



# Collaborating for Justice for Older African Americans

**A Guide for Elder Justice Teams to Build Equitable Partnerships with Culturally-Specific Organizations**



ncall

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Dear Elder Justice Community Coordination Team,

All older adults deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Yet, elder abuse remains a pervasive issue, with up to 5 million older adults impacted annually. This number will undoubtedly increase as the U.S. population ages and the number of older adults continues to grow. African Americans impacted by elder abuse face unique barriers to accessing support and justice. Strategies for providing support to older African American victims must acknowledge the distinctive cultural, social, and historical factors that influence the experiences of the African American community. These factors, ranging from systemic inequalities to generational trauma, can significantly impact how elder abuse manifests, is recognized, and reported. Unfortunately, the prevailing service models and programs designed to address elder abuse often fall short in addressing the specific needs and circumstances of older African Americans, leading to underreported cases and a lack of adequate support.

The Collaborating for Justice for Older African Americans Guide presents the invaluable insights from stakeholders across the country who participated in one of our listening sessions, roundtables, and interviews. Through that process, we had the privilege of learning from African American culturally-specific programs. Their expertise, experiences, and deep understanding of the cultural nuances and historical context of services and community collaboration have provided us with invaluable insights that shaped this guide. We also met with mainstream elder justice professionals who shared their experiences with collaboration, perspectives on the importance of engaging culturally-specific programs, and barriers they face in collaboration.

By sharing the outcomes of these sessions, we aim to inform elder justice community coordination teams in more effectively addressing elder abuse among older African Americans. The perspectives and recommendations shared by the participants closely guided us in identifying key strategies to enhance the effectiveness of existing collaborative efforts that are enclosed in this guide.

As communities aim to combat elder abuse through multidisciplinary approaches, it is our hope that this guide will inspire action, foster dialogue, and contribute to the development of collaborations with African American culturally-specific programs. Through these equitable and inclusive collaborations, we can create communities where older African Americans age with the safety, dignity, and justice that they deserve.

Sincerely,

Victoria Ferguson-Young and Kristin Burki

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Cultural and Historical Context.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>How this Guide was Developed .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section Two: The Importance of African American Culturally-Specific Programs .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>What are Culturally-Specific Programs? .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Importance of Culturally-Specific Programs .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Elements of African American Culturally-Specific Programs .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section Three: Barriers to Collaboration .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Overview of Elder Justice Community Coordination Teams.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Equitable Engagement is Rare – What’s Getting in the Way?.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Section Four: Guiding Principles for Equitable Engagement with Culturally-Specific Programs .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1: Incorporate an Understanding of the Historical and Present-Day Impact of Racism. ....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2: Build a Holistic Network of Partners Fundamental to the Safety and Well-being of Older African Americans. ....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3: Build Trust with Culturally-Specific Programs by Being Trustworthy. ....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>4: Recognize Relationships Are Everything. ....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5: Value the Culturally-Specific Program’s Expertise.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>6: Share Power and Resources. ....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7: Invest in Culturally-Specific Programs. ....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8: Promote Survivor-defined Support, Including Alternatives to Engaging Law Enforcement.....</b>	<b>30</b>

<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Conversation Guide.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Introduction .....	35
Who is this Conversation Guide for? .....	35
What is the purpose of the Conversation Guide? .....	35
What is the focus of the Conversation Guide? .....	36
Facilitator Guidelines: Preparing for the Conversation .....	36
<b>Appendix 2: Community Forum Toolkit.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Introduction .....	44
Facilitator’s Guide: Planning and Hosting a Community Forum	
Promoting Elder Justice in the African American Community .....	45
Learn More: Resources for Planning and Facilitating	
a Community Forum.....	50
Sample External Agenda for Attendees .....	51
Sample Internal Agenda for Planning Team and Speakers .....	52
PowerPoint Template Slides .....	54
<b>Appendix 3: Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Works Cited .....</b>	<b>76</b>

# Introduction

The aim of the Collaborating for Justice guide is to equip multidisciplinary elder justice partners to build stronger and more equitable collaborations with African American community-based and culturally-specific programs. Through these collaborations, older African Americans impacted by elder abuse will have greater access to effective and culturally responsive services and supports.

This is so important because every person affected by elder abuse deserves support and services that are welcoming, trusted, and culturally-responsive. “Interpersonal relationships are culturally constructed, and any attempt to understand elder mistreatment ... should take into account cultural context.” Indeed, culture affects how people perceive elder abuse and also what type of help is needed. Culture also impacts how service providers address elder abuse (M Li, R Chen, XQ Dong, 2020). This bears true for older African American survivors; in addition to culture, services and community responses are most effective if they understand and recognize the social, political, and economic realities (Vann, 2002).

## The Cultural and Historical Context

Historical and present-day racialized oppression and subsequent trauma has resulted in the marginalization of African Americans in communities across the United States. The country’s long and devastating history of racism and discrimination deeply impact African Americans over the course of their lifespan from slavery and Jim Crow racial segregation laws, to redlining policies and divestment of African American neighborhoods, to over policing and subsequent over-incarceration of African American men, institutions and systems aimed to rob African Americans of their humanity and undermine their success.

These racial harms are not just historical; they persist to this day. In large and small ways, public policies and institutions often reflect or



repeat this history, contributing to perpetuating a system of unfair advantages for white people and disadvantages for Black, Indigenous and other people of color. These policies have resulted in disparities and inequities across many dimensions of the African American community: education, employment, housing, health, politics, persisting across generations in the lives of older African Americans and within the African American community.

