

# ADULT ABUSE and SELF NEGLECT

WHAT ARE THEY & WHAT IS  
BEING DONE ABOUT THEM?

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# Today's Remarks

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- What is NAPSA and what is APS
- Overview of elder abuse in general
- Self-neglect in particular:
  - Indicators
  - Risk factors
  - Interventions
  - Role of APS
- Federal role in elder & adult abuse
- Summary and discussion points

- The only national organization representing adult protective services and clients.
- 700+ members from every state
- An annual conference –in New York in 2010 – a newsletter, various committees, etc.
- The national voice of vulnerable adults, advocating for the services they need, and providing professional training and information to the APS field.
- Funded by the Admin. on Aging and others

# What is Adult Protective Services?

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## ■ Purpose:

- To investigate reports of abuse, neglect, self-neglect and exploitation of adults with disabilities age 18+ (42 states at minimum).
- To intervene to protect the victim to extent possible.

## ■ Authorization:

- APS is the statutorily authorized entity under each state's laws to receive and investigation reports of elder abuse.

# Adult Protective Services (APS)

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- APS professionals are the **first responders** to elder abuse and abuse of younger adults with disabilities – APS investigates, intervenes, protects.
- APS workers may be the only people who see victims in their homes (except for predators).
- APS = the **“boots on the ground”** in the fight against elder and vulnerable adult abuse.
- APS work is difficult & dangerous.
- **APS saves the lives and assets** of vulnerable adults.

# APS ≠ APS

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- ▶ APS can differ from state to state & county to county:
  - ▶ Definitions
  - ▶ Client eligibility: age; disability; residence
  - ▶ Mandated reporting – 11 states require financial institutions to report abuse to APS
  - ▶ Resources
- ▶ APS budgets are being slashed in virtually every state while the client population soars

# Elder Abuse: Just the Facts

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- New research findings from New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (Dr. Lachs et al)
  - Statewide random telephone surveys of community dwelling older persons compared to cases reported anywhere (APS, police, aging service, DV).
  - **One in 13 persons** 60+ reported abuse within the previous 12 months (**7.6%**).
  - Sample excluded persons in facilities, with dementia, without telephones, etc.

# Elder Abuse Underreported

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## **NYS Prevalence Study** (abuse by others):

- For every elder abuse case reported to any agency, **23.5** cases go unreported.
- **For every case of financial exploitation reported, 44 go unreported.**
- **Only one in 57 neglect cases is ever reported.**
- **Seniors reported financial abuse occurs more frequently than any other type of elder abuse.**
- Most elder abuse (90%) is committed by family members.



# Costs and Consequences of EA

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Abused seniors are:

- **3X** more likely to die (Lachs).
- **4X** more likely to go into a nursing home (Lachs).
- More likely to utilize medical services at higher rates (DV studies).
- At risk of needing Medicaid as a direct result of financial exploitation (**9%**) (Utah study).
- **→ Elder abuse = huge drain on Medicare, Medicaid & other public programs**

# Self Neglect - Type of Adult Abuse

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- NAPSA's policy is that self neglect is a form vulnerable adult abuse
- A significant portion of APS work is devoted to self-neglect
- Not every state includes self neglect in APS but most do
- Self neglectors are very expensive: calls to police, public health, zone enforcement, animal control and repeated medical interventions

# Self Neglect Defined by NAPSA

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- An adult's inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks including
  - (a) obtaining essential food, clothing, shelter, and medical care;
  - (b) obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health, or general safety; and/or
  - (c) managing one's own financial affairs.
- Choice of lifestyle or living arrangement is not, in itself, evidence of self-neglect.

# Self Neglect – Signs of

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- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- Hypothermia/hyperthermia
- Excessive dirt or odor, hazardous, unsafe or unclean living conditions
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing

# Self Neglect – More signs of

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- Missing eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures or prostheses
- Unexpected/unexplained deterioration of health
- Bedsores
- Signs of excessive drugging, refusal to take medication or other drug misuse.

From WCADV on Health Canada website.

# Self Neglect – Risks of

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- Self-neglectors are *2X as likely to die* as non-self-neglectors
- Self neglect is an independent risk factor for death
- *Self neglect*, the most common reported form of elder abuse, *occurs 3X as often* as caregiver neglect or physical abuse.

