



**Focus Group on Crime Victimization
of Older Persons:
Recommendations to the
Office of Justice Programs**



March 30, 1998

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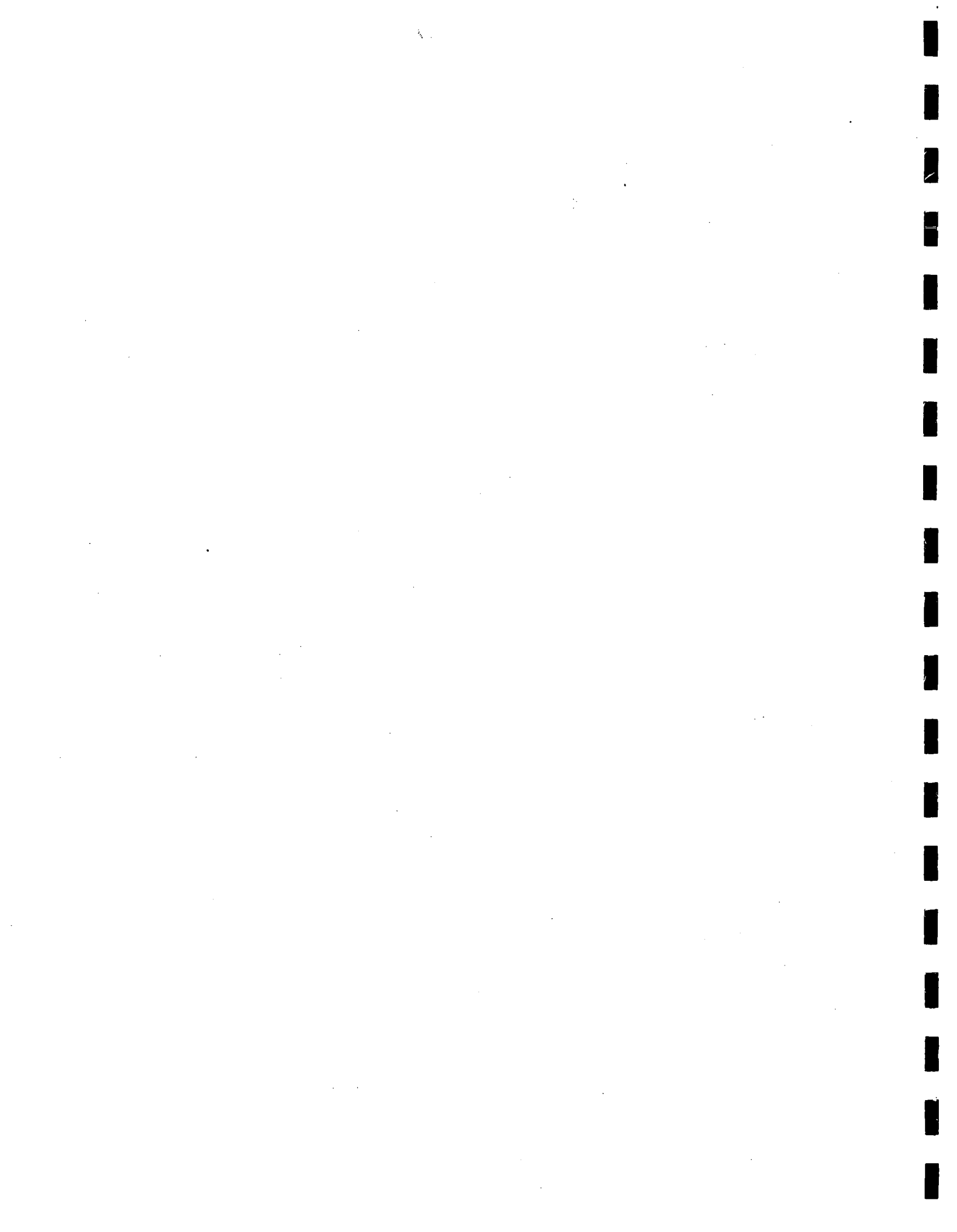
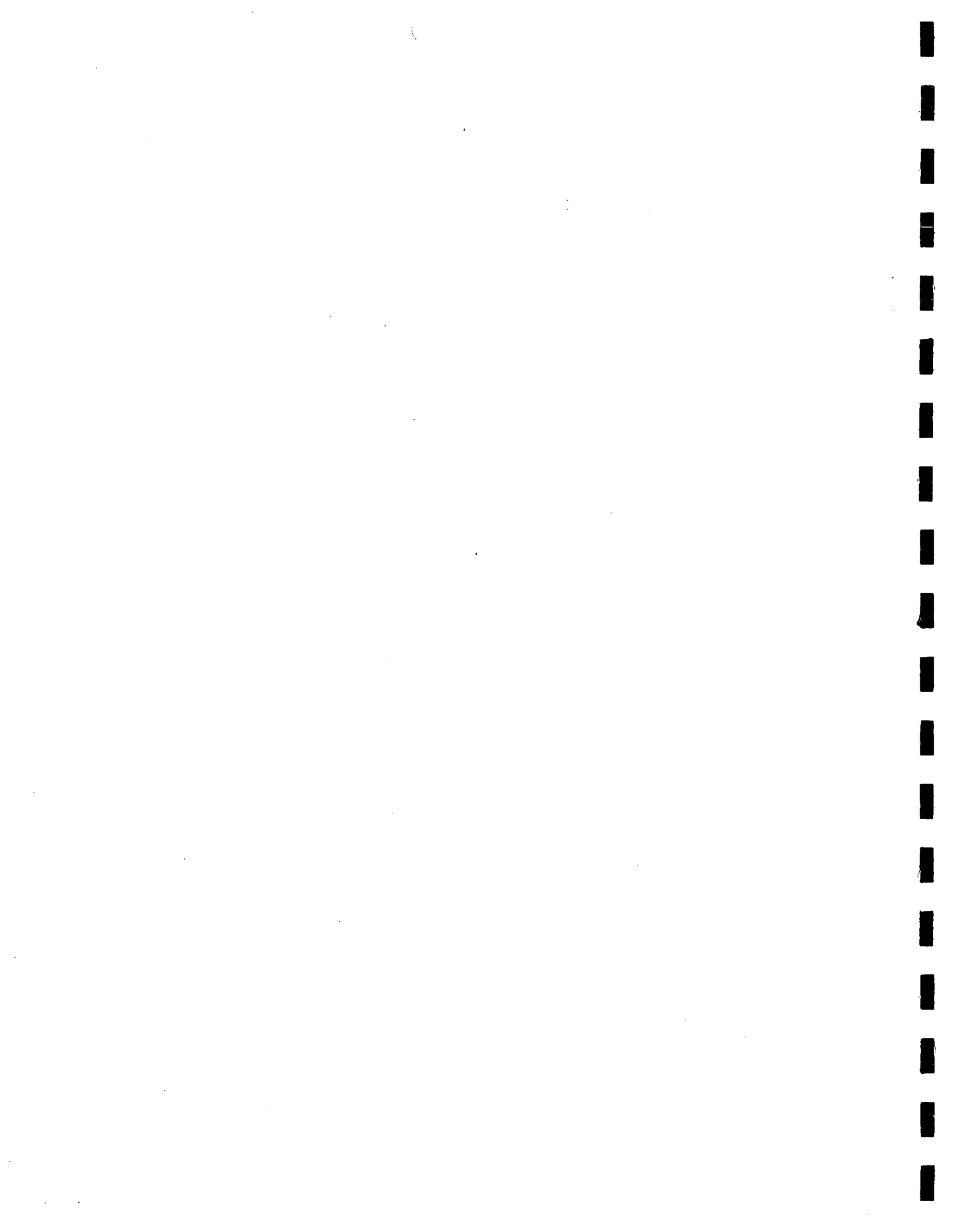


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Background

Introduction

In light of Attorney General Janet Reno's commitment to elevating the role of the Department of Justice in addressing crime victimization of older persons, the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), through funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, convened a focus group March 30, 1998 on this topic. Focus group participants were asked to identify critical issues related to prevention, enforcement, and the response of the criminal justice system and other institutions. They were also charged with making recommendations about how the Department of Justice -- in particular the Office of Justice Programs and its bureaus and offices -- can support state, local, and tribal efforts in this area.

