcement personnel as possible. Each of these components was designed to enhance knowledge of elder abuse laws and reporting while making more salient the various issues surrounding aging and the elderly. Specifically, the topics covered were the "changing demographics of the elderly population; myths and facts of aging; communicating with the elderly; understanding fear, victimization and vulnerability; the value of specialized training; intervention and investigation of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation; the elder abuse reporting law and working with protective services; and responding to missing persons with Alzheimer's disease."

The following were the principle goals of the Elderly Protection Project:

◊ Develop training curricula for recruit, in-service, and advanced training in elder abuse protection;
◊ Conduct broad scope training using the curricula;
◊ Increase knowledge of trainees in elder abuse and reporting laws; and
◊ Increase reporting of elder abuse by departments whose officers receive training.

The Criminal Justice Training Council Recruit Academies, Boston Police Academy, and the State Police Academy include introductory training on elder abuse for recruits. At the start of the project, recruit trainings were expected to reach approximately five hundred (500) recruits in 1994.

The Project was quite successful in conducting it's two-day advanced trainings throughout the state. The Project Director, Attorney John Scheft held these trainings in conjunction with regional protective service providers (required contacts in cases of elder abuse). These trainings provided a more detailed overview of the issues described earlier. Equally important, the trainings were designed to foster more interactive community policing and collaboration between law enforcement and protective services. For these reasons, this component of the trainings were considered the centerpiece of the Project. All of these trainings were conducted by Attorney Scheft, to ensure consistency in training and eliminate the logistics of locating and training instructors for each region.

EVALUATION:

The evaluation of the Elderly Protection Project was funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), grant number 94IJCXK001. The NIJ's technical assistance team was utilized by Project evaluators in helping to determine appropriate evaluation methods and in addressing problems of design and measurement.

The evaluation had two main foci. The first concerned the scope of the Project. The second concerned the quality of the instruction given at the trainings.

The method for determining the scope of the project used three primary measures:

1. The number of officers participating. This number is calculated for each training component.

2. The geographic distribution of participants and location of trainings to ensure that all officers in the various regions of the state had access to training.

3. Other outreach efforts by the Project. These efforts may encompass such things as speaking engagements at events, reports, and attendance at conferences and seminars.

Information on these measures was collected by Project personnel. Attendance sheets from the training sessions were collected by the Project Director and forwarded to evaluation staff. Staff reviewed this information and compiled the data to determine both total attendance and the various characteristics of attendees.

The method for determining the quality and potential impact of instruction involved five measures:

1. Advanced training participants' initial evaluation of the instruction.

2. Advanced training participants' evaluation several months following the training.

3. Project evaluators determination of the quality of instruction.

4. Data from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs reflecting mandatory reporting rates.

5. Arrest data assessed by age of victim.

Information regarding the advanced training participants' evaluation of the quality of instruction was collected in two ways. The Project Director distributed a questionnaire to the participants on the last day of the training. The results of this questionnaire were compiled by the Project Director and summary statistics were forwarded to staff evaluating the Project. A follow-up survey was constructed by evaluation staff and distributed to a sample of training participants by mail. The data was compiled solely by the staff conducting the evaluation.

Evaluation staff attended a two-day advanced training session located in Burlington, MA. The staff felt it was necessary to observe the training first hand. The quality of instruction was examined by reviewing the topics covered and receiving input from other training participants.

Elder abuse report data from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs was also collected and analyzed. This data provided key information on the sources of elder abuse reporting as well as the types of elder abuse incidents committed in Massachusetts. Related arrest data for 1994 has been requested from the Massachusetts State Police Crime Reporting Unit. The data to be examined is from the National Incident-Based Reporting System and represents reports from fifty-seven local police departments in Massachusetts.

TRAINING:

At the end of the granting period (July 1994) the project trained 829 recruits, far exceeding their initial goal of 500. These trainings were conducted between April of 1993 and May of 1994, with all regions of Massachusetts sending recruits. Data in Table 1, provided by the Project, describes the scope of the recruit program through May 1994.

Table 1
Elderly Protection Project Recruit Trainings

Month	Dates	Year	Location	# of cadets	Hours	Instruction
April	29	1993	MCJTA Needham	80	2	Elder Issues
August	4, 5	1993	MCJTA Burlington	83	6	Elder Issues
August	12	1993	MCJTA Foxborough	69	6	Elder Issues
September	16	1993	Springfield Academy	29	4	Elder Issues
September	17	1993	MCJTA Agawam	34	4	Elder Issues
October	5	1993	State Police Academy	191	4	Elder Issues
October November	12, 14 1, 2	1993	Boston Police Academy	45	8	Elder & Mental Health Issues
February	2, 4	1994	MCJTA Burlington	80	6	Elder Issues
February	22	1994	MCJTA Agawam	38	3	Elder & Mental Health Issues
March	9, 10, 14	1994	Boston Police Academy (M.B.T.A. Recruits)	29	6	Elder & Mental Health Issues
April	11, 12	1994	MCJTA Waltham	45	6	Elder & Mental Health Issues
April	28	1994	MCJTA Somerville	32	2	Elder & Mental Health Issues
May	9	1994	MCJTA Plymouth	74	5	Elder & Mental Health Issues
Total number of recruits trained:				829		

All of the recruits were instructed on issues of elder abuse and thirty-seven percent (37%) were trained in both elder abuse and mental health issues (Chart 2).

Chart 2
Type of Instruction Received by Recruits

Elder & Mental
Health Issues
37%

Elder Issues
63%
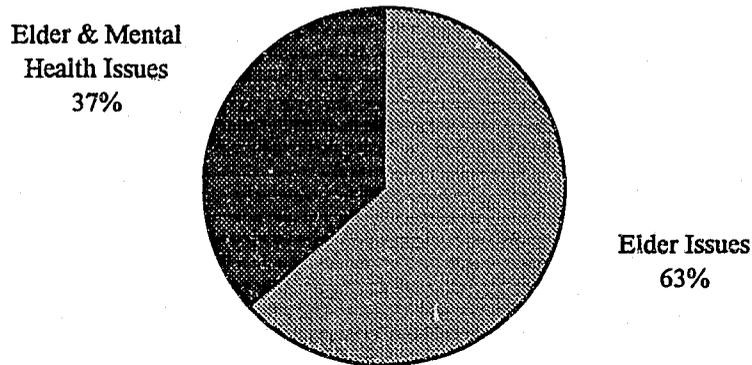
Recruits received between two and eight hours of training, with the majority (82%) receiving training of more than three hours (Chart 3). All regions of the state sent officers to the sessions.