Dr. Carmel Dyer, Consortium for Research in Elder Self-Neglect (CREST)

<http://www.bcm.edu/crest/?PMID=3705>

# Self Neglectors: Characteristics of

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- Generally or often:
  - Isolated
  - Untrusting
  - Fearful
  - Independent
  - Do not see any problems with situation
  - Do not want any help
  - May have a history of trauma

# Self Neglectors: What do we know?

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- They are more likely to:
  - Live alone
  - Be female
  - Be older
  - Have a substance abuse problem

From the Health Canada website



# Self Neglectors Are Likely to be Ill

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- Physically, they have higher rates of:
  - Heart disease
  - Depression (51%)
  - 2/3's have physical impairments which hamper their abilities to perform ADLs.
  - Poor nutrition plays a role

# Self Neglectors Are Likely to be Ill

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- Mentally, they are more likely to have:
  - Dementia
  - Mental Illness
  - **Half score poorly on cognitive tests**
- Many fail to recognize the danger they're in

# Self Neglect Occurs in Isolation

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**95%** lack adequate social supports – the most common finding

Dr. Carmel Dyer

# Hoarding: a special case

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- The acquisition of and the inability to discard worthless items although they appear to others to have no value\*
- May see self as creative or thrifty, also as an environmentalist and/or collector
- If animal hoarder, sees self as savior
- *Cannot* make the decision to dispose of items
- May feel out of control, embarrassed, overwhelmed

\*Frost and Gross, 1993; also Kim Hubbard and Carol Tryon, Orange Co., CA

# Why do some people self neglect?

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- OCD in some cases of hoarding
- Dementia leading to loss of executive function → can't make decisions
- Inability to ask for or accept help
- Fierce desire to maintain independence
- Paranoia or delusions
- Traumatic events leading to withdrawal as form of self protection
- Functional impairments

# What's to be done?

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- Adult Protective Services (APS) responds in most states
- Self neglect the most common type of abuse reported to APS (27%)\*
- In some states self-neglect makes up most of the APS cases
- Self neglect cases are very time intensive
- Self neglect often draws the attention of the community and the press

\*2004 APS Data Survey; National Center on Elder Abuse

# What can APS do re self neglect?

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- In some states, APS can take immediate, temporary, emergency custody of a self neglecter in serious jeopardy
- Only persons declared by a court to lack decisional capacity, based on medical evidence, can have their lives taken over by others once they are adults
- Emphasis on self-determination can prevent interventions

# What are the conflicts?

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## ■ **Autonomy:**

- *I'm and American, darn it.* I can do what I please with my life and my property and the government should butt out.
- Professionals have an ethical duty to respect autonomous decisions of competent adults

## ■ **Beneficence:**

- Professionals must try to act in the best interest of their clients
- If client lacks capacity, professional assumes they want needed help



# Intervening in self neglect cases

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- If client refuses help and interventions are judged necessary:
  - *WHO* DECIDES?
  - And *HOW* DO THEY DECIDE?

# SUCCESS IS POSSIBLE

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- Perhaps not in all cases
- Give the client a sense of control
- Provide social supports in a gradual manner
- Never shame or belittle the client
- Provide needed medical interventions
- Support more research

# Hoarding Task Forces

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- Multi-disciplinary:
  - APS
  - Animal control
  - Public health
  - Zoning authorities & fire departments
  - Health care providers
  - Social service/aging service providers
  - Mental health professionals
  - Public guardian agencies

# Most important principles

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- **Respect client's rights**
- **Gain and build the client's trust**
- **Accept small victories**
- **Work collaboratively**

# Policy Issues

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- State laws, policies and services differ
- Time and resources APS has to devote to self neglect cases at risk
- Emphasis on arrest and prosecution – i.e. vulnerable adult abuse = domestic violence – de-legitimizes the suffering and victimization of self-neglectors
- Ongoing, fundamental conflicts of autonomy and self-determination vs. protection and safety

# Intervening in self neglect cases

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What do *you* think?

- Where should the lines be drawn?
- How should the process work?
- When does the community's desires outweigh those of the individual?
- What assessment tools should be used? Have they been tested?
- What agencies and professionals should be involved?