Planning for the focus group involved OJP and most of its bureaus and offices -- including the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute for Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, and Violence Against Women Grants Office -- as well as the Executive Office for United States Attorneys. The one-day session was held at OJP in Washington, D.C. Lori Stiegel, Associate Staff Director of the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly, and Candace Heisler, then-Assistant District Attorney in San Francisco, served as facilitators for the discussion and are the authors of this report.

The recommendations provided in this report form the core elements of an overall strategy for the Office of Justice Programs to undertake in improving its support for state, local, and tribal efforts in this area. A draft of this report was circulated to OJP's bureaus and offices in order to help inform their planning for fiscal year 1999.

Focus Group Participants

Focus group participants represented national, state, and local experts in the areas of aging, elder victimization,¹ and criminal justice. They were from a broad range of disciplines and professions involved in these issues, including:

- state criminal justice agencies in states with significant older populations
- American Association of Retired Persons

¹Throughout this report, the term "elder victimization" is used to refer to (a) elder abuse, both domestic and institutional, (b) crimes against older persons, and (c) fraud against older persons. An explanation of these three categories appears in Section I: Overview of Elder Victimization.

- American Prosecutors Research Institute
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- National Association of Adult Protective Services Administrators
- National Association of Attorneys General
- National Association of State Units on Aging
- National Center on Elder Abuse
- National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
- National Criminal Justice Association
- National District Attorneys Association
- National Hispanic Council on Aging
- National Indian Council on Aging
- National Sheriffs' Association
- National Institute on Aging/National Institutes of Health
- U.S. Administration on Aging
- individual federal, state, tribal, and local practitioners representing various disciplines within the aging network, criminal justice system, and research community.

A complete list of the focus group participants is included as Appendix 1. In addition to those invited from outside the Department, representatives from the Department components involved in planning the focus group attended as observers.

Purpose of Focus Group

In opening remarks, OJP Deputy Assistant Attorney General Noël Brennan, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Director Nancy Gist, and BJA Program Development Division Director Timothy Murray urged the focus group participants to discuss what is happening on elder victimization and to reflect on what should be happening at every level of government. They also asked participants to make recommendations to the Department regarding support for innovations through technical assistance, particularly through partnerships with entities that

traditionally have not worked with the Department of Justice. Specifically, the participants were asked to develop recommendations on ways of preventing and combating crime victimization of older persons, as well as ways of better assisting those older persons who have been victimized. The Department's representatives stated their expectation that the focus group would identify critical issues and problem areas, model programs and promising practices, and existing partnerships and how they are accomplishing their goals and tasks.

Demographic Imperative for Focus Group

The Department's interest in strengthening its leadership role in efforts to prevent and respond to elder victimization is quite timely in light of the growth of the aging population in the United States. According to a report by demographer Jacob Siegel for the U.S. Administration on Aging ("Aging Into the 21st Century," May 31, 1996, www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/stats/aging21) the middle series of the Bureau of the Census population projections released in 1996 indicate that there will be a moderate increase in the older population until about 2010, a rapid increase for the next 20 years to 2030, and then a return to a moderate increase between 2030 and 2050. Between 2010 and 2030, the growth rate of older persons will exceed that of the population under age 65, resulting in a sharp increase of the proportion of older persons to 20 percent of the country's overall population.

Siegel indicates that the population of older persons who are 85 or older will grow rapidly between 2030 and 2050. Census Bureau figures demonstrate that aging of the baby-boomers will result in at least a 400 percent cumulative growth of the 85+ population. That age group will comprise nearly 5 percent of the population in 2050, as compared with 1.4 percent currently. Some particularly vulnerable groups will also experience large increases. These groups include the "oldest old" (age 85+) living alone, older women, older racial minorities living alone and with no living children, and older unmarried persons with no living children and no siblings. Siegel reports that there will be large increases in the number of persons with poor health and disabilities and, concomitantly, in the number of persons requiring formal care (generally nursing home care) and informal care (in-home care).

The anticipated increase in these particular groups of older persons is significant because they are the most vulnerable to crime victimization. Research has indicated that the risk factors for elder abuse include the dependency of the victim, social isolation, and the frailty, disability or impairment of the victim (Wolf, "Understanding Elder Abuse and Neglect," *Aging*, No. 367, U.S. Administration on Aging, 1996). These same factors, combined with their control of wealth, also heighten their exposure to crimes and frauds (Heisler, "Crime and Safety: The New Peril for Older Persons").

Overview of Contents

Section I of this report of the focus group discussion provides an overview of elder victimization and outlines recent and ongoing federal efforts to address crime victimization of

older persons. Section II summarizes the discussion of the focus group participants in identifying the issues that must be addressed in this area: (1) society's response to elder victimization; (2) the perceptions and responses of older persons to crime victimization; and (3) the response of the criminal justice system. Section III provides the focus group recommendations to the Department of Justice. These recommendations fall into five broad categories: (1) technical assistance; (2) research; (3) professional development and training; (4) prevention through public education and awareness; and (5) recommendations for specific professional groups.

Section I: An Overview of Elder Victimization

This section defines and discusses the problem of elder victimization. It offers the background necessary for understanding (1) the problems with the current response of the criminal justice system to elder victimization that were identified by the participants and are covered in Section II and (2) the recommendations offered by the focus group participants that are set forth in Section III.

Neither the Justice Department staff nor the focus group facilitators provided the participants with a definition of "elder victimization." Telemarketing fraud, however, was excluded from the discussion because the Department has supported a number of efforts addressing that issue. "Elder victimization" was used loosely by participants throughout the focus group, but for the purposes of this report the term is defined to include the broad categories of (1) elder abuse, (2) crime against older persons, and (3) fraud against older persons. Each of these categories is explained below.

Elder abuse (which practitioners and researchers sometimes refer to as "*elder abuse and neglect*," "*elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation*," or "*elder mistreatment*") takes a number of forms. Elder abuse occurs in two types of settings: domestic (in the community, i.e., not within an institution) and institutional (in long-term care facilities or other health care institutions). Neither a federal definition nor a common state definition of elder abuse exists, so this report will use the following categories and definitions developed by the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA).²

- Physical Abuse -- use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment.
- Sexual Abuse -- non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
- Emotional/Psychological Abuse -- infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts.
- Neglect -- the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an older person.
- Abandonment -- the desertion of an older person by an individual who has physical custody of the older person or by a person who has assumed responsibility for providing care to the older person.