For older African Americans, the accumulation of stress resulting from systematic oppression and discrimination over the course of the lifespan “substantially impacts overall health, increases the risk of chronic disease and provides greater susceptibility to abuse” (NCEA 2021). While research on the extent of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older African American adults is scarce, what is known is the impacts of racism, such as disparities in economic security or health, increase risks for abuse (NCEA 2021).

In spite of and in response to the individual and collective experience of structural and interpersonal racism, the African American community has developed rich and powerful support networks at the individual, family, and community levels. These supportive factors buffer older African Americans from risk factors and include community networks, faith affiliation, extended family networks and beliefs about family unity, reverence for older adults, and flexible roles within families (NCEA 2021). A prime example of community networks is African American culturally-specific programs. These programs are critical resources in the African American community and key partners in elder justice responses.

## **How this Guide was Developed**

The Collaborating for Justice Project Team is comprised of the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) project leads Victoria Ferguson-Young and Kristin Burki, Asha Project Director Antonia Drew Norton, and two subject matter expert consultants, Dr. LaTrice Buck and Umi Hankins.

Members of this project team identified professionals in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and from across the country representing community-based and culturally-specific programs serving the African American community, criminal justice stakeholders, and service providers. In four group meetings (listening sessions and roundtables) and four individual interviews, we heard from 22 professionals about their experience working with the African American community, their perspectives on culturally-specific programs, and their experience with community collaboration. The insights from these meetings guided the development of the Collaborating for Justice materials.

**Culturally-specific programs are those that are designed for, designed by, and led by the community they intend to serve.**



# Section Two: The Importance of African American Culturally-Specific Programs

## What are Culturally-Specific Programs?

Culturally-specific programs are those that are designed for, designed by, and led by the community they intend to serve. The majority of individuals served are typically representative of the particular community of color (Gillum, 2008). Services reflect the cultural values, norms, expectations, and attitudes of the group served.

African American culturally-specific programs may focus on a variety of issues such as domestic and sexual violence, health equity, housing, mental health, or other issues.

## The Importance of Culturally-Specific Programs

Culturally-specific programs emerge from the community itself when a need is identified that existing services are unable to meet. In many cases, this is due to mainstream organizations being ill-equipped or otherwise ineffective at serving the community (Cuerr-Stevens et al, 2019).

While the African American community is not a monolith and there is tremendous diversity of experiences and perspectives within it, there is also shared historical and cultural context.

Traditional services, which we will refer to as mainstream services or systems, are those that are not culturally-specific but rather aim to be available to the entire community. They are mostly publicly funded governmental or non-profit organizations; examples include human services, law enforcement, victim services, aging services, healthcare, or housing programs. Typically led by and designed by white people, they often “perpetuate a system designed to localize research, evaluation, services, and resources for white people, organizations, and institutions.” (White Star, 2018). While mainstream



organizations serve people from all backgrounds and often state that all are welcome, in many cases, the services or responses are not culturally responsive; indeed, there has been much criticism of the shortcomings of mainstream organizations in serving the African American community. These shortcomings result from practices by mainstream service providers that marginalize the African American community.

### **Practices that Result in Marginalizing African American Survivors**

#### **“One size fits all” approach**

- Mainstream services are viewed as uniform, which don’t account for ways that culture impacts help seeking and healing. Additionally, services that are approached the same regardless of race or background don’t account for the cultural nuances of the African American family or how racism has created risk and protective factors related to abuse and safety that are unique to the community. For example, broadly speaking, in the African American community, family is first. Yet, mainstream services are geared toward the individual vs the family and the victim vs the victim and abuser. To address this mismatch, culturally responsive services for the African American community often address the family to promote safety and healing.

#### **Lack of racial literacy**

- Mainstream service providers often lack understanding of the history of racism in the US and in their community, and how that impacts outcomes in the African American community. They are also not frequently taught about the racialized harm caused by the institutions and entities, and how that impacts relationships with the African American community presently. In the collaboration realm, they may lack understanding of how public and private funding has prioritized mainstream and majority-white communities and programs, leaving African American communities and entities at a disadvantage. As a result, mainstream service providers run the risk of invalidating the experiences of African Americans in their community or worse, replicating harmful patterns.
- Mainstream entities and providers often shy away from discussing race, racial oppression, and trauma, either minimizing its existence or downplaying its role in serving older survivors. As a result, they are not practiced in having meaningful conversations about race, power, and

privilege in their community's response to elder abuse, and in their community collaborations. For example, in some communities, African American survivors are reluctant and scared to seek help within mainstream services and systems. Instead, they find support in culturally-specific organizations. Without knowing how to have conversations about this reality, mainstream providers lose opportunities to understand where system improvements are needed.