Chart 3
Hours of Training

Number of Hours	Total Hours Trained
2	112
3	38
4	254
5	74
6	306
8	45
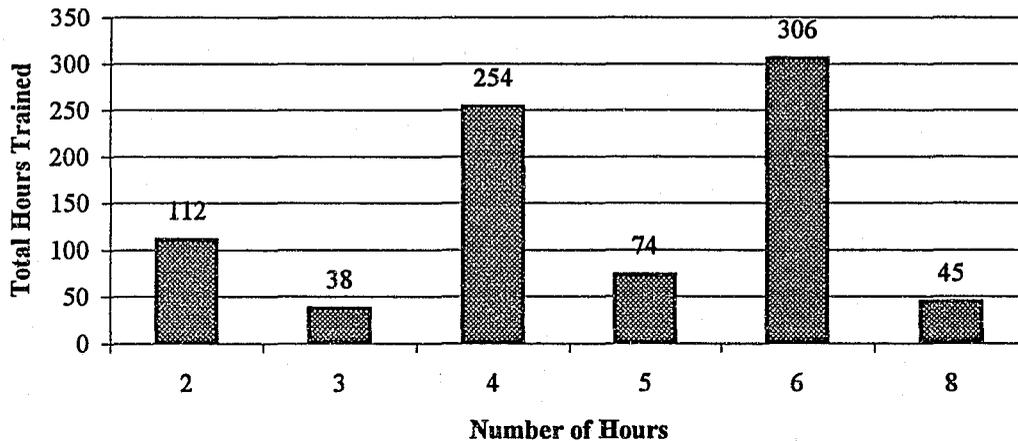
In FY94, sixteen advanced training sessions were conducted between September 1993 and May 1994. These trainings were offered in all regions of the state in coordination with local Protective Service Agencies (Appendix 1). As Table 2 illustrates, a total of 571 police officers, protective service workers and other related professionals attended these advanced trainings. Police officers comprised eighty-two percent (82%) and protective service workers accounted for eleven percent (11%) of the total attendance. The remaining seven percent (7%) included representatives from District Attorney's offices, the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance, and AARP. Police from 194 local departments attended the training, representing 55.2% of the total 351 local police departments in the state.

Table 2
Elderly Protection Project Advanced Trainings

Location of Training	Police Attendance	PSW Attendance	Other Attendance	Total Attendance
Groton	31	2	0	33
North Adams	31	1	0	32
Southborough	48	3	1	52
Dennis	28	4	3	35
Worcester	24	3	3	30
Peabody	21	6	0	27
Agawam	22	9	2	33
Fall River	25	3	0	28
Boston	42	9	1	52
Winthrop	24	2	0	26
Burlington	40	2	0	42
Foxborough	40	2	0	32
Malden	32	5	2	39
Turner's Falls	24	5	11	40
Bridgewater	23	2	11	36
Lawrence	25	5	4	34
Total	470	63	38	571

The quality of instruction was determined initially by evaluations completed by participants at the end of their training. Participants assessed the overall quality of the program as positive, with 76% rating the quality as excellent. No participant said the program was poor (Holmes , McCallum & Brensilber, 1994).

REPORTS OF ELDER ABUSE:

Information on official reports of elder abuse was collected from protective service agencies and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). Records from EOEA were most inclusive and comprehensive as it is the repository for all protective service agencies to send related documentation. Elder abuse reporting data was analyzed in a variety of ways. A major focus was placed on elder abuse reports filed by police which corresponded to the timing of the Elder Protection training. Chart 4 indicates when the training was introduced to the law enforcement community in relation to the rate of

elder abuse cases reported by the police. A review of this graph suggests that the training may have had an impact on an already increasing rate of police reporting elder abuse incidents.

Chart 4

Statewide Elder Abuse Cases Reported to Protective Service Agencies
1993-1994 by Quarter
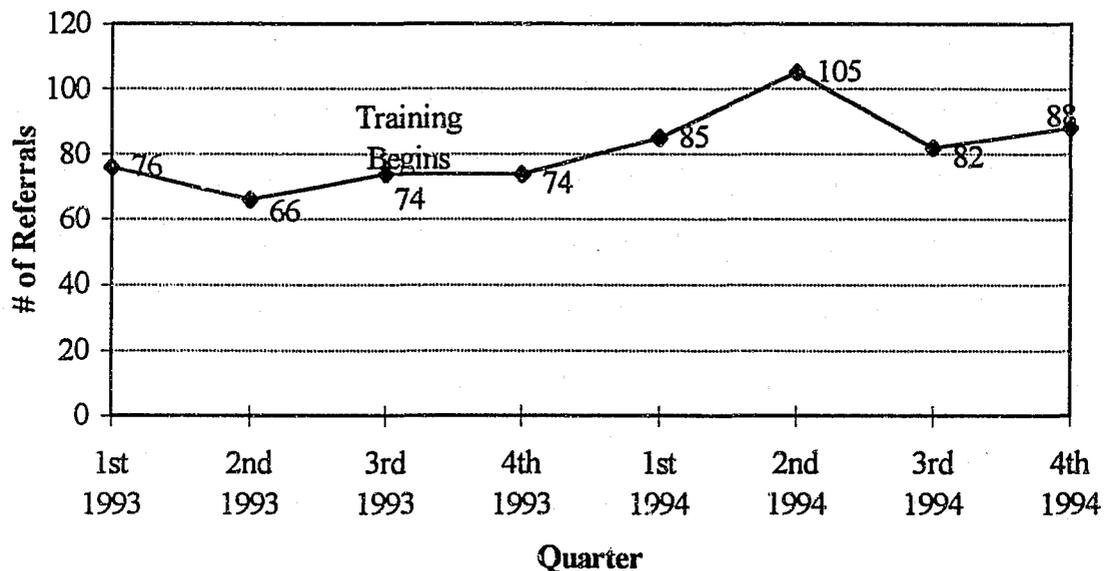
Source: Executive Office of Elder Affairs

A review of the number of elder abuse cases reported by police to protective service agencies since 1990, suggested evidence that the number of cases reported had been rising. Whether this increase was due to a growing awareness and willingness to report elder abuse cases and/or an actual upsurge in elder abuse was difficult to determine in definitive terms. The information available from EOEA did, however, provide more detailed information on the initial sources for referrals and the relationship these "reporters" had with the victim.