²"Elder Abuse Information Series #1," National Center on Elder Abuse (1996).

- Financial Exploitation -- illegal or improper use of an older person's funds, property, or assets.
- Self-Neglect -- behavior of an older person that threatens his or her health or safety.

State laws vary significantly as to which categories are included in their definitions of elder abuse and, further, how those categories are defined. The lack of common definition makes it difficult to obtain national data on the reported incidence of elder abuse.

Crime against older persons is the term used in this report to refer to "street crime" or crime committed by individuals who are not related to or who are not in a fiduciary or trust relationship with the older victim.

Fraud against older persons refers herein to scams and other fraudulent practices that constitute financial crimes against older persons. Fraud against older persons may be committed by someone unknown to the victim or by someone who is acquainted with or in a fiduciary or trust relationship with the victim. Some fraud against older persons is also "elder abuse."

Some of the forms of elder abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation) clearly constitute crimes under state law, whereas others (neglect, abandonment) are only treated as crimes in some jurisdictions. While self-neglect clearly is not a crime, it may be an outcome of or a response to the victimization of an older person.

Only in recent years has our society begun to recognize that elder abuse is a crime as well as a social services issue. Some background will help the reader understand the development of the social services approach and the critical role that the Department of Justice can play in recharacterizing the dialogue to focus on the criminal aspect of this problem.

The original research and dialogue about elder abuse treated it as a problem resulting from "caregiver stress." In other words, our perception was that older persons were (1) physically abused by caregivers who became overwhelmed by the burden of providing care and lashed out in anger or frustration or (2) neglected by caregivers who had the best of intentions but did not know how or lacked the mental or physical ability to provide adequate care. The response to this problem was the development in every state and the District of Columbia of a reporting law (either mandatory or voluntary) and a distinct social services system to respond to reports of elder abuse.³ In each jurisdiction the system is implemented by an Adult Protective Services (APS) program that receives and investigates reports of abuse and then, working with

³North Dakota is in the process of establishing a social services system to respond to reports of elder abuse; however, it does have a reporting law.

social and/or aging services, offers and arranges or provides protective services when reports are substantiated.⁴

APS programs were authorized by state laws modeled after child abuse statutes. The premise of these programs was that elder abuse could be stopped by (1) the provision of social services that would help to alleviate the burden and stress faced by the caregiver or (2) by the removal of the older victim from the home. But APS worker experience and additional research soon indicated that there were many more sinister causes of elder abuse. Older persons were physically abused and sexually assaulted by caregivers and non-caregivers for reasons other than stress. Spouses and other intimate partners were violent to their partners throughout long relationships and in relationships that began when they were older. Family members and fiduciaries exploited older persons because they believed that they were entitled to an "early inheritance" or simply thought they could get away with it. Caregivers decided not to pursue necessary medical treatment of bed sores or other conditions because it would "cost too much" or reduce their inheritance.

State legislatures and APS programs responded to this growing understanding of the causes of elder abuse by expanding the approach to the problem. Legislatures enacted new provisions in state APS laws to expand the definition of elder abuse to include sexual abuse, financial exploitation, and other problems that were not recognized in the early years of the field. Legislatures also enacted criminal penalties for various forms of elder abuse by adding new crimes to the state's criminal code or by establishing enhanced penalties for crimes against older persons. Increasingly, APS programs have used a multidisciplinary team approach to address difficult cases and policy and practice issues, developing relationships with law enforcement and other allied professionals. Efforts to train allied professionals about elder abuse and APS have been underway for a number of years and the number of cross-training programs has risen substantially.

Increasing experience with and research about elder victimization has led to a greater understanding of the profiles of victims and perpetrators and the needs of victims, including:

- Older persons are often targeted by criminals (including scam artists) and abusers because of their physical and mental frailties, their dependence on others, and their control of

⁴In most jurisdictions, the APS program also is responsible for investigating allegations of adult abuse and arranging or providing services to younger victims of abuse. These state laws extend APS authority to persons over age 18 who are either disabled, vulnerable, or impaired. In some states, the requirement that a victim be disabled, vulnerable, or impaired may apply to older persons as well. Other states, however, authorize APS involvement for younger persons who are disabled, vulnerable, or impaired and for older persons who are simply of a certain age (usually 60 or 65) whether or not they are disabled, vulnerable, or impaired.

wealth (Wolf, "Understanding Abuse and Neglect," *Aging*, No. 367, U.S. Administration on Aging, 1996).

- While older persons are significantly less likely than younger persons to become victims of violent crime, personal theft, or household crime, they have a greater fear of crime than other age groups and this fear dramatically reduces their participation in society ("Elderly Victims of Crime," *National Victim Assistance Academy*, U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- Crime has an enormous impact on the physical, emotional, and economic well-being of older persons. Generally, older persons are less able to recover financially from crime because they live on reduced incomes or because they lack jobs and cannot replenish lost resources. Older crime victims are more likely to be physically injured than younger victims. The inability of older victims to recover from the physical and financial effects often associated with victimization makes the psychological impact of crime more profound for them than it is for younger victims (Plotkin, *Improving the Police Response to Domestic Elder Abuse*, Police Executive Research Forum, 1993).
- Older persons, particularly those in minority groups, may have negative perceptions of the criminal justice system (Nerenberg, "Culturally Specific Outreach," *Understanding and Combating Elder Abuse in Minority Communities*, 1998). Moreover, physical or mental frailties may make it more difficult for them than it is for younger persons to access the system ("Elderly Victims of Crime," *National Victim Assistance Academy*, U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- Victims of elder abuse typically are female, are disproportionately represented in the 75+ age category, have one or more physical or mental impairments, have assets, are socially isolated, and are at greatest risk of harm from those with whom they live (Heisler, "Crime and Safety: The New Peril for Older Persons").
- Abusers of older persons are most often the victims' adult children, live with the victim, are experiencing some form of stress, have committed more than one act of abuse, have a substance abuse problem, have emotional problems, and are financially dependent on the victim (Heisler, "Crime and Safety: The New Peril for Older Persons").
- Older persons in minority populations may face additional problems that make them even more vulnerable to crime victimization than older persons in the majority group. Minority older persons are often poorer and in worse health than white older persons. They are often more isolated due to language barriers. They may face discrimination, a decline in status, and a loss of their culture's traditional support systems. They may refuse to use or be unable to access mainstream social services because of cultural attitudes, distrust, language barriers, and lack of knowledge. Moreover, advocates from minority communities and recent research studies indicate that some minority cultures

perceive elder victimization in a different manner than does the white culture. (Stanford, "Diversity in an Aging Society -- Abuse: The Wild Card," *Understanding and Combating Elder Abuse in Minority Communities*, 1998).

To date, the federal response to elder victimization has been limited but nonetheless highly significant. Two federal agencies -- the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services -- have devoted resources to the issues of elder victimization.

The Office of Justice Programs has supported numerous programs related to crimes and frauds against older persons.