### **Discrimination and lack of understanding of trauma responses of African American victims**

- Mainstream service providers often misunderstand African American survivors' response to violence. This can retraumatize survivors and leave them feeling misunderstood or judged. Even worse, it can result in racial bias by the service providers and criminal legal system stakeholders, resulting in the survivor not being believed or being viewed as the primary aggressor.
- A long-time director of a culturally-specific program explained: "We knew even back then that Black women didn't like going to mainstream programs, didn't like telling their story to white women who were looking at them like they're crazy. They placed judgment on them, treated them like they didn't matter. This has always been an issue." Antonia Norton, Director, The Asha Project, Milwaukee, WI

### **Rigid focus on victimization vs older adult's priorities**

- For older African Americans, the experience of abuse, neglect, and exploitation does not occur outside of the context of the family, particularly when the person causing harm is a partner, adult child, or other family member. The priority for the older African American adult may be to get help for their loved one first and foremost. Yet, mainstream services focus only on the victim at best, and focus on punitive solutions for the abuser at worst. Additionally, African American older adults may have other priorities that take precedence over the abuse, such as housing, health, mental health, or other concerns. Mainstream programs often focus on services directed at the victimization only rather than address the older adult's priorities holistically.
- Dr Patricia Davenport, Executive Director of Our House, Inc. in Mississippi explained further: "What is missing in mainstream is the lack of holistic approaches to healing. For me it is important to not just work with the survivor but also the children, extended family members and

**“The people I work with often won’t call the police – so how do we create safety plans that work for you?”**

**– Maria Santiago,  
Elder Justice Advocate,  
The Healing Center,  
New York, NY**

the offenders. All individuals need services in order to break the cycle of violence.”

### **Centering community response on the criminal legal system**

- The long history of over-policing, racialized police violence, and over-incarceration of the African American community results in distrust of law enforcement and the criminal legal system. As a result, older African Americans typically do not view law enforcement as a source of support or safety; rather than putting an abusive family member in jeopardy of being involved in the criminal justice system, they often prioritize protecting their family members (NCEA, 2021).

Furthermore, mainstream services, including human services, are often seen as extensions of this system. (Vann, 2002). Many of the services for older survivors are anchored by partnerships with law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies, which are seen by mainstream entities as essential partners.

Research further supports the findings from the Collaborating for Justice’s listening sessions and interviews.

Commonly, mainstream organizations focus their efforts on reducing racial disparities by focusing on cultural competency for service providers, and by systemic organizational change.

**“We need to serve older Black adults in ways that aren’t injurious to their family – we need to do what they want, provide options.”**

**– Antonia Norton,  
Director, The Asha  
Project, Milwaukee, WI**

Neither of these strategies have proven effective at reducing racial disparities. (A. Curry-Stevens et al, 2019). Mainstream organizations often consider the needs of communities of color, including African Americans, as an afterthought or low priority vs seen as mission critical or central in program design. Additionally, it’s not uncommon for mainstream organizations to focus services on the individual level vs the cultural or political context the individual is situated within. When organizations frame their work at the individual level, the solutions are then also individualized, often resulting in pathologizing. Mainstream organizations often fall short of framing the issues of gender-based violence and elder abuse as social problems or ones situated in the context of racism and discrimination. (A. Curry-Stevens, J.S. Muthanna, 2016).

### **Elements of African American Culturally-Specific Programs**

While culturally-specific African American programs vary based on the mission, leadership structure, program design, and approach to addressing community needs, there are some elements commonly shared by many:

- **Community-led or Community-driven:** the voice of those served is front and center in program planning. Culturally-specific programs are often grounded by the belief that those closest to an issue are often closest to the solution. In various ways, they seek leadership of

“It’s not us and them, we are collectively healing together. It’s not us and them, it’s we.”

– Kalimah Johnson,  
Executive Director,  
SASHA Center, Inc.,  
Detroit, MI

the community they serve: through community conversations and convenings, focus groups, or even simply by listening to their clients and subsequently adapting their approach.

- **Peer support:** In many cases, those with lived experience in the focus area (domestic and sexual violence, substance use, mental health) are leaders in the program and see healing as a lifelong journey. As the Director of one culturally-specific program put it, “We are the work” (Kalimah Johnson, Executive Director, SASHA Center, Inc. Detroit, MI). This approach is anchored on minimizing the power differential between “service provider” and “client” while supporting their collective healing.
- **Culturally-grounded:** Service practices/interventions are culturally focused; for example, use of food, faith, history, art, and drama to deepen connection to community, reduce isolation, and be a source of cultural healing.
- **Cultural understanding:** Culturally-specific programs understand the historical and cultural context of the African American experience and how that impacts African American families. Having to explain one’s culture, beliefs and worldview, especially amidst crisis or trauma, can be exhausting and

**“We need to spend more time creating solutions that don’t involve the state into the Black home that often hasn’t been a place of support and care... our program participants are often huge anchors, supporting their family and community, and we don’t want them to be involved in the carceral system”**

**– Latonya Maley, MPH,  
Executive Director,  
Affinity Community  
Services, Chicago, IL**

traumatizing. Culturally-specific programs provide a needed space of understanding.

- **Holistic view of well-being:** Culturally-specific programs understand that a person experiencing abuse has a full and complex life in and out of the abuse, and as a result, services often address challenges outside of the victimization. Culturally-specific African American programs view the whole family vs just the survivor herself. A holistic view is also often used as a strategy to identify and reach individuals impacted by abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Strategic partnerships with other programs or community initiatives outside the focus of the culturally specific program help the culturally-specific program reach people in other ways.
- **Alternatives to the criminal justice system:** Culturally-specific African American programs are often seeking solutions outside the typical criminal justice system. These programs understand the deep mistrust of law enforcement and the criminal legal system in general. As a result, they may involve counseling, peer support, education, economic support, and other ways to support a survivor’s safety and healing. As the Director of one culturally-specific program put it “We need to spend more

time creating solutions that don't involve the state into the Black home that often hasn't been a place of support and care... our program participants are often huge anchors, supporting their family and community, and we don't want them to be involved in the carceral system" (Latonya Maley, MPH, Executive Director, Affinity Community Services, Chicago, IL).