# Finally

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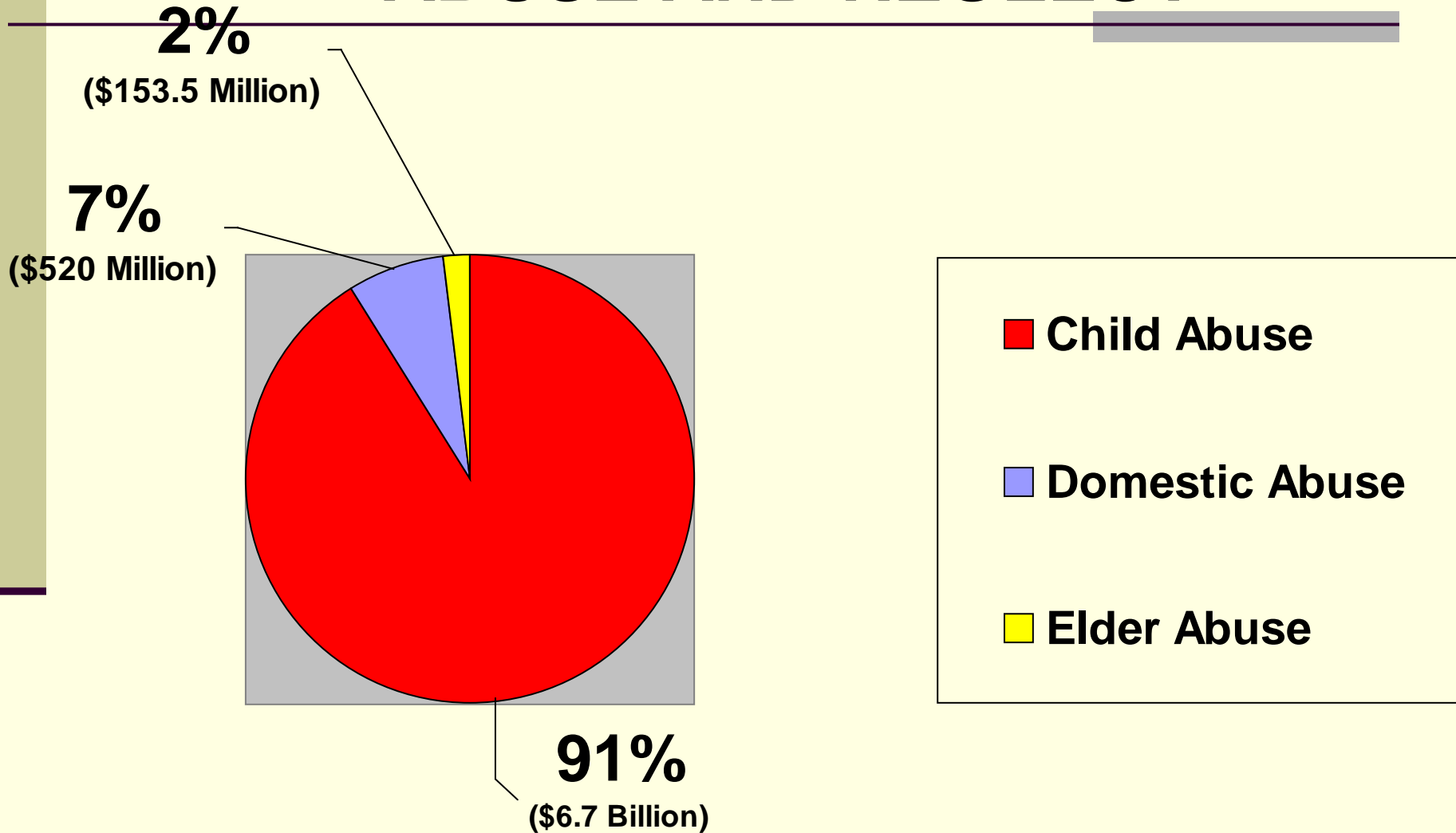
- What are the rights of the individual to live in a self destructive manner vs. the rights and obligations of the community in which he or she lives?
- Please let me know when you have it all figured out!

What's the government doing?