- BJA and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) jointly funded the Triad program (an initiative of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and National Sheriffs' Association (NSA)), which seeks to promote community volunteerism, reduce victimization, and lessen the impact of crime and violence on older persons.
- Supported by a Departmental earmark for "programs to assist law enforcement in preventing and stopping marketing scams against senior citizens," BJA has undertaken a Telemarketing Fraud Curriculum Initiative. Under this initiative, the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), working with the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) and the National White Collar Crime Center (NWCCC), has developed a training curriculum for prosecutors and investigators to help address these crimes.
- In 1997, BJA provided support for a symposium hosted by NAAG featuring seminars and discussions on various topics concerning older persons and the criminal justice system.
- In 1998, BJA awarded a grant to the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) for the Home Improvement Fraud Against Seniors Program. APRI will provide local prosecutors with training and technical assistance designed to help them increase prosecution, prevention, and education efforts focused on protecting older persons from home improvement fraud.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is developing a statistical report on elder victimization using data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). These statistics will include comparisons of victimization of older persons with that of other age groups, patterns of victimization that are different among older persons than among other groups in the population, and some statistics on violence committed against older persons by relatives and others well known to the victim.

- In 1996, NIJ awarded a two-year research grant to Victim Services in New York City to conduct (in cooperation with the New York City Police Department) an evaluation of a joint community policing and social service response to elder abuse.
- In 1998, OVC awarded a grant to the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence and Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly to jointly develop a curriculum for lawyers about domestic violence and elder abuse.
- Also in 1998, OVC awarded a grant to the ABA Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly to develop a curriculum on elder abuse for victim assistance professionals.
- In 1997, OVC awarded grants under its Telemarketing Fraud Prevention and Public Awareness Program. The goal of this program is to support federal, state, and local efforts among law enforcement, crime prevention, victim assistance, consumer protection, adult protective services, and programs for older persons in the implementation of public education and training efforts. Funded projects include:
 - (1) Training and information on fraud for bank personnel throughout the state of Oregon and creation of services for older fraud victims.
 - (2) Production and distribution of a booklet aimed at preventing telemarketing and telephone fraud in Baltimore (including use as an insert in the Sunday edition of the Baltimore Sun at the newspaper's cost).
 - (3) A national, coordinated public education and awareness and training effort among the NSA and a range of agencies and corporations, including the AARP, NAAG, NDAA, Triad, NSA, state sheriffs' associations, and Radio Shack. Pilot programs are being conducted in Maryland, Montana, Virginia, and Washington with replication planned nationwide.
 - (4) A public education campaign by the National Hispanic Council on Aging to combat telemarketing fraud in the Latino community including: distribution of information and meetings of small groups of seniors in south Texas and the Washington, D.C. area to discuss telemarketing fraud issues, and development of a peer counseling program for older persons to provide victim assistance.
- OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) published a booklet entitled *Guidelines for the Screening of Persons Working With Children, the Elderly, and Individuals with Disabilities in Need of Support*, prepared by the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law.

- The OJP Violence Against Women Grants Office (VAWGO) Fiscal Year 1998 applications for the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and the Technical Assistance Program included a number of special interest areas, one of which was "community-driven initiatives to address violence against women among diverse, traditionally underserved populations," including older women. Under its Technical Assistance Program, OJP/VAWGO has awarded a grant to the American Bar Association Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly to provide training and technical assistance on issues related to older battered women to current recipients of OJP grants under the Violence Against Women Act.

Department of Justice efforts related to elder abuse and crime victimization of older persons extend outside of OJP. Several components within the Department (including the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, Criminal Division, Civil Division, Civil Rights Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Executive Office of United States Attorneys, and the Office of Justice Programs), are involved in a broad Nursing Home Initiative, which is aimed at improvement of enforcement of nursing home fraud and abuse through investigation, litigation, and legislation efforts. As part of the Nursing Home Initiative, the Justice Department and Department of Health and Human Services convened a conference in the fall of 1998 that brought together key federal, state and local agencies involved in nursing home regulation, oversight, and enforcement. The purpose of the conference was to gain a better understanding across agencies of the current law and practice with respect to nursing home enforcement. Following this conference the Department has undertaken several efforts to improve and expand existing enforcement activities.

OJP components have recently undertaken two efforts as part of the overall initiative. First, OVC will convene a focus group of experts to explore the needs of victims of abuse, neglect, and fraud in nursing homes. The purpose of the focus group is to identify key victim issues and urgent unmet needs and to develop multi-disciplinary recommendations for addressing these problems. Additionally, BJA is supporting a survey and analysis of state statutes that address patient abuse and neglect, as well as the development of model patient abuse and neglect legislation.

Individual U.S. Attorneys' offices also have initiated efforts related to crime victimization of older persons. For example, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Carolina used a portion of its training funds to cosponsor a state conference on financial exploitation of the elderly and to pay for national experts to attend and present at the conference.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through its Administration on Aging (AoA), has funded public awareness efforts, collaborative initiatives in states and local communities, demonstration projects, research, and technical assistance on elder abuse. In recent years, budget cuts have eliminated or dramatically reduced funding for public awareness, demonstration projects, and research. However, AoA is still able to provide some support to collaborative efforts and to fund the National Center on Elder Abuse, which is responsible for

providing information about elder abuse to the public and professionals, providing technical assistance, disseminating information to and providing training for state offices on aging and other public and nonprofit agencies, and conducting short-term research activities. Additionally, AoA and the HHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funded a multi-year national incidence study on elder abuse. The results of this study were published in September 1998. The study report (without appendices) can be found at AoA's website: www.aoa.dhhs.gov/abuse/report/default.htm. The National Aging Information Center (NAIC) is disseminating a limited number of copies, including the appendices. The NAIC may be contacted at 330 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 4656, Washington, D.C. 20201 (phone: 202-619-7501, fax: 202-401-7620, TTY: 202-401-7575). The ACF also administers the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, which funds shelters and domestic violence programs that sometimes serve older battered women.

Section II: The Response to Crime Victimization of Older Persons

Focus group participants were asked to address society's perception of older persons and how that perception has shaped our Nation's response to the issue of elder victimization. Additionally, participants discussed the reactions of older persons and the criminal justice system to the problem. This Section will summarize the participants' discussions.

Section 2.1 Defining the Problem: Society's Response to Elder Victimization

Throughout the day, focus group participants discussed societal attitudes and perceptions about older persons and their victimization. They identified our society's general devaluation of old age as a cause of the widespread lack of knowledge and concern about elder victimization. Participants noted that older persons are viewed as less important than children and that less money is spent on protecting them from victimization. Examples of this attitude toward older persons and its impact were given: (1) the homicide of an older person is scarcely noted by the media while the death of a child under similar circumstances generates significant attention and causes a public outcry; (2) a decision was made in Pennsylvania, based solely on cost savings, to refrain from conducting fatality reviews of the deaths of women over 59 years of age; (3) deaths of older people are typically characterized as natural whenever possible to avoid the cost of autopsies.

The participants agreed that, traditionally, elder victimization has been treated less seriously than other crimes and elder abuse has been viewed as something other than criminal conduct. Participants made the following points:

- Even when conduct against older persons is recognized as criminal, prevailing views result in treatment of older persons as persons with dementia who lack capacity to testify or who would "make a bad witness."
- When an older person is victimized, that act is sometimes used by others to establish that the victim is no longer competent to make decisions or to live independently.
- Responses to elder abuse usually involve an investigation and intervention by an APS worker, rather than an investigation by a law enforcement officer.
- When a spouse or adult child who also provides caregiver services for an older person abuses him or her, that older person is likely to be perceived and treated as a social service "case" or even "the problem," rather than as a victim of crime. The perpetrator is often viewed as the "victim" because he or she has the burden of caring for a difficult and demanding frail older person.