Existing research on the effectiveness of culturally-specific programs validates their effectiveness in the following areas: "improving client retention, longer periods of service engagement, reduced pathologizing of distress, affirming racial identity and providing more holistic interventions, and greater involvement in systems change that adds upstream interventions, collectively working to improve client outcomes" (Cuerr-Stevens et al, 2019). Program components that are seen as beneficial by service recipients include being better able to relate to African American staff, feeling more understood and welcome, and more effective outreach strategies to reach the intended population (Gillum, 2008).





## Section Three: Barriers to Collaboration

### Overview of Elder Justice Community Coordination Teams

Elder justice community coordination teams work to build a comprehensive response to improve the safety and well-being of older adults affected by abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Multidisciplinary responses acknowledge the fact that elder abuse cases are often complicated: The abuser may be a spouse, intimate partner, family member, or caregiver. The older victim may want to maintain a relationship with or protect the abuser. Older victims may be healthy and active or they may have physical or cognitive limitations. Older adults experiencing abuse may be in contact with the justice system, social services, health care, faith communities, and the aging services network.

Elder justice collaborations vary in structure, approach, and membership but typically teams include professionals and community partners from various disciplines who share a broad vision of their community's responsibility for enhancing services and safety for older victims. In some communities, collaboration is informal. In others, collaboration is more formal and occurs through community coordination teams that meet regularly to address elder abuse. Examples of these teams include: a Multidisciplinary Case Review Team (M-team), an Abuse in Later Life Coordinated Community Response (ALL-CCR) team, a domestic violence Coordinated Community Response (CCR), or a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) with a focus on abuse in later life, an Elder Abuse Fatality Review Team (EA-FRT), or a Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST).

Communities adopting a multidisciplinary approach often find many benefits of working together, including:

- Gaining a more complete picture of victims' needs by hearing from professionals with various perspectives.
- Creating a more complete list of options for victims by raising awareness among professionals of remedies and services that are available or highlighting gaps in available services.
- Leveraging additional resources.
- Reducing the duplication of services.

An effective collaborative response includes engaging key partners who hold integral roles in addressing elder abuse. Some of these partners include, but are not limited to: adult protective services, aging services, civil justice systems, criminal justice systems, culturally-specific services, disability rights organizations, domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy programs, faith partners, financial institutions, health care providers, long-term care, and behavioral health providers.

### **Equitable Engagement is Rare – What’s Getting in the Way?**

Advancing the safety of older adults impacted by abuse is no small task; multidisciplinary collaboratives are complex and can be challenging. Community coordination teams must consider a plethora of key decisions: Member recruitment and engagement, meeting leadership, mission and scope, and goals and strategies. Additionally, elder justice collaborations must understand and manage the community dynamics which typically revolve around power, decision-making, and resource allocation. Determining who should be at the table is difficult enough, though simple in comparison to decisions around who gets to frame the issue and who identifies the solutions.

Elder justice community coordination teams often recognize the importance of having representatives from the whole community. Engagement with culturally-specific programs is a critical way for community responses to be informed by the community itself. “Meaningful collaborations can produce more useful tools, minimize tokenism and the replication of institutional oppressions, and contribute to environments where we can share power and foster racial equity.” Starr, R. W. (2018) Yet, for a variety of reasons, elder justice collaborations often fall short of effective partnership with culturally-specific organizations and projects. “Often, CCRs do not have partners at the table that adequately reflect the community.” (Koss, M. P., White, J. W., & Lopez, E. C. (2017).



Elder justice collaborations have varied levels of awareness of the importance of engaging the African American community. Even when this understanding is present, they may lack knowledge of effective relationship-building and collaboration strategies.

Elder justice collaborations don't always know what culturally-specific programs exist in the community. In many cases, elder justice community coordination teams are looking narrowly at partners that focus on abuse or focus on older adults; however, culturally-specific programs focusing on other key community priorities often serve African Americans across the lifespan and can be key partners in identifying, reaching, and partnering to serve older African Americans who may be experiencing abuse. In other cases, community-based or grassroots projects are initiated by African American community members aimed at addressing the community priorities. It may be difficult for elder justice teams to become aware of these efforts without existing connections to the community.

Even when elder justice collaborations are aware of the community-based or culturally-specific programs, they may lack clear understanding of the mission, approach, interests, and priorities of the program. For example, a mainstream domestic violence program's service model may only

include services for victims of abuse and may focus most services on the victimization itself, whereas a culturally-specific program may see the whole family as the client and may have a more holistic approach to meeting the family's needs.



## Section Four: Guiding Principles for Equitable Engagement with Culturally-Specific Programs



As elder justice community coordination teams continually seek ways to build comprehensive community responses to improve the safety and well-being of older adults affected by abuse, neglect, and exploitation, this must include intentionally and proactively engaging those closest to the problem. To build equitable partnerships with African American culturally-specific programs, elder justice teams should first understand the factors that contribute to marginalization and ways of undoing that marginalization.

The Guiding Principles outlined on the next pages are designed to guide elder justice community coordination teams in their process of combating marginalization and advancing equitable engagement with African American culturally-specific programs. The principles look beyond the actual formal meetings to address the racialized power dynamics in community responses to elder abuse.