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# FEDERAL DOLLARS SPENT ON ABUSE AND NEGLECT

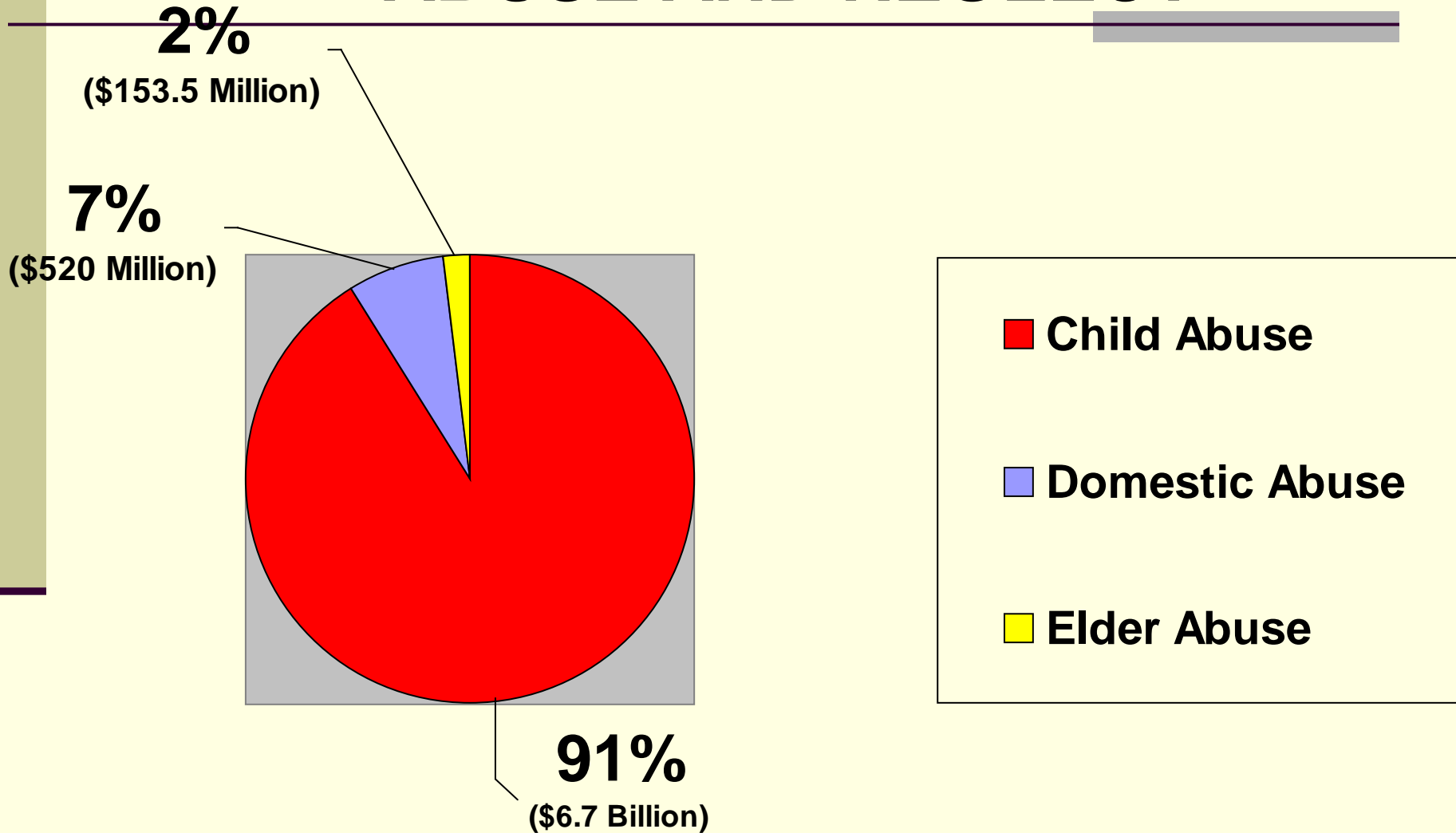


# The Federal Government's Response to Elder Abuse Is:

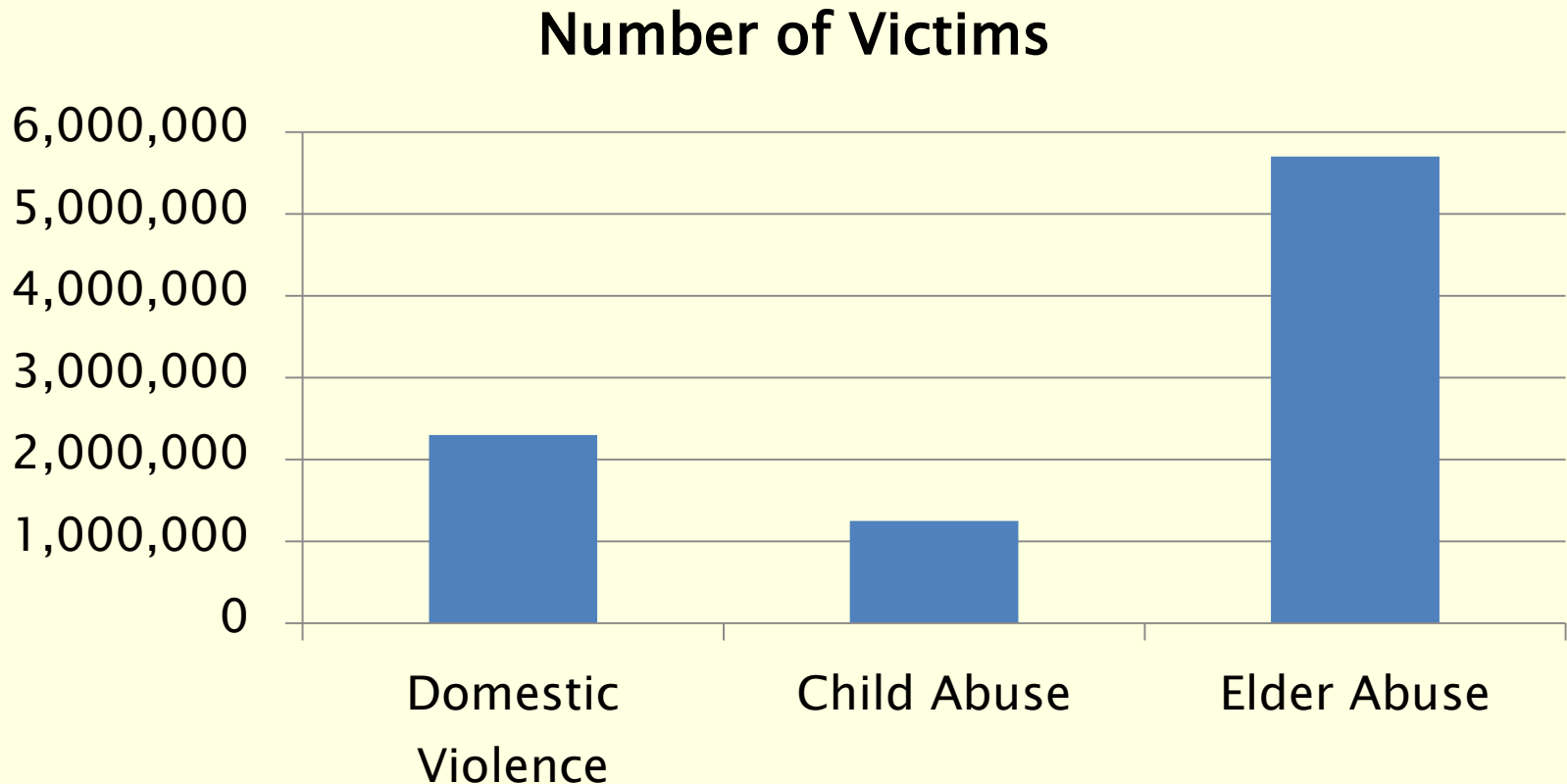
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- **\$11.9 Million** in designated funding in 2009 (<\$.21/person 60 and older).
- **\$0** dollars in designated funding for Adult Protective Services
- Some states use SSBG \$'s - House Republican budget eliminates SSBG as duplicative funding.
- **Vulnerable adult abuse victims the only victims which get no direct federal help.**

# FEDERAL DOLLARS SPENT ON ABUSE AND NEGLECT



# Estimated Numbers of US Crime/Abuse Victims by Age/Type



\*EA Victims based on 2009 Acierno study

# Elder Justice Act Now Law

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- EJA authorizes first federal funding stream for state and local APS Programs at **\$100M/year**
- Authorizes \$25M for APS demonstration grants
- President Obama included **\$15M** in new money for APS demo grants in FY 2012 budget request (+\$1.5M for Indian APS & \$5M for Long-term Care Ombudsman Prog.)

# In Summary, Elder Abuse Is:

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- A huge public health, social justice and criminal justice issue.
- More rampant and more lethal than previously known.
- An large but invisible cost to Medicaid et al.
- Affects the fastest growing population group.
- According to surveys, reported cases are increasingly complex.
- Not a priority for the federal government



*Thank You!!*

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