- If a family member financially exploits the older person, society often excuses the conduct as “collecting the inheritance a little early” or “meeting the family’s financial needs.”
- A different standard applies where the perpetrator was not known to the victim; such conduct is treated as a crime.
- Sexual assault of older persons is rarely reported and its frequency is often denied. Little is known about this aspect of the problem and our societal “ageism” can inhibit an effective response to it.
- Very little is known about elder abuse in minority populations. There is a paucity of research about these and other critical areas related to abuse of older persons.

Participants observed that society’s inadequate response to elder abuse is further indicated by the problems associated with the system for reporting such abuse. Every jurisdiction’s adult protective services law either mandates or allows the reporting of suspected elder abuse to law enforcement or a social service provider or both. Yet relatively few reports are made. Mandated reporters are often ignorant of or disregard their duty to report suspected abuse. Few professionals have received training about their reporting obligations. Most states provide criminal sanctions for the failure to make a mandatory report, but there have been very few prosecutions of mandatory reporters who failed to fulfill their responsibility. Moreover, even where mandated reporters are trained and appropriate reports are made, the system has significant problems. The laws often permit or require that reports be submitted to a variety of agencies, each with its own philosophies and operating rules. Few APS and criminal justice agencies have effective operating procedures requiring prompt cross-reporting and, as a result, successful development of criminal cases for prosecution rarely occurs.

Focus group participants noted that the public perception of elder victimization, particularly elder abuse, mirrors the attitudes and lack of knowledge of mandated reporters under APS laws. There is little education offered to the public about aging, elder victimization or abuse, or how to respond when abuse is suspected. There is little funding currently available to develop such information or education. Across society, the lack of interest in and concern about such issues has inhibited the emergence of a constituency capable of raising the issue’s visibility. As a result, there is little organized effort to pursue increased spending, research, advocacy or policy development. Participants expressed their hope that the interest of the Department of Justice in elder victimization would lead to an improved systemic response to the problem. They commented that the Violence Against Women Act has certainly shown that when there are coordinated and well-funded efforts to address entrenched legal and social problems, with effective leadership from the Department of Justice, real change and improvement can, and will, occur.

At the governmental level, there is no uniform and comprehensive system to identify and document the incidence of elder victimization, particularly elder abuse. Focus group participants expressed concern that these cases are typically included in traditional crime categories such as robbery, larceny, and assault, but are never further identified as elder victimization cases. As a result, agencies are unaware of the need to prioritize such cases, designate specialized resources to handle them, and train staff about the particular needs of older crime victims and effective practices for building these cases for prosecution. Further, the lack of data makes it difficult for agencies to demonstrate their need for additional resources or grant funds.

Section 2.2 Defining the Problem: Perceptions and Responses of Older Persons to Victimization

Older persons, like the rest of society, have been slow to characterize fraud and abuse against them as criminal conduct. Even when older persons realize that they have been victimized, a variety of barriers -- some institutional and others personal -- have prevented them from reporting the crime to law enforcement or seeking other forms of assistance and relief.

Many older persons, particularly those in minority communities, do not identify with the terms "elder abuse" and do not necessarily define abuse in the same way that other groups define similar behavior. Culture may also help to shape the older person's response to victimization. For example, focus group participants pointed out that many older victims in the Hispanic cultures respond to victimization by neglecting their own health and well-being. Others believe that bonds of culture prevent some older victims from disclosing abuse to outsiders. Additionally, some older victims, because of their cultural history, do not trust the criminal justice system to deal with them or their abusers fairly or safely.

Focus group participants observed that many victims of elder abuse, whether in domestic or institutional settings, are victimized by people whom they love and trust or upon whom they are reliant for the provision of necessary care. This fact raises significant barriers to reporting abuse and seeking help from either the social services or criminal justice systems. Older persons are reluctant to cause their family members or trusted friends to "get in trouble." They may choose to suffer continued abuse rather than see their spouses, children, other family members or friends prosecuted and incarcerated. Many older persons believe that unless they allow an abusive family member to live with them, the abuser will be left homeless and living on the streets. Other older persons do not want to tell their families that they are victims as they fear embarrassment, humiliation, loss of independence, or the disgracing of the abusive family member. In addition, the values of the older generation may result in a belief that what goes on in an older person's home is private and cannot be discussed outside the family. If the abuser is also the victim's caregiver, the older person justifiably may fear being left without care and ending up in a nursing home. Many older persons hope that the income earned by an abusive family member for serving as the older person's caregiver will help the abuser to become more responsible and self-sufficient and to overcome mental health and/or substance abuse problems. Older persons who are abused in institutional settings may fear retaliation by those upon whom

they are dependent for care if they or their family members make reports of abuse or neglect by facility staff.

An additional problem facing vulnerable older persons is that in many states, convicted criminals -- even felons who lose many civil rights upon their conviction -- can be, and are, employed in the homes of frail older persons and paid through programs that arrange or provide in-home support services. The delivery of in-home services is not highly regulated, and therefore many parole and probation officers guide convicted criminals into this area of employment. In reality, this places persons who may be predatory in the homes of some of our most frail, fragile, and dependent older persons.

In addition to these personal and systemic barriers is the fact that many older persons are simply too frail and isolated to get help. Indeed, their isolation and attendant loneliness may make them especially vulnerable to fraud and abuse by family members, acquaintances, or strangers. Other older persons are isolated by virtue of living in rural settings or in Indian country, miles from other people. Some are isolated by language, especially if they do not speak English, or by their physical and mental impairments.

Section 2.3 Identifying the Problem: The Response of the Criminal Justice System

Focus group participants noted that the response of the criminal justice system to elder victimization, particularly abuse, mirrors that of society and older persons. In general, traditional responses have not identified elder victimization as a priority. Few officers, investigators or detectives, prosecutors, or victim advocates have ever received training in working with older persons. As a result, fundamental skills such as interviewing, assessing ability to testify, and case investigation, development, and prosecution are lacking.

In some jurisdictions, the production of evidence in cases of elder victimization is problematic. For example, some states do not have statutory authority enabling law enforcement and prosecution to memorialize the testimony of a frail older person for later use at trial. A few states, such as Illinois and Delaware, have enacted statutes permitting courts to receive hearsay statements made by older victims. Most states do not have such provisions. Moreover, many states do not empower law enforcement to freeze the assets of a person suspected of financially exploiting an older person, even if those assets are in reality the criminal proceeds of the exploitation and will be spent long before a case reaches its conclusion.

Among the overarching goals of the criminal justice system are (1) stopping the criminal conduct, (2) protecting the victim and society, and (3) holding the perpetrator accountable. Focus group participants opined that if the abuser is an older person, many communities are uncertain about how to respond to the situation and meet these three overarching goals. They added that if a law enforcement officer decides to arrest an older perpetrator, many jails refuse to accept the suspect for incarceration due to a belief that the suspect will "not thrive" in jail or a fear that liability will result if the older suspect becomes ill or dies while in custody. Some

communities treat the perpetrator as mentally impaired and divert the matter from the criminal justice system and instead handle it through the mental health system. This offers the victim neither relief nor safety, especially if the mental health system decides that the perpetrator does not need mental health services and releases the perpetrator.