Table 3
Sources of Elder Abuse Referrals, 1990 - 1994

Report Source	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	% of 1990-1994 Total Referrals	% of 1994 Total Referrals	% Chg. Over Prior Year*
Adult Day Health Center	53	64	88	112	88	2%	2%	-21%
Ambulance Service	42	77	81	95	110	2%	2%	16%
Church/ Synagogue	2	4	6	5	6	0%	0%	20%
Council on Aging	69	81	108	113	103	2%	2%	-9%
Court	16	18	21	29	29	1%	1%	0%
District Attorney's Office	19	56	42	45	52	1%	1%	16%
Department of Public Health	7	4	3	8	9	0%	0%	13%
Department of Social Services	3	6	5	6	4	0%	0%	-33%
Disabled Persons Protection	2	3	7	2	20	0%	0%	900%
Fire Department	14	15	28	29	21	1%	0%	-28%
Home Care Corporation	352	531	532	536	567	12%	11%	6%
Home Health Aide Agency	129	158	233	267	298	5%	6%	12%
Homemaker Provider Agency	50	75	65	77	80	2%	2%	4%
Hospital	352	613	680	676	671	15%	14%	-1%
Housing Authority	22	33	29	28	52	1%	1%	86%
Mental Health Center	102	90	96	104	95	2%	2%	-9%
Nursing Home	30	43	49	75	66	1%	1%	-12%
Nutrition Program	6	9	13	5	5	0%	0%	0%
Police	133	266	268	290	360	7%	7%	24%
Private Practice: Physician	13	44	35	46	58	1%	1%	26%
Private Practice: Therapist/ Psychiatrist	2	10	25	9	11	0%	0%	22%
Social Services/ Family Services Agency	41	120	143	122	118	3%	2%	-3%
Utility Company	1	3	1	5	4	0%	0%	-20%
Visiting Nurses Assoc.	240	460	508	647	737	13%	15%	14%
Not An Agency	535	793	822	977	1,055	21%	21%	8%
Other	161	241	288	262	246	6%	5%	-6%
Unknown	44	48	71	74	87	2%	2%	18%
Miscoded	1	0	5	3	13	0%	0%	333%
TOTAL	2,441	3,865	4,252	4,647	4,965	100%	100%	7%

Source: Executive Office of Elder Affairs
* Indicates the percentage change in 1994 over the 1993 calandar year0...

Table 3 represents not only the number of reports filed by each source from 1990 through 1994, but the diversity and range of "reporters." The breakdown of sources corresponds to those listed on the protective service agencies' forms. This table further illustrates the steady increase of elder abuse reports to protective service agencies over the last few years, including an overall seven percent increase from 1993 to 1994. In 1994, the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) became the highest source of reports among the identified agencies, representing 14.8% of the total referrals that year. A review of this list indicates that the medical community in general was the most common source of referrals of elder abuse. Reports by police, compared to other reporting sources, revealed that in 1994, seven percent (7%) of elder abuse cases were reported directly from the police.

By law, a defined group of professionals are mandated to report cases of elder abuse to the proper authorities. The distribution of elder abuse reporters categorized by mandated versus non-mandated reporter status are listed within Table 4.

Table 4
Reporters Occupation/Relationship to Victim

Occupation/Relationship of Reporter	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	% of 1990-94 Total Referrals	% of 1994 Total Referrals	% Chg Over Prior Year*
Coroner	2	0	3	0	1	0%	0%	0%
Emergency Medical Technician	47	86	91	102	114	2%	2%	12%
Firefighter	10	10	20	23	17	0%	0%	-26%
HC Casemanager	196	272	274	279	315	7%	6%	13%
HHA	17	17	26	25	28	1%	1%	12%
Homemaker	26	24	29	22	49	1%	1%	123%
Nurse/ LPN	340	585	671	710	599	14%	12%	-16%
Physical/ Occupational Therapist	9	16	12	19	14	0%	0%	-26%
Physician	31	69	53	77	70	1%	1%	-9%
Police Officer	131	265	268	290	359	7%	7%	24%
Probation Officer	2	2	5	3	3	0%	0%	0%
Social Worker/Caseworker	647	1,000	1,171	1,183	1,147	26%	23%	-3%
Therapist/ Psychiatrist	39	41	51	47	39	1%	1%	-17%
Visiting Nurse	115	190	215	330	567	7%	11%	72%
Other Mandated Reporter	162	292	304	301	296	7%	6%	-2%
Total Mandated Reporters	**1,774**	**2,869**	**3,193**	**3,411**	**3,618**	**74%**	**73%**	**6%**
Self-report	145	182	171	205	217	5%	4%	6%
Guard/ Conservator	1	2	0	2	2	0%	0%	0%
Spouse	6	13	11	8	15	0%	0%	88%
Housemate	0	2	2	7	3	0%	0%	-57%
Adult Child	105	202	212	251	284	5%	6%	13%
Other Family/ Relatives	106	176	176	223	228	5%	5%	2%
Landlord	14	15	18	30	43	1%	1%	43%
Clergy/ Rabbi	1	5	8	5	6	0%	0%	20%
Friend/ Neighbor	144	187	197	224	244	5%	5%	9%
Attorney	11	15	20	17	23	0%	0%	35%
Victim Witness Advocate	25	44	43	58	73	1%	1%	26%
Government Official	0	3	13	4	6	0%	0%	50%
Other Non-Mandated Reporter	70	103	111	123	103	3%	2%	-16%
Total Non-Mandated Reporter	**628**	**949**	**982**	**1,157**	**1,247**	**25%**	**25%**	**8%**
Unknown	**39**	**47**	**71**	**74**	**90**	**2%**	**2%**	**22%**
Miscode	**0**	**0**	**6**	**5**	**10**	**0%**	**0%**	**100%**
TOTAL	**2,441**	**3,865**	**4,252**	**4,647**	**4,965**	**100%**	**100%**	**7%**

Source: Executive Office of Elder Affairs
* Indicates the percentage change in 1994 over the 1993 calendar year.