## 1: Incorporate an Understanding of the Historical and Present-Day Impact of Racism.

*Authentic equitable partnerships begin with a commitment to understand the history and present-day impact of racism and how that influences services and collaborations in a community.*



Building equitable collaborations with the African American community is not a step-by-step process; at the foundation lays a strong understanding of the historical and present-day racialized dynamics and impact of racism in one's community. It requires competent staff, initial training, and ongoing education. Without this understanding, traditional and mainstream entities run the risk of doing more harm by repeating dynamics that marginalize the African American community or by approaching oneself as a savior vs true partner. As Dr. Shawn Ginwright states in his book *The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves*, the question is not “What do I need to do” but rather, “Who do I need to become?”

Indeed, equitable collaboration requires an understanding about not only what structural racism is, but also how our work is impacted and shaped by it (White Starr, 2020). Our society typically shies away from conversations about personal bias, power, and privilege, yet this humility and understanding is necessary to understand how it impacts our work.

### **STRATEGIES TO INCORPORATE UNDERSTANDING OF RACISM:**

- Deepen your knowledge of the history of race and racism: Educate yourself on the African American experience in the United States and in your local community. Find resources on unlearning racism here: [Racial Justice Resources - YWCA Southeast Wisconsin](#)
- Attend trainings to learn more about how race and racism impact the experience of victimization and help-seeking; research local or state racial justice or equity trainers when possible; build training into your organization's budget.
- Refer to the [Increasing Access to Healing and Just Outcomes for Older African American Crime Survivors: A Toolkit for Enhancing Critical Knowledge and Informing Action within the Crime Victim Assistance Field](#), by Juanita Davis, and Katie Block.
- Develop language and awareness to have effective conversations about race and racism's impact on your community and your work.

- Reflect on your own relationship with race, power, and privilege.
- Learn more about promoting equity in your community collaborations through [Transformational Collaborations: Considerations to Apply a Racial Equity Lens](#) by Z. Ruby White Starr.
- Start the conversation within your Elder Justice community coordination team; Reference the Conversation Guide in addendum 1. The Conversation Guide is a companion piece that includes guidelines for facilitating a discussion with your elder justice community coordination team on advancing equitable engagement, including discussion prompts and resources to further your learning.

## 2: Build a Holistic Network of Partners Fundamental to the Safety and Well-being of Older African Americans.



*Elder justice teams should develop a strong understanding of community-based efforts occurring to support the diversity of the African American community. Think within and beyond the typical elder justice partners to build a comprehensive network that reflects the holistic experience of older African Americans.*

The issue of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation is complex; older adults impacted by it often have varied support systems which may include non-traditional sources. Some communities have culturally-specific African American programs or initiatives; for those that do, very few, if any, have elder abuse explicitly as their mission. However, many of these programs serve people across the lifespan, whether their mission is focused on health, mental health, housing, or other issues. Building collaborations with these organizations can assist the elder justice collaborative to reach, identify, and serve older African Americans in their community that they otherwise might not be able to.

### **STRATEGIES TO BUILD A HOLISTIC NETWORK:**

- Be part of activities and events in the African American community, even if they are not elder-justice-specific.
- Identify intersections in your community: What entities or initiatives are being led by the African American community that serve older adults, even if older adults aren't their primary population? Ex: Faith, mental health,

health, housing, substance use.

- Develop meaningful partnerships with community-based programs who frequently work with older African Americans.
- Engage faith leaders within the African American community; attend worship services or other public events to learn more about the faith community; Introduce yourself to clergy and lay leaders to begin relationship building.
- Plan a community forum to learn about the work being done in your community. See addendum 2 for a Community Forum Toolkit. The Community Forum Toolkit is a companion piece to equip elder justice teams with resources to bring together partners working with and on behalf of older African Americans to develop a shared understanding of the community efforts already occurring and opportunities to further advance elder justice for the African American community. The toolkit includes a Facilitator Guide, sample agendas, and a sample PowerPoint template.

### 3: Build Trust with Culturally-Specific Programs by Being Trustworthy.

*Trust building must be intentional and long-term; Mainstream entities must be willing to show they are trustworthy before expecting to be trusted.*



Many culturally-specific programs describe distrust with mainstream entities resulting from experiences with them that have undermined or even exploited the culturally-specific program. Examples of actions that marginalize culturally-specific programs and sow distrust include: not recognizing or supporting the program or community's own agenda or priorities, scheduling meetings at times and in locations without accounting for the needs of the program, or asking for training on how to be culturally responsive but then not integrating any of training material into practice.

This skepticism of mainstream partners and collaborations further stems from experiences in which partnering feels performative; it seems the mainstream organization's interest is based on checking a box for a grant application or other self-interests vs sincere interest in partnering to address the African American community's concerns.

It is not enough to simply invite the program to the collaborative meetings or to say that all are welcome to attend the meetings. Mainstream elder justice

partners must be willing to intentionally demonstrate they are trustworthy before expecting to be trusted.

### **STRATEGIES TO DEMONSTRATE TRUSTWORTHINESS:**

- Speak out in public and in private against racism when it occurs.
- Recognize achievements and accomplishments in the African American community .
- Show interest in the culturally-specific program’s service model.
- Support the priorities and work of the program and community even if they are different from your priorities.
- Follow through and integrate learning/follow up words with actions/be willing to change your practices once you learn more about racial justice and culturally relevant services.
- Be willing to address difficult issues; deal with conflicts directly vs prioritizing harmony.
- Don’t forget the basics of relationship-building: invest time, be authentic, and show you are dependable.