Focus group participants commented that the concept of using alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in cases of elder victimization, particularly elder abuse, raises difficult questions regarding the appropriateness of such methods in these types of cases and of cultural sensitivity. While ADR apparently has not been used widely in these cases because of the imbalance of power between the abuser and the victim, focus group participants indicated that some communities such as the Navajo Nation refer such cases to Peacemaker Courts, a type of victim-offender reconciliation program. It is unknown if such a model is uniquely effective within Indian nations, should be expanded into other settings, or actually increases danger to the victim while failing to hold the perpetrator accountable.

Most states do not mandate any training on the subject of elder abuse for law enforcement officers. Few states offer training to prosecutors. Creative approaches to prosecution are rarely used, even though domestic violence cases have taught the value of building cases that minimize the need to call the victim to testify.

Case management practices such as vertical prosecution, creation of specialized investigation and prosecution units, and vertical advocacy within the criminal justice system are rarely used in these types of cases. Collaborative and coordinated responses involving law enforcement, adult protective services, and other agencies such as the public guardian are uncommon, even though such approaches are most likely to result in the development of sufficient evidence for successful prosecution while meeting the short and long term needs of the victim.

Most courts and judicial officers handling cases with older victims have never been trained on many of the substantive issues involved and on promising practices for accommodating the needs of older litigants and victims. The American Bar Association and other organizations and courts have developed recommendations and plans for accommodating the needs of parties and witnesses who are older or who have disabilities. Moreover, the American Bar Association Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly, in conjunction with the National Association of Women Judges, has created model education programs on elder abuse for judges and court staff and implemented those programs in a few states. Nonetheless, at this time, no one has determined if there are practices that could be used to increase the willingness of older victims to participate in the criminal justice process.

Where there are criminal convictions for victimization of older persons, perpetrators are dealt with in an inconsistent manner. Some jurisdictions impose probation and order batterers to attend intervention programs just as some jurisdictions do in domestic violence cases. However, no studies have been conducted to indicate if batterer intervention programs are appropriate or

effective in these cases. Some courts impose no contact and stay away orders; others do not. It is unknown whether these punishments and orders help to stop the criminal conduct, make victims and society safer, and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Section III: Recommendations of the Focus Group

As a result of the extensive discussions, focus group participants identified a number of broad areas for Department of Justice support. These include:

1. Technical Assistance
2. Research
3. Professional Development and Training
4. Prevention through Public Education and Awareness
5. Recommendations for Specific Professional Groups

Some common themes discussed throughout the day provide a foundation for each of the recommendations:

- Focus group participants indicated that policy makers, researchers and practitioners should always consider the concerns and issues of minority populations as well as the differences between urban and rural communities.
- Participants agreed that all programs and responses need to be designed in a culturally competent fashion.

Section 3.1 Technical Assistance

The leadership of the Department of Justice could result in (1) significant enhancement of the availability of technical assistance to encourage collaborative efforts across disciplines; (2) development of a national clearinghouse for collection and dissemination of promising practices and resources on criminal victimization of older persons; and (3) support of training efforts that enhance development of promising practices and a seamless web of services to victimized older persons. The nation's knowledge of and response to elder victimization could be markedly improved through such technical assistance and support.

Specifically, participants identified the following areas for technical assistance:

1. Encourage professionals at the State and local levels in a variety of disciplines to develop collaborative relationships and working agreements to coordinate development of multi-disciplinary teams and older person fatality review teams and to identify promising law enforcement and prosecution practices.

2. Develop a national clearinghouse on elder victimization to disseminate information on research findings, data collection on incidence, promising practices, resources, and demonstration projects.
3. Develop directories of national resources on elder victimization and specific educational resources on assisting minority older persons.
4. Support creation and dissemination of a "*Research-In-Brief*" type publication on promising practices and emerging issues in elder victimization.
5. Assist courts with identifying the promising practices for accommodating older victims in the court systems, including evaluating the value of a special court for older crime victims.
6. Collect and disseminate the currently available training modules on elder victimization so that persons providing training have complete and current teaching materials available for use or adaptation.

Section 3.2 Research

The Department of Justice can play a key role in closing the knowledge gap about elder victimization through support of research on that subject. Among the topics identified as priorities by the focus group participants were:

1. Data about the incidence and prevalence of elder victimization, particularly elder abuse and domestic violence in later life;
2. Promising practices by criminal justice agencies and victim service providers;
3. Characteristics of victims and perpetrators;
4. Family dynamics that influence domestic elder abuse;
5. Promising interventions, including the value of domestic violence batterer intervention program models;
6. Causes of the crime victimization of older persons;
7. The appropriateness and efficacy of using alternative dispute resolution in cases involving elder victimization;
8. The costs to taxpayers and the health care system of elder victimization;

9. How the criminal justice system can best handle situations where the criminal defendant is a necessary caregiver to the victim who may or may not also be a family member;
10. The impact of shifting demographics on service delivery, especially among minority communities;
11. Incidence and special characteristics of elder victimization in minority and underserved communities;
12. Liability for law enforcement when arresting, or not arresting, older perpetrators; and
13. The impact of broad societal trends, such as welfare reform or managed care, on elder victimization.

Participants also urged that the Office for Victims of Crime conduct an analysis of programs it currently funds in the area of elder victimization and the effectiveness of these programs.

Section 3.3 Professional Development and Cross-Training

All participants felt that training within and across disciplines was critical to improving every system's response to victimization of older persons. While participants recognized that the specific content and form of training might vary across disciplines, they opined that collaborative approaches to training should be the norm. They also emphasized that all training must be culturally competent and address minority issues and, where appropriate, address differences between urban and rural communities. The specific training recommendations made by participants included:

1. Law enforcement officers, social service providers, aging services professionals, prosecutors, victim advocates, shelter workers, emergency and rescue workers, and health care providers need cross-training on victimization of older persons, aging issues, reporting laws, sexual abuse of older persons, and community resources. Law enforcement officers who are first responders are especially critical because they are called upon to decide whether a matter is even viewed as criminal, whether an investigation is conducted, and whether a police report is generated. Victim advocates and coordinators and state Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) administrators also need training on elder victimization. Training for criminal justice entities must reach agency heads and line staff.
2. Law enforcement, social service providers, aging services providers, victim advocates and prosecutors need cross-training on development of interdisciplinary working agreements and collaborative investigations in order to assure that criminal case evidence is expeditiously and effectively developed while the victim's short and long term service and emotional needs are addressed at the same time.

3. U.S. Attorneys and state Attorneys General and their staff members need specialized training on crimes and scams targeted against older persons and on abuse of older persons. NAAG, the National Association of Medicaid Fraud Control Units (NAMFCU), and a number of state Attorneys' General offices and state Medicaid Fraud Control Units have done work in this area but much more effort, especially at the state level, is needed.

4. State and federal law enforcement officers and supervisors need specialized training on new technology and emerging crimes and complex financial scams and business frauds, such as churning or Internet scams, that target older persons. In addition, law enforcement needs new technology and equipment to discover and investigate crimes on the Internet.

5. Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) need training on elder victimization in order to help ensure better linkages between the VA, aging service providers, including the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, the local Adult Protective Services agency, and the criminal justice system.