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When an elder abuse claim is filed by protective services, its considered to fall into one of seven types of abuse:

physical abuse: non-accidental use of physical force resulting in bodily injury or pain;

emotional abuse: willful infliction of mental or emotional anguish by threat, humiliation, intimidation or other verbal/non-verbal abusive conduct;

sexual abuse: any sexual act directed at another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will; or not forcibly or against the person's will where the victim is incapable of giving consent;

neglect: willful/non-willful failure by the care giver to fulfill his/her caretaking obligations or duty. This can be active, passive or self-neglect (there is no current criminal action under which a person can be prosecuted for neglect);

death by abuse or neglect: killing of one human being by another through abuse or neglect of the victim;

financial exploitation: unauthorized use of funds, property or resources of another person;

other allegations:

Chart 5
Summary of Allegations, 1993 & 1994

Type of Abuse
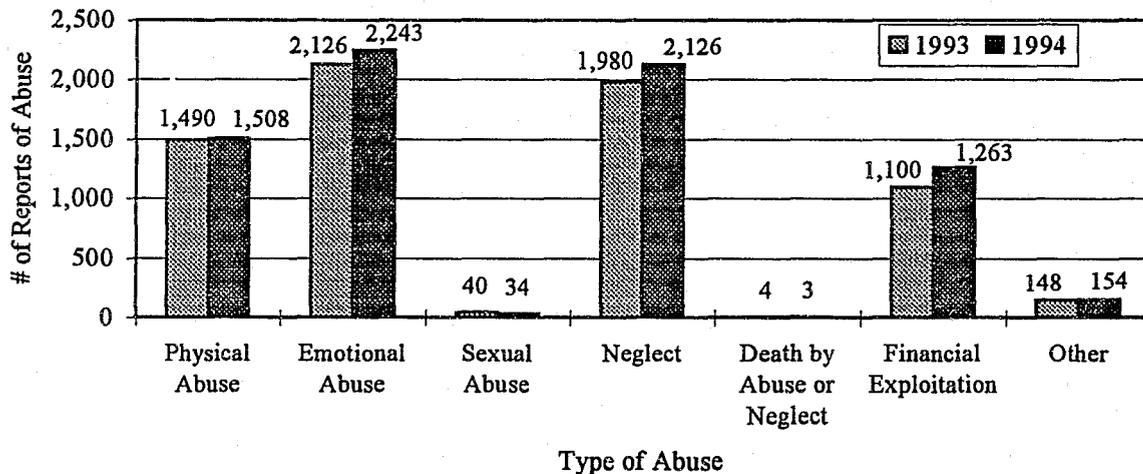
Source: Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Chart 6
Reported Elder Abuse Cases by Sex of Victim
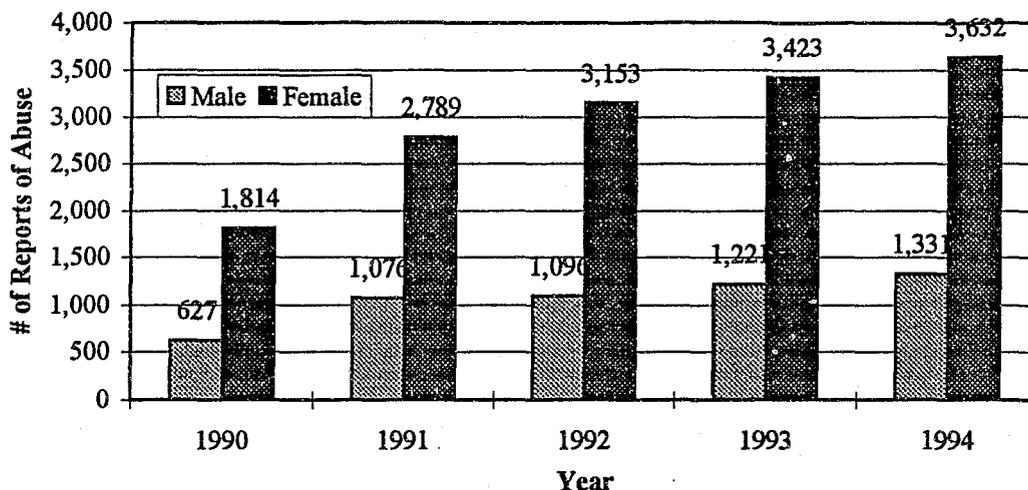
Source: Executive Office of Elder Affairs

As noted earlier, the number of reported abuse cases for elders has steadily increased from 1990-1994. This trend is particularly noteworthy among elderly women (Chart 6). Statistics reported by EOEA indicated that women were more often the victim of elder abuse, or at least those reported, representing 78% of the victims in 1994. This data should be considered within the context that women represent a higher portion of the elderly population than men in general. According to the 1990 census, approximately sixty percent of the 1,076,809 residents of Massachusetts sixty years or older were women (MISER).

Due to technical problems experienced at the Massachusetts Crime Reporting Unit, 1994 NIBRS data has not yet been relayed to the evaluation staff.

SURVEY OF TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

In order to assess the impact of the training project on those who participated in the two day training sessions, a survey was designed to elicit information regarding familiarity with elder abuse laws, participation in and evaluation of the training experience, and encounters with elder abuse cases.

Methodology

A sample of those individuals who participated in the training program were identified and mailed surveys. 231 of the 571 participants at the time of the survey (December 1994) were selected based on communities where elder abuse report data was initially accessible from corresponding protection service agencies. Participants were identified from original mailing lists inviting them to take

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part in the training. After the first mailing in December 1994, a repeated mailing of the same survey was sent in January 1994 in an effort to increase the number of respondents.

A majority of the sample (90%) were representatives of the law enforcement community, which was true for the training classes in general. However, other agencies who attended the Attorney General's trainings, such as protective service workers, victim/witness advocates, and District Attorneys were included. The survey was designed to allow respondents to answer the first portion regardless of whether they participated in the training, whereas the latter portion was designated for training participants only. Respondents were permitted to remain anonymous. As a result, there was no way to guarantee that the recipient of each survey actually participated in the Elderly Protection Project's two-day training.

The survey (Appendix 2) consisted of both closed and open ended questions. Some of the questions asked in the initial evaluation, completed by participants at the end of the training sessions, were included to provide for a means of comparison. Background information of the respondent was requested as appropriate. Questions were designed to appraise the applicability of the material covered and issues concerning elder abuse incidents and reporting activity were addressed.