## **4: Recognize Relationships Are Everything.**

*Mainstream entities will set themselves up to fail if they approach partnerships with culturally-specific programs with a one-time invitation to attend a meeting; rather, mainstream entities must cultivate authentic relationships over time.*



Many partners addressing elder justice find themselves working in “silos” due to the demands of the organization, funding requirements, competition for funding, staffing capacities, and lack of adequate resources, among other reasons. Yet, effective collaboration requires authentic relationships where trust is built over time. This is particularly the case with culturally-specific organizations serving the African American community, as a result of the historical marginalization of this community and programs serving it, as well as current practices that continue to marginalize culturally-specific programs.

### **STRATEGIES TO CULTIVATE AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS:**

- Attend community and cultural events, for example events that commemorate Juneteenth or Black History Month. Show willingness to go



to the community in the spaces meant for the population they are serving.

- Attend the outreach events and fundraisers of the culturally-specific program. Show your interest in getting to know the program, people, and network.
- Seek out community members with shared interest in elder justice who are trusted and get to know them, their priorities, concerns and interests. Consider “credible messengers” even if their current focus is not explicitly elder justice.

## 5: Value the Culturally-Specific Program’s Expertise.

*By design, African American culturally-specific programs are part of the community and therefore have the deep understanding needed to develop solutions that will be effective for the community.*



While elder justice collaborations outwardly communicate that all are welcome, some culturally-specific programs don’t feel welcome and even feel undervalued in the community. Mainstream programs may not understand the service model or approach the culturally-specific program takes in serving the African American community and may not make meaningful efforts to learn more and truly understand. Some culturally-specific programs view the collaborative to mistake unity for uniformity; in other words, service models that are different from the mainstream aren’t trusted or valued. There may also be perceptions by mainstream providers that the culturally-specific program is most useful in advancing the mainstream response vs seeing the value of the culturally-specific program’s services in the survivor’s safety, justice, and healing (ex: seeing the main value of a culturally-specific program as being a bridge between the African American survivor and criminal legal system to advance victim cooperation in the prosecution of a case).

In other ways, African American community leaders may experience partners from mainstream organizations do not trust their credibility or see their value. African Americans in multidisciplinary collaborations often feel they need to prove themselves in ways that white professionals don’t. Additionally, there is often an emphasis on academic credibility over community credibility; best practices stemming from academics are more highly prioritized over best practices stemming from the experience being part of and working directly with the

community. As Dr. LaTrice Buck of the Collaborating for Justice Project Team stated: “Grassroots agencies not being acknowledged for their knowledge is incredibly problematic; [mainstream organizations] normally don’t want to be “Boots on the Ground” but that’s critical to know exactly what the people need and how to serve them. Non-profit leaders often think their education will help to inform what the people need, but that doesn’t work.”

### **STRATEGIES TO DEMONSTRATE VALUE OF THE CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC PROGRAM’S EXPERTISE**

- Have opportunities for the culturally-specific program to share their work and let people know of their experiences, how they provide services, and their outcomes; recognize and uplift their work.
- Ask how the elder justice collaborative can support the work that the culturally-specific program is already doing.
- Make referrals to the culturally-specific program.

**“Grassroots agencies not being acknowledged for their knowledge is incredibly problematic; [mainstream organizations] normally don’t want to be “Boots on the Ground” but that’s critical to know exactly what the people need and how to serve them. Non-profit leaders often think their education will help to inform what the people need, but that doesn’t work.”**

**– Dr. LaTrice Buck, Inspire Consulting, Inc., Milwaukee, WI**

- Respect service models that are different from the mainstream or that approach the work differently. For example, culturally-specific programs are part of the community and in some cases, are peer-based; in this case, rigid professional boundaries may not fit. Rather than assuming the service model is lacking boundaries or unethical, learn more and trust the program.

## 6: Share Power and Resources.

*Inequities in power and access to resources impact the ability of community-based and culturally-specific programs to engage in community collaboratives. Sharing power and resources in meaningful ways promotes equitable partnership.*



Within a multidisciplinary collaborative, it's common to find members with uneven power and authority levels. In this context, power refers to “the ability to decide what a problem is, to decide what needs to be done about it, to decide who will be included to solve it, in what capacity, and with what resources” (White Starr, 2020). Equitable collaborations require a willingness for the lead organization/s to shift power in ways that listens to the African American community and program’s experience and priorities.

Otherwise, uneven power dynamics may result in some partners not being comfortable speaking up or others prioritizing smooth relationships over progress. Power dynamics are often underscored by funding levels of the participating organizations; in many communities, partners are eligible for the same limited funding. This creates competition where the organization is focused on securing their own funding to serve their clients vs working together. In these cases, organizations with less funding may not be as direct with what they see is needed for fear they will lose funding opportunities. In other cases, the organization that is satisfied with their funding level may not be fully engaged because they already have the funding needed. Either scenario undermines collaboration and innovation to improve the lives of older African American adults.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SHARING POWER AND RESOURCES:**

- Involve the culturally-specific program from the start of the initiative, project, or collaborative. Do not design the project or program and then ask for involvement.