6. Allied service professionals, including employees of banking and other financial institutions, need professional training on recognizing and dealing with elder victimization. Attorneys who represent older clients also need such training. Participants noted that state and local bar associations may be helpful in providing a portion of the training. The participants also recognized the value of having these professionals provide training on elder victimization at their own national, regional, state and local conferences, as long as the professionals are sufficiently knowledgeable and trained to educate their colleagues.

7. Health care professionals need training to help them detect and treat elder abuse and to understand and comply with laws mandating that they report suspected abuse. Participants noted that hospital accreditation and certification procedures now require that emergency departments have protocols on elder abuse, just as they do for child abuse and domestic violence.

8. Coroners and medical examiners need training to recognize elder abuse cases. To illustrate the problem, the Los Angeles Police Department Homicide Unit is studying a number of deaths of older persons that were coded as natural deaths. There is a strong suspicion that many older persons' deaths are assumed to be natural when in reality they are homicides. Moreover, participants pointed out that in Pennsylvania, fatality review teams have chosen to save money by declining to review deaths of women over age 59. Practices such as these mean that deaths resulting from elder abuse often are not detected.

Section 3.4 Prevention Through Public Awareness and Education

A recurring theme throughout the focus group meeting was the lack of knowledge and understanding about elder victimization throughout the United States. The following statements reflect common observations made by participants about older persons.

- Elder abuse is not seen as criminal and characterizations such as “abuse” or “mistreatment” perpetuate the misimpression.
- Older persons lack value in American society and so their deaths under suspicious circumstances are not viewed as important enough to be investigated by law enforcement.
- There exist widespread beliefs that abuse is better handled as a civil or social service matter.
- Many criminal justice professionals view older persons as incompetent witnesses.
- Many professionals do not recognize the signs and indicators of elder abuse and, even if they do recognize abuse, do not understand and execute their reporting duties.
- Neither older persons nor others in the community know how to recognize or address elder victimization.

While some of these issues are addressed in other parts of these recommendations, the focus group participants agreed that a comprehensive effort to educate the public was critical to protecting older persons, holding perpetrators criminally accountable, and stopping the exploitation and abuse of others in society.

Participants pointed out that public awareness and education efforts must be culturally competent and tailored to address the needs of special populations, such as minority and rural older persons, within a particular community. Those who develop materials must be aware that many older persons are illiterate or have vision, hearing, or cognitive limitations that affect their ability to understand education materials. Suggestions were made that written materials be in large print, that models appearing in or on materials should be persons with whom older persons can identify, and that language should be age-appropriate. The content should be carefully screened to assure that it does not blame the victim or make the victim feel foolish for being victimized. Themes should be positive in nature. For example, language about “enjoying the golden years,” personal safety, or asset management and protection may elicit a better response than “growing old is a time of danger in this community.” Other suggestions for public awareness efforts included:

1. Public awareness and education programs must be ongoing. One-shot efforts are of minimal value.
2. Programs and materials should be distributed to places where older persons congregate. Examples include senior centers, health provider offices, religious institutions, and cultural centers. Again, programs and materials should be culturally competent.

3. Training and materials should also be provided to “gatekeepers,” e.g., persons who go to the homes of older persons, such as Meals on Wheels delivery volunteers and staff, utility company repair staff, and mail carriers.
4. Materials about the criminal justice system and process need to be developed for older persons. These include audio and video presentations and curricula for use in Senior Academies, such as those operated by Triad, as well as in victim assistance offices and law enforcement crime prevention programs. Prosecutors and law enforcement officers should participate in developing and delivering training on the operation of the criminal justice system.
5. Educational campaigns about scams and emerging crimes against older persons should be developed for both older and younger members of the community.
6. People who manage or participate in programs such as Neighborhood Watch should be educated to recognize and report elder victimization and to assist older victims in the neighborhood through the criminal justice process. Neighborhood clean-up programs and other programs that assist older victims of crime should also be encouraged and supported.
7. Materials on elder victimization and materials about how to screen for, recognize, and terminate a bad caregiver should be developed for older persons and their families.
8. All forms of the media should be involved in public awareness and education programs. The media can be helpful in educating the public about scams, the need to report victimization, and the existence of services to help victims.

Section 3.5 Recommendations for Specific Professional Groups

While the preceding recommendations applied to a broad array of disciplines, there were also a number of recommendations that were quite specific to certain professional groups. These are catalogued in this section. There was one universal recommendation for each of these distinct professional groups: the head of the agency must identify the issue of elder victimization as a priority in order for agency-wide change to occur.

Section 3.5A Federal Agencies

1. The Department of Justice should continue to assess how its components are serving older persons who are victims of crime, in order to help ensure that older persons also benefit from the “seamless web” of services that the Department has been promoting for victims of crime.
2. The Long Term Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) should be authorized to serve older persons on tribal lands.

3. The Department of Justice should consider pooling some of its funding to enable joint/multiple agency projects on elder victimization. In the words of one participant, "the constant fragmentation and disjointed funding and resources must be avoided."

4. A federal task force should be convened to develop common definitions related to elder victimization and model legislation.

5. Given the significant problems in collecting accurate data on the incidence of elder victimization, a review of current federal reporting categories should be undertaken. It would be helpful for the Department of Justice to evaluate whether there are ways of gathering information on the federal crime reporting systems about: (a) the type of crime; (b) the type of relationship between the victim and the offender (e.g., whether the offender is a member of the victim's family or the victim's caregiver); and (c) the age of both the victim and the offender. A study to determine the best way to encourage or require local jurisdictions to gather and report victimization data to the concerned federal authorities would be highly beneficial. Participants suggested that thought be given to whether requiring or suggesting the addition of a box for elder victimization or abuse to police reports would be helpful.

6. Model legislation on restitution for older victims of crime, fraud, and abuse should be developed.

Section 3.5B Victim Advocate Programs

1. There should be specialized and trained advocates for older victims, particularly those who have been abused. There should be vertical advocacy in such cases, i.e., one advocate who works with the victim from the beginning to the end of a case.

2. Victim Compensation Programs should be expanded to authorize reimbursement to older victims of scams and frauds.

3. There should be funds available to allow payment to older victims of their expenses related to all elder victimization crimes, including relocation and repair costs resulting from the criminal victimization.

4. Older victims should be allowed to access services and victim compensation programs even if they are not willing to report the criminal conduct and whether or not the crime is defined as violent. If program requirements mandate victim cooperation, that requirement should be interpreted to deny coverage only when the victim's conduct made prosecution impossible.

Section 3.5C Law Enforcement

1. Law enforcement should require that all elder victimization cases be supported with a written report, even if the victim is reluctant to report or give information. Such reports will allow police

to track crime trends and common schemes as well as warn and educate other potential victims and witnesses.

2. Expand victim protection programs to cover older victims of crime, fraud, and abuse, whether or not the crime is violent.

3. Law enforcement agencies of any size can benefit from having specially trained officers to investigate crimes of elder victimization. Such officers are better able to respond to older victims of crime who typically have a relatively high level of fear that they will suffer harm or retaliation if they report to or cooperate with authorities. Further, these specially trained officers are more skillful in interviewing older persons and building criminal cases. For example, the Chicago Police Department has such a program with a cadre of trained "elder services officers" (ESOs) assigned to it. The Los Angeles Police Department Bunco Unit has two investigators who specialize in large estate fraud cases committed against older persons.