Results

A total of 134 of the 231 surveys were completed and returned. This equals a 58% rate of response. The composition of respondents as identified by their answers to questions of where employed and job title was as follows (Table 5):

Table 5
Distribution of respondents by job title

Title	Frequency	Percentage
Police Officer	52	39%
Sergeant	42	31%
Detective	11	8%
Lieutenant	10	7%
Protective Service Worker	8	6%
Other	6	4%
Victim/Witness Advocate	2	1%
Chief	1	1%
District Attorney	1	1%
Trooper	1	1%
Total	**134**	**100%**

The survey asked if any designated contacts or programs specifically addressing elders existed in the respondent's agency. Three possibilities were presented to check, if applicable, and a space was provided for "other". Some of the twenty-two or 16.5% of respondents who checked "other", described "hotlines" and outside agencies (i.e., council on aging, social services, etc.) as examples. Some answers provided in "other" could have been included in the three areas stated, specifically community policing programs. Chart 7 represents the distribution of respondents indicating any of the three options which reportedly had been implemented in their department or agency.

Chart 7

Agency Strategies for Handling Elder Abuse
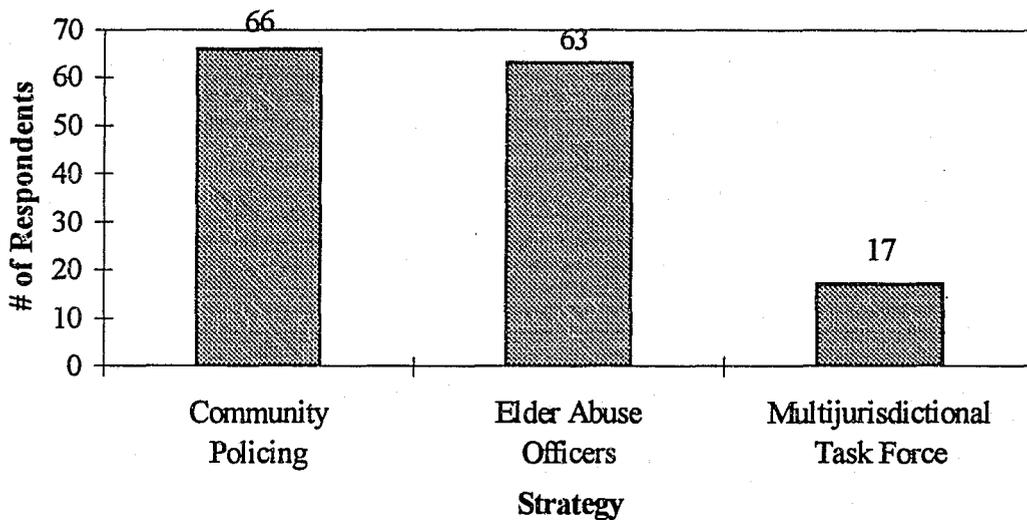
N=134
Note: Numbers total more than 134 due to multiple reports

"Percentage of actual elder abuse currently reported in your area" (Question #4)

The vast majority (over 75%) of respondents described feeling that less than 40% of elder abuse is actually reported. 39% of those who answered, estimated that only 10% of elder abuse cases were reported.

Table 6

Respondents' perception of the percentage of actual
elder abuse cases currently reported in their area

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
0%	23	17%	20%
10%	44	33%	39%
20%	17	13%	15%
30%	12	9%	11%
40%	4	3%	4%
50%	3	2%	3%
60%	2	1%	2%
70%	4	3%	4%
80%	0	0%	0%
90%	2	1%	2%
100%	2	1%	2%
Total	113	84%	100%

Note: 21 cases were missing

"Remaining obstacles to elder abuse being reported" (Question #5)

The subjective nature of the question, "*What remains the greatest obstacle to elder abuse being reported?*" was designed to provide respondents, potentially possessing unique insight in this area, an opportunity to describe what they considered true problems to be addressed. The eagerness to provide this information was reflected in the highest percentage of respondents answering an open-ended question (88%). Responses fell into three general categories focusing on problems with a) the elderly population (the victims), b) law enforcement and human service professionals, and c) relatives and care givers.

Most respondents mentioned that the victim's **fear** of retribution, retaliation, intimidation, the unknown, being left alone or being removed from their home was the most common explanation as to why elder abuse was not reported. Additionally, issues of loyalty to the abuser, especially family members, along with a general reluctance to provide personal information to others, especially the police, was viewed as a prevalent obstacle. Problems with reporting abuse was an initial obstacle followed by the fear of testifying, prosecuting a family member, and "actually being in a courthouse setting." Beyond the problems raised concerned with fear, disbelief, denial, and embarrassment on the part of the victim, limitations caused by mental impairment and frailty were mentioned. In addition, problems associated with isolation and victims' lack of easy access to independent parties in a position to help often contributed to undetected and unreported abuse.

Concern was also expressed regarding inadequate education and information about legal rights. This lack of knowledge about what constitutes elder abuse and how to report it was described as yet another obstacle encountered. "Elders not knowing the law and/or having the skills or faculties to make their situation known to proper authorities" summed up this problem. Finally, several respondents believed that many potential victims lacked confidence in "the system", especially where follow-through, prosecution, and recourse were concerned. "Stereotypes of police, they think we don't have time or that we don't care", was one participant's response.

The obstacles described pertaining to police officers and service providers should be considered within the context that over 90% of respondents were among the law enforcement community. The major difficulties cited herein addressed the need for increased awareness and training among the police about indicators of elder abuse. Some respondents expressed the lack of routine interaction between the elderly population and police as a major problem. Furthermore, "the system" available to process these cases was described as "overworked." Other areas, more applicable to service providers in general, included a reluctance by mandated and unmandated reporters to file, get involved, and then devote time to activities such as testifying in court. Respondents suggested that a reluctance to report elder abuse was also related to reporters' concerns that the situation might come back to them in the form of a lawsuit or a threat on their lives.

Obstacles raised in reference to the public domain described the public's lack of awareness as to the seriousness of the problem of elder abuse and how one goes about reporting such abuse when recognized. And again, the issue of avoiding involvement, whenever possible, in someone else's business was raised.

Tables 7 through 10 represent responses to the four questions (#6 - 9) asking trainees to self-rate their knowledge of elder abuse reporting laws, procedures, communication skills and the training on their ability to recognize signs of elder abuse. The majority of respondents rated their knowledge and related training as "good" with very few, if any, reporting ratings below "fair".