- When writing new grants, bring the smaller program to the table at the concept phase of the grant application, versus getting a letter of support or memorandum of understanding once the grant is developed.
- Develop agreements within the team around the decision-making process: who will be involved and how will differing perspectives be managed? Consider a framework that recognizes that all partners, regardless of size or funding, have equal power.
- Develop clear roles and responsibilities within the team or partnership.
- Identify common goals and shared interests in the beginning.
- Embrace conflict as healthy and don't attribute conflict to personalities.
- Publicly give credit to the smaller organization when the partnership shares an accomplishment.

## 7: Invest in Culturally-Specific Programs.

*Support the capacity of culturally-specific programs through sharing connections, funding, and other investments.*



Marginalization of the African American community not only impacts older adults impacted by abuse; it often also impacts culturally-specific programs. As a result, these programs tend to have relatively fewer resources than mainstream programs, and they may therefore have smaller budgets and smaller staff. This may impact the program's capacity to write for or manage large grants that would increase their capacity. It also impacts the time available to participate in community collaborations.

To engage the culturally-specific program in an equitable way, mainstream entities and collaboratives must consider capacity and compensation in a way that supports the organization vs unintentionally undermining them. For example, a mainstream organization may offer to compensate a smaller organization for their time on a task force but may not consider the time it takes to get up to speed on the task force's work. Or, even when a smaller organization receives hourly compensation for work on a collaboration, this is not enough to add additional staff or cover overhead costs. At times, this results in an over-extended staff member participating in the limited way they have time for. In short, compensation for hours worked on the collaborative will not necessarily support the smaller organization's capacity. In addition, smaller or newer culturally-specific programs may not have community visibility or relationships with funders, donors, media, or policymakers that is necessary to advance their mission.

## **STRATEGIES FOR SHARING POWER AND RESOURCES:**

- Take the lead of the culturally-specific program. When partnering with small organizations that don't have large budgets or large staff, ask what capacity-building support would be helpful.
- Share the connections that you have. For example, if you are attending a meeting with a politician or member of the media, invite the culturally-specific program. Or, bring these stakeholders with you to the culturally-specific program's fundraisers or other agency events.
- Introduce the culturally-specific program to your donors; help set up a meeting or do an email introduction.
- Review grant proposal budgets for equitable distribution of funds vs a sub-contract for hourly work—ensure the budget covers indirect costs vs only salary.
- Attend fundraisers of the culturally-specific program.
- Highlight the work of the program in the mainstream organization's newsletters, social media, or blog posts; encourage your network to volunteer, donate, or attend their events.
- Amplify the issues that are important to the African American community or culturally-specific program.
- For smaller organizations without grant management infrastructure, offer consultation or other support on grant proposal development.
- Provide payment to organizations when asking them to be on committees.
- Pay trainers, speakers, and panelists for preparation, speaking, and overhead costs.
- When partnering on a grant application, offer grant writing as necessary to allow the smaller program to participate.
- Consider not applying for a grant if the smaller organization is.



## 8: Promote Survivor-defined Support, Including Alternatives to Engaging Law Enforcement.

8



*Older Black survivors are disinclined to seek help because of distrust of institutions and the risk of racial discrimination (M Li, R Chen, XQ Dong, 2020) so community solutions that revolve around a criminal justice system leave many older abuse victims without access to support and services.*

For many survivors of elder abuse, engaging law enforcement is a last resort, especially if the person causing harm is a family member. This is especially true for African Americans who have been living with the legacy of the criminal justice system’s role in controlling and dehumanizing from the time of slavery all the way to present day. Discrimination and bias are woven into laws, policies, and individual biased behavior across all aspects of the criminal justice system: policing, prosecution, and sentencing. “The disproportionate racial impact of certain laws and policies, as well as biased decision making by justice system actors, leads to higher rates of arrest and incarceration in low-income communities of color” (Vera Institute for Justice, 2018). The fact that Black people are twice as likely as white people to be shot and killed by police officers (Washington Post, 2023) leaves many African Americans viewing law enforcement agencies as sources of fear and harm vs support and safety.

For the older generation of African Americans, the criminal justice system is not perceived as justice; additionally, they may also have other priorities. (Koss, M. P., White, J. W., & Lopez, E. C., 2017). These priorities may include safe and affordable housing, access to quality healthcare, addressing caregiving needs, food security, or enhancing a support network.

Despite the criminal justice system often being seen as a detriment to their safety, this system is typically the anchor for elder justice collaborations: law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judicial system are often seen as core partners. Centering the criminal justice system in elder justice community coordination is a barrier for many African American culturally-specific programs. Even if they understand this dynamic exists, elder justice teams often stop short of revisiting the structure and focus of the collaboration and may not be equipped to have these difficult conversations about the criminal justice system within the team. Community collaboratives may prioritize the status quo and the comfort of law enforcement vs the culturally-specific organization.

## **STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING SURVIVOR-DEFINED SUPPORT INCLUDING ALTERNATIVES TO ENGAGING LAW ENFORCEMENT:**

- Map out how an older survivor reaches services depending on which organization they contact first.
- Learn how community-based and culturally-specific organizations are assisting older adults without first engaging the criminal justice system.
- Have conversations in the elder justice team about the limitations of centering the criminal legal system in your community response and how that impacts the African American community's access to services.
- Discuss current and future possibilities for building a survivor-defined and community-based response that includes a variety of options for older survivors including meaningful alternatives to the criminal justice system.