4. Community-oriented policing programs should be expanded to address elder victimization wherever it does not currently do so.

5. Law enforcement agencies should consider establishing a senior volunteer program to assist older crime victims. The Illinois Triad's "Seniors Helping Seniors" program is an example of such a program.

Section 3.5D Prosecution Agencies

1. Vertical prosecution of all cases of elder victimization should be encouraged. Vertical prosecution benefits victims as they do not have to tell a series of prosecutors what has happened to them and it allows them to know who to call in case of a problem. It also benefits prosecutors as it helps them to develop a rapport with and the trust of the victim. It enables an agency to devote resources to specially training the prosecutor(s) who will handle these types of cases.

2. Prosecutors should use procedures to memorialize the testimony of older victims at an early point in the case. If such procedures do not exist, the prosecutor should work with state legislators and the state prosecutor's association to enact such procedures. To illustrate, many states permit the early court examination or deposing of an older victim. Some states, including Illinois and Delaware, permit during trial the use of hearsay statements made by older victims and witnesses in certain situations.

3. Prosecutors should attempt to build cases which do not rely on the victim to testify at all or which reduce reliance on the victim to prove the case. Techniques now widely used in domestic violence cases should be applied in elder victimization cases.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was the view of focus group participants that effective and committed leadership by the Department of Justice is needed to make elder victimization a priority area for the criminal justice system, to encourage collaborative efforts across disciplines, to support and develop increased technical assistance and training of a variety of professionals, fund research, and support prevention efforts through public education and community awareness initiatives.⁵ The Department's efforts in these areas could result in a marked change in society's attitudes about older persons and its response to the crime victimization of older persons.

⁵A list of current programs that participants identified as good models is provided in Appendix 2.



APPENDIX 1

Focus Group Meeting on Crime Victimization of Older Persons March 30, 1998

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APPENDIX 2

Focus Group Meeting on Crime Victimization of Older Persons March 30, 1998

Promising Programs Identified by Focus Group Participants

The co-facilitators led the focus group in a discussion of the successful approaches and programs that address the victimization of older persons. Two points previously made were reiterated at the beginning of the discussion:

1. There is a need for ongoing activity around prevention; and
2. Each community has to design collaborative efforts involving criminal justice agencies, victim advocates, older persons, and the social and protective services agencies that serve older persons in order to make an effective impact in the community.

Successful programs identified by the participants included:

- The "We Are Family" Program of the San Francisco Consortium for Elder Abuse Prevention is an inter-generational program that is culturally-specific to the African-American community and builds on the strengths of the family. It works through churches and community institutions. Currently, the program is focusing on efforts to educate the community about mortgage fraud, disseminating one-page fact sheets that are easy to read and advise what one should do if approached about such a mortgage. A lawyer referral service has been developed with the local bar association.
- In Ventura County, California, the District Attorney's Office has produced paper placemats with elder victimization prevention messages that are distributed by Meals on Wheels, restaurants, senior centers, and congregate living sites. In Chautauqua County, New York, McDonald's is helping print similar paper placemats for distribution in that county.
- Also in Ventura County, California, pharmacies are helping the District Attorney's Office enhance public awareness by stuffing one-page alerts and elder abuse information into older persons' prescription bags.
- In Indian Country, traditional forms of dispute resolution (e.g., Navajo Peacemaker Courts) have been used in cases involving older victims. Some of these traditional methods are comparable to forms of "alternative dispute resolution" used outside of Indian Country. Focus group participants representing tribal organizations stressed that the use of traditional forms of dispute resolution is very important because programs and

techniques that have been developed and successfully implemented elsewhere do not work in Indian Country.

- Colorado revised its adult protective services law and corresponding criminal code in 1991. Joint training of adult protective services workers and law enforcement officers was conducted in local jurisdictions. Over the last few years there has been incremental growth in the collaboration between the two, and a handbook of guidelines has been developed to promote further collaboration between law enforcement and adult protective services.
- In South Carolina, adult protective services and law enforcement wrote the elder abuse codes together; therefore, both disciplines use the same terminology and definitions.
- The Massachusetts Bank Reporting Project is a successful program that is being replicated by many other states. The project trains bank personnel to recognize, prevent and intervene in financial abuse of older persons and scams and frauds targeted at older persons.
- Triad programs involve trained law enforcement officers and older volunteers to help meet the needs of older victims and potential victims in the community. Triad is having great success in helping improve the quality of life for older persons and victims. Triad is a partnership that is sponsored nationally by the National Sheriffs' Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and AARP, and at the community level by the local sheriff, police chief, AARP chapter, and community leaders. Plans are in place to expand Triad programs into Indian Country in the near future.
- The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Wisconsin Office on Aging created a booklet of elder abuse indicators and behaviors that constitute elder abuse. It also explains the terminology used by social workers and the terminology used by prosecutors to help bridge the knowledge gap between the two professions. Also, the elder abuse experts in the state have trained at the state prosecutors' conference.
- A number of offices of state attorneys general have held conferences to educate allied professionals on victimization of older persons, developed or collaborated on education and prevention programs, and developed multi-list coordination and information sharing on these topics. Also, NAAG has implemented an Elder Consumer Affairs Program.
- The ABA Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly, with funding from the State Justice Institute, developed 29 recommended guidelines for state courts handling cases involving elder abuse. The Commission, in conjunction with the National Association for Women Judges, also developed three curricula on elder abuse for judges and court personnel. The first curriculum is a general one for judges, the second is for judges with

a background or caseload in family violence cases, and the third is for court staff who serve as the front line workers at the courthouse.

- In South Carolina, a multidisciplinary conference on financial exploitation of older persons was conducted using training money from the U.S. Attorney's office.
- South Carolina law requires that there be a state adult protection coordinating council for vulnerable adults. This council includes all allied professionals who address the problem. The council studies systemic problems and looks at how to make the system better through interagency agreements and memoranda rather than changing legislation. The group also sponsors training and cross-training.
- California POST (law enforcement training) developed and disseminated a two-hour training video on elder abuse. The state then passed a law mandating two-hour training for those officers who supervise or handle elder abuse cases (see California Penal Code Section 13515). The California District Attorneys' Association has provided three-day multidisciplinary seminars for professionals on elder abuse for more than five years.
- The Los Angeles County Fiduciary Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) investigates financial abuse and exploitation of older persons, such as large estate frauds and a variety of other fraud schemes and scams. The professional team consists of financial experts, law enforcement, adult protective services, and volunteers (usually retired financial experts who go through records and develop charts and track the monies).
- In some jurisdictions, Senior Crimestoppers assist law enforcement in warding off criminal activity in elder care facilities and institutions by regularly visiting and being trained on indicators of abuse or mistreatment.
- In Texas, the Attorney General's office, AARP, and the area agencies on aging have partnered to provide elder abuse training in both English and Spanish.
- In Tennessee and Georgia, some of the legal aid programs serving older persons have received Victims of Crime Act monies to provide assistance to victims of elder abuse.
- The Utah Adult Protective Services office and the Delaware Attorney General's office have each hired a law enforcement officer to work with the state APS program. The officers help to train the APS workers about the role of law enforcement and the criminal justice system and also serve as a liaison between law enforcement and APS.