Table 7
Respondents' ratings of their knowledge
of elder abuse reporting laws

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	22	16%
Good	88	66%
Fair	23	17%
Not Good	0	0%
Poor	1	1%
Total	**134**	**100%**

Table 8
Respondents' ratings of their knowledge of the
procedures for responding to elder abuse incidents

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	29	22%
Good	84	63%
Fair	21	16%
Not Good	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	**134**	**100%**

Table 9
Respondents' rating of their knowledge
of the unique aspects of communicating
with elderly people

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	20	15%
Good	84	63%
Fair	26	19%
Not Good	4	3%
Poor	0	0%
Total	134	100%

Table 10
Respondents' rating of their formal training
on recognizing the signs of elder abuse

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	26	19%
Good	72	54%
Fair	32	24%
Not Good	3	2%
Poor	1	1%
Total	134	100%

Despite very favorable reviews of the actual training course immediately proceeding the course itself, responses herein were relatively less enthusiastic. The question of this series which referred specifically to the training (#10) received the lowest total percent of respondents (73%) rating their response as "good" to "excellent".

Evaluation of training experience and relevance

Questions #14 through 18 on the survey asked participants to evaluate their training experience in terms of relevance and usefulness in their work as well as what impact, if any, it had on their reporting of elder abuse. Over 96% of the respondents agreed that the elder abuse training had assisted them in their work (Table 11).

Table 11
Respondents' assessment of the statement:
"the training I received on elder abuse has assisted
me in working in my field"

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	49	37%	42%
Agree	63	47%	54%
Uncertain	4	3%	3%
Disagree	0	0%	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0%
Total	116	87%	100%

Note: 18 cases were missing

An overwhelming majority of respondents reported referring back to the training materials (Table 12). Though over 82% of those who responded claimed that the information conveyed was easy to recall, 16.7% replied that they were "uncertain" (Table 13). When a similar question was posed immediately following the training ("*The information will be easy to remember*"), 96% of the trainees (n=531) fell into the same range of agreement.

Table 12
Respondents' assessment of the statement:
"When I am faced with an issue of elder abuse,
    I refer back to my training"

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	50	37%	43%
Agree	63	47%	55%
Uncertain	2	1%	2%
Disagree	0	0%	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0%
Total	**115**	**86%**	**100%**

Note: 19 cases were missing

Table 13
Respondents' assessment of the statement:
"I find the information I learned in training
    easy to recall"

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	21	16%	18%
Agree	73	54%	64%
Uncertain	19	14%	17%
Disagree	1	1%	1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0%
Total	**114**	**85%**	**100%**

Note: 20 cases were missing

Agreement with, "*I treat elderly people with even more sensitivity now than I did before my training*" (Question #17) can also be considered in comparison to a similar question posed at the end of the training. On the five scale range from agree to disagree, 76% of the trainees "agreed" at the highest end of the scale that "*It [the training] increased my sensitivity to older people*" when they completed the evaluation at the end of the session. Whereas only 40% of those who responded many months later, "strongly agreed" and another 40% "agreed" to statement to statement #17 in the survey (Table

20

14). Social desirability and the way this question might be misinterpreted may have been a factor in how people answered.

Table 14
Respondents' assessment of the statement:
"I treat elderly people with even more sensitivity
    now than I did before my training"

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	46	34%	40%
Agree	46	34%	40%
Uncertain	8	6%	7%
Disagree	14	10%	12%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%	1%
Total	**115**	**86%**	**100%**

Note: 19 cases were missing

There was little question that respondents rated the training as having increased their receptivity to reporting elder abuse (over 89%) and an even higher number stated that they were reporting elder abuse cases when confronted with them (Tables 15 and 16 respectively).

Table 15
Respondents' assessment of the statement:
"Since my training, I have been more open to the idea of
    reporting elder abuse"

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	40	30%	35%
Agree	62	46%	54%
Uncertain	4	3%	4%
Disagree	7	5%	6%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%	1%
Total	**114**	**85%**	**100%**

Note: 20 cases were missing

Table 16

Respondents' assessment of the statement:

"I have been reporting instances of elder abuse when
   confronted with them"

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	44	33%	42%
Agree	59	44%	56%
Uncertain	3	2%	3%
Disagree	0	0%	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0%
Total	106	79%	100%

Note: 28 cases were missing

Interestingly, a slightly smaller percentage of respondents completed the question about actually reporting elder abuse cases.

Elder abuse issues not covered in the training (Question #20)

Only twelve respondents (9%) who answered "yes" to having "encountered any issues relating to elder abuse that were not covered in the training", described what they perceived as areas missing. Some of the examples provided addressed situations which became chronic needs for service, the availability or reported indifference of relevant agency representatives, inadequate services, cultural diversity, emergency placement, and a need for additional professionals to be included as "mandated" elder abuse reports (i.e., "clerks of court"). There were three references to matters of financial exploitation and fraud, which was covered in all training sessions, indicating that some respondents either did not recall the training or did not participate in the program in its entirety.

New programs initiated resulting from the training program (Question #21)

The response to Question #21, asking for "*new programs in your department/agency that may have been initiated as a result of this training program*", included thirty-one respondents (23%) who described such programs. Responses ranged from individual officers to entire units specifically assigned to elder affairs. Many references were made to community policing strategies targeted at working with and responding to special needs and concerns unique to senior citizens. One program, which was noted by several respondents was Triad, a community policing initiative which exemplifies collaboration between law enforcement, senior citizens, and support/protective services to increase safety for elder persons. Another related activity was the distribution of the "vial" or "file of life",

designed to document critical and relevant information made accessible to any emergency worker entering a senior citizen's home in the event of an emergency.

Most useful aspects of the training program (Question #22)

Reports of what aspects of the training was most useful varied. Most responses pointed to the appreciation of concrete materials and factual information to use and refer to as needed. Specifically, the manuals, contact persons/agencies/phone numbers, Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) mandated reporting laws and reporting procedures were repeatedly highlighted. The usefulness of demographic statistics, myths and facts on aging, information specific to financial exploitation and other issues unique to the population (i.e., Alzheimer's disease and senility) were also mentioned. Respondents seemed to find being presented with a variety of perspectives, including an elder's point of view, as well as actually role-playing problem-solving techniques in class quite beneficial.

Responses to this question were extremely positive and descriptive, with over 81% of survey participants providing comments. Overall, there appeared to be a general consensus that the training was not only useful, but provided them with the kind of materials and information they could easily refer to when necessary. One respondent provided an example of how he applied his training in a case when he wrote, "we had a missing Alzheimer male that we found as a result of notes I had -- as to how a patient in that state would react."

Least useful aspects of the training program (Question #23)

The majority of the fifty-two respondents (39%) who commented on "*what aspects of the training proved least useful*", answered "none", "not applicable", or they had not yet experienced an elder abuse case. Some references were made to the reality of "trying to get proper help for someone", problems dealing with specific social service and legal agencies, "aspects dealing with metropolitan issues", and "institutional abuse." On a more concrete level, one respondent reported that there was some duplication of information and another expressed a problem with there being too much to absorb over the long days, recommending briefer training periods.

Suggestions for improving the Elder Protection Project training program (Question #24)

The overall response to the training program was extremely positive. Thus, most of the descriptive feedback fell into the "keep up the good work" or "extend to include more officers" (i.e., "in-service training") domain. If anything, **more** training and **updated** (refresher) sessions in the area were repeatedly requested (or at least a mailing with updated bulletins). Making the training mandatory was offered too.

Suggestions on how the training could be improved included "methods of encouraging elders to communicate with police", adding a training on how to implement programs for the elderly or how to present related topics to the elderly, "ways to assist elders in **avoiding** victimization", including senior citizens as participants and presenters, providing additional information on financial abuse, and offering a "make-up" class for those who were not able to attend both days.

SUMMARY

The evaluation as it was designed and executed suggests several conclusions. The Elder Abuse Protection Training Project was highly successful in getting officers to take the training. It achieved its goals for developing and implementing curricula for recruit and advanced training modules. The scope was broad, both in terms of the numbers of officers trained and in terms of the wide geographic representation of participants in the program. The project appeared to be achieving its goals.

Those individuals who participated in the targeted audiences reported the quality and value of the training to be excellent. The level of enthusiasm rating the training, diminished slightly from the end of the actual training compared to when the survey was mailed several months later. However, many respondents made the point that the training was not only productive, but especially so when compared to other trainings they had attended.

Having participated in a training, the evaluation staff concur with the positive response presented in evaluations and surveys. In addition, training participants expressed to evaluation staff personally that they "heard" the Elderly Protection Project was a particularly quality presentation and useful and served to be an opportunity to network and share mutual experiences related to working with the elderly citizens in their communities.

A review of the number of elder abuse reports to Protection Service Agencies indicated that the timing of training may have had an impact in increasing the number of cases reported. However, since it was difficult to match communities (specific Protection Service Agencies) with corresponding law enforcement officers who participated in the Project's training, drawing major conclusions on the impact of elder abuse reporting must be done cautiously. The fact that elder abuse cases reported has been increasing steadily, in general, is another contributing factor to consider.

How much knowledge was gained by trainees and how useful the information conveyed "on the job" seemed to be fairly high. For example, the vast majority of survey respondents recognized that a great deal of elder abuse continued to go unreported. Most of the reasons provided for elder abuse going unreported reflected those covered in the two-day training. Thus, either participants' perceptiveness to the problem was increased and/or they recalled quite well what was presented by the Project.

Not only were issues raised about obstacles related to senior citizens and their care givers, but respondents acknowledged problems with the role of the law enforcement community. This was

notable given that 90% of survey respondents were law enforcement representatives. Thus, it appears that the trainings were worthwhile simply in increasing awareness of the problem at large, but particularly the role played by the police. In addition, a vast majority of trainees stated that the content of the training presentation and the materials disseminated had been useful in their work. The anecdotal feedback provided good examples of how various police cases dealing with an elderly individual were handled better as a direct result of information conveyed during the training. One could conclude that the Project did an admirable job in their coverage of the issue. Few respondents even answered the question asking for areas NOT covered in training and those who did made minimal suggestions, some of which were, in fact, covered.

In addition to the training being rated highly, numerous initiatives resulting from the training program were reportedly undertaken within police departments. Most of the initiatives described, fell into the realm of community policing. The application of the issues raised by the Elderly Protection Project would be best addressed within the context of collaborative efforts between law enforcement and the community they serve, especially senior citizen residents. Thus, it appears that the training succeeded in reaching their targeted audience, provided them with an increased awareness as well as knowledge of the laws and issues, but left them pointed in a direction to take what they gained and integrate it into their work.

DISCUSSION

It is important to address issues raised associated with evaluating law enforcement training programs in the area of domestic violence. First, though elder abuse perpetrated by family members and those individuals known to the victim would fall within the area of domestic violence, the problem as a whole goes well beyond that of domestic violence. Thus, it is assumed that this factor was considered when this project was proposed and selected as part of an overall study to assess such training programs.

Furthermore, because the evaluation herein was implemented after the training had already been initiated, the tracking of who was trained when from where was not built into the Project's original design, making comparisons between trainings, reports of elder abuse and related crime statistics difficult to argue. Similarly, if this tracking had been set up, then surveys could have also been identified by region in association with time of training and associated data provided by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

Though, to date, crime statistics have not yet been provided to evaluation staff, the data will be limited. Information selected by age of the victim can only be obtained from NIBRS (National Incident Based Reporting System) versus Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). Only 20% of Massachusetts towns are presently reporting NIBRS. Thus, linking those towns who provide such crime data with trainees located within them, is limited due to the nature of the original study design. Future studies in this area should anticipate the need to link elder abuse reports provided by Protection Service Agencies, crime

reports provided by NIBRS reporting Police Departments, and Law Enforcement officials partaking in related trainings in terms of geography and timing.

Lastly, an important factor recommended to include in future evaluations, is the perspective of the elderly community. It would be interesting and most relevant to develop a means of assessing the elderly citizens in a community where the police received training on elder abuse. This is especially important given that many participants reported implementing various community policing initiatives to work directly with senior citizens.

It appears that the Project's training not only accomplished its intended goals, but had a "ripple" effect by simply providing a seemingly renewed appreciation for law enforcement trainings and a service to the community at large. How future trainings in this area are evaluated needs to be re-examined and approached as early into the training program as possible.

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APPENDIX 1

Location of Advanced Training Sessions
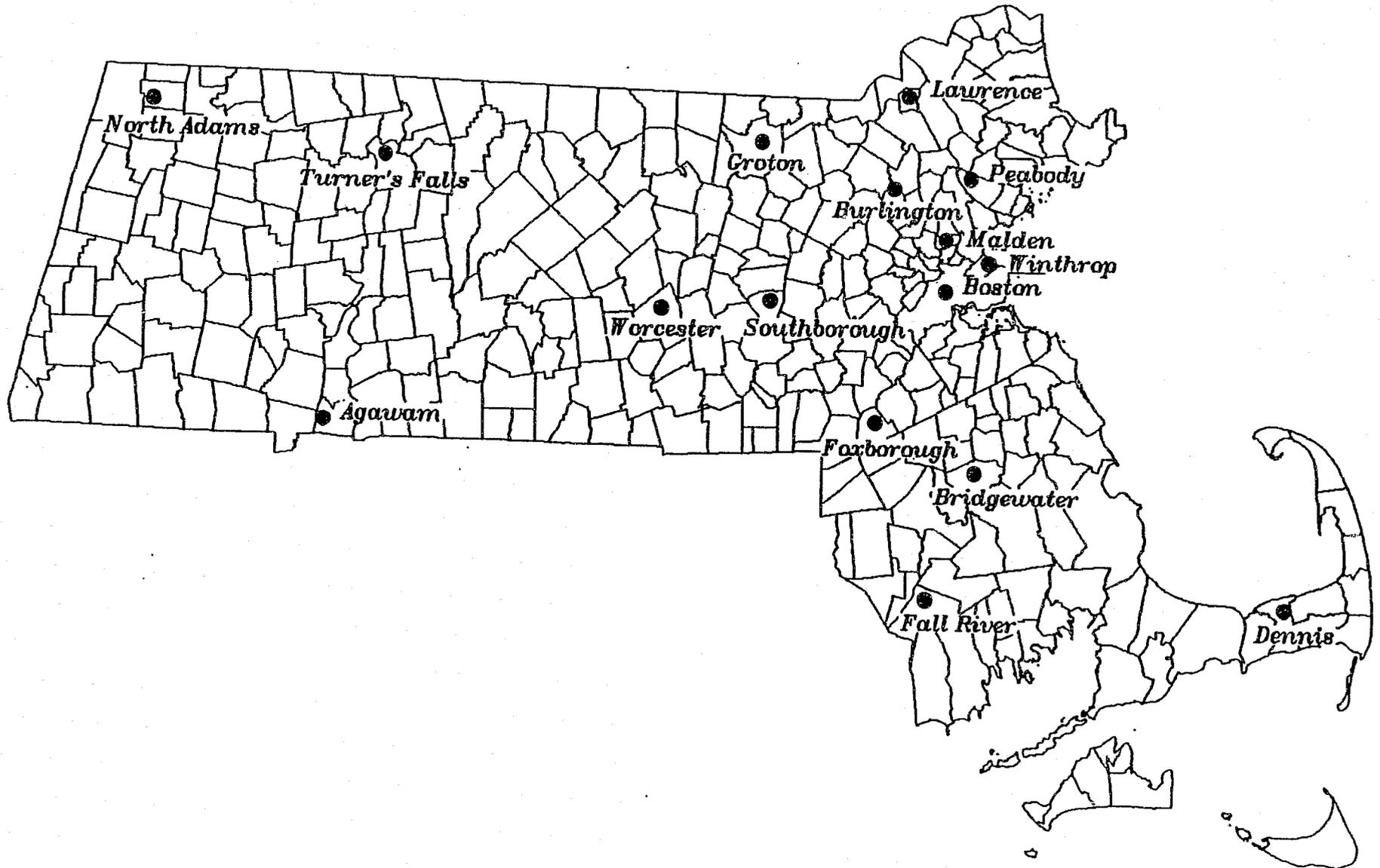
APPENDIX 2

ELDER ABUSE TRAINING PROGRAM EVALUATION

All responses to this questionnaire will be confidential and non-judgmental. Only aggregate information will be published or presented. This is not a test. So, please provide the most accurate information possible.

1. What agency/department do you work for? _____

2. What is your job title? _____

3. Which of the following does your agency/department use? (Please check all that apply.)

   ☐ Elder abuse multidisciplinary task force
   ☐ Officers/workers specializing in elder abuse
   ☐ Community policing program including a focus on elderly people
   ☐ Other_____

4. In your experience, what percentage of **actual** elder abuse is currently reported in your area:

   ☐ 0% ☐ 10% ☐ 20% ☐ 30% ☐ 40% ☐ 50% ☐ 60% ☐ 70% ☐ 80% ☐ 90% ☐ 100%

5. What remains the greatest obstacle to elder abuse being reported?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Please circle the answer which best describes how you feel:

Rate: Excellent to Poor

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Not Good	Poor
6. My knowledge of elder abuse reporting laws is:	1	2	3	4	5
7. My knowledge of the procedures for responding to elder abuse incidents is:	1	2	3	4	5
8. My knowledge of the unique aspects of communicating with elderly people is:	1	2	3	4	5
9. My formal training on recognizing the signs of elder abuse has been:	1	2	3	4	5

10. Have you attended any training sessions on elder abuse issues other than the Attorney General's?

☐ Yes ☐ No **If Yes, please specify**_____

11. Did you complete the two-day advanced law enforcement elder abuse training program?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial (_____days/hours)

If you answered "No" to question 11, please stop here.

12. Where did you attend the Elder Abuse Training session? _____

13. Did you receive a yellow instruction manual at the training?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please circle the answer which best describes how you feel:

Rate: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. The training I received on elder abuse has assisted me in working in my field.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When I am faced with an issue of elder abuse, I refer back to my training.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I find the information I learned in training easy to recall.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I treat elderly people with even more sensitivity now than I did before my training.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Since my training, I have been more open to the idea of reporting elder abuse.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have been reporting instances of elder abuse when confronted with them.	1	2	3	4	5

20. Have you encountered any issues relating to elder abuse that were not covered in the training?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If you answered "yes" to the above question, would you please describe these issues.

_____
_____
_____
_____

21. Are there any new programs in your department/agency that may have been initiated as a result of this training program?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If you answered "yes" to the above question, would you please describe these programs.

_____
_____
_____
_____

22. What aspects of the training program have proved to be **most** useful to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____

23. What aspects of the training program have proved to be **least** useful to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____

24. Please list any suggestions you may have about how we can improve the Elder Abuse Project training program.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Please return before February 17, 1995 by FAX 617-727-5356 or by mail in the SASE.