## Conclusion

Older African Americans survivors deserve services and responses that are culturally responsive; ones that understand them and address the issues most important to them. When elder justice coordination teams seek to build a cohesive community response to elder abuse, it's vital that those responses account for the context of the whole community, including African Americans. These teams can be more effective when they form stronger relationships with African American culturally-specific programs through the Guiding Principles and strategies described here. These Guiding Principles support elder justice community coordination teams to combat marginalization and advance equitable engagement with African American culturally-specific programs. It is our hope that this guide will serve as a catalyst for change, fostering a deeper understanding of the importance of culturally-specific programs in serving the community and working toward a more inclusive and equitable response in which older African Americans receive the support they need and deserve.





# Appendices



# Collaborating for Justice for Older African Americans

## Appendix 1: Conversation Guide

This resource is a companion piece to *Collaborating for Justice for Older African Americans, A Guide for Elder Justice Teams to Build Equitable Partnerships with Culturally-Specific Organizations*. In the following pages you will find guidelines for facilitating a discussion with your elder justice community coordination team on equitable engagement, four discussion prompts, and resources to further your learning.

## Introduction

Thank you for taking an important step in the work to deepen your support of older African American survivors of abuse. One of the most effective methods to serve this particular community is to equitably engage with the culturally-specific organizations that serve them. Culturally-specific programs are those that are designed for, designed by, and led by the community they intend to serve. The majority of individuals served are typically representative of the particular community of color. African American culturally-specific programs may focus on a variety of issues such as domestic and sexual violence, health equity, housing, mental health, mass incarceration or other issues. These organizations are essential because they center the voices and experiences of their community, create safe spaces for the unique trauma faced by their community, and utilize a holistic approach to intervention.

This Conversation Guide is part of the Collaborating for Justice Project's Guide for Elder Justice Community Coordination Teams. It is intended to support your team in building equitable partnerships by providing you with information about the importance of culturally-specific programs and strategies to effectively collaborate with them. One of the first steps to building equitable collaborations is to have a shared understanding with your team and this conversation guide is intended to support you in that. These conversations are designed to be ongoing and never truly complete, because addressing inequity and establishing new practices and collaborations takes time along with consistent dialogue.

### Who is this Conversation Guide for?

This conversation guide is intended for elder justice community coordination teams like:

- Multidisciplinary Teams
- Task Forces
- Coordinated Community Response Teams

### What is the purpose of the Conversation Guide?

This guide serves to equip elder justice community coordination teams with information and strategies toward equitable collaboration. It can be used to assist in creating the space for the discussions needed prior to engaging culturally-specific organizations.

## What is the focus of the Conversation Guide?

Use this guide to begin a conversation on the following:

- The importance of intentionally supporting older African American adults
- Exploring fears and concerns about equitable engagement
- Organizational preparation for equitable engagement
- Creating the space to engage in difficult conversations about race, power, and collaboration

## Facilitator Guidelines: Preparing for the Conversation

Conversations about inequities may raise feelings of indifference, guilt, shame, mistrust, and fear of saying something wrong. These feelings are valid and expected, but they often result in avoiding important discussions that must occur before inequity can be addressed. We need to accept that we have those feelings and be brave enough to have these conversations. These facilitator guidelines are offered to those leading conversations to help ensure they are meaningful and productive.

### Create a Safe Space

Being intentional about the structure of your discussions is important to create a space that everyone will feel welcome to contribute and speak without judgment. Your group can determine the structure for your conversation. Below are some examples you may want to consider:

- Schedule at least 60-90 minutes for the conversation
- Let all team members know that everyone is encouraged to join and participate
- Plan a setting, whether in-person or virtual, that provides a safe and confidential space for those involved (i.e., an invite only video call or a conference room with a closed door)
- Be explicit about the focus, purpose, and goals of the conversation and communicate them clearly to attendees.

**Roles to Identify:** Facilitator, Note Taker, Timekeeper

**Materials Needed:** Large Flip chart or White board (with appropriate markers for either). When notes are captured visibly for the group to see, it helps with processing the information shared and discussed.

## Share the 4 Agreements of Courageous Conversations

1. Stay engaged: Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue.”
2. Experience discomfort: This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially in dialogue about race, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open. It is not talking about these issues that create divisiveness. Divisiveness already exists in the society. It is through dialogue, even when uncomfortable, the healing and change begin.
3. Speak your truth: This means being open about thoughts and feelings and not just saying what you think others want to hear.
4. Expect and accept non-leisure: This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding, which requires ongoing dialogue.

**Set Context:** Bring people into the conversation by setting the context. Here are a few questions to consider:

1. What is happening now that makes this important?
2. Why is this conversation important?
3. Why now?

(Sources: <https://www.sagethinking.com.au/resources/articles/on-leadership/creating-safe-spaces-for-courageous-conversations/>; <https://www.myinspirededucation.com/blog/the-four-agreements-glenn-singleton>; <https://mylearning.nps.gov/library-resources/facilitating-courageous-conversations/>)



# Conversation #1: Understanding the barriers African American older adults face due to historical and present-day racism

1. What are some of the specific barriers that older African American adults face in seeking services to assistance? Please list those that come to mind on your flip chart or white board.

*Facilitator's Note: Ask participants to list the barriers they can think of; Share ones not identified; Refer to the Collaborating for Justice Project Guide, if necessary.*

2. Why do these barriers exist?

*Facilitator's Note: Please refer to the Collaborating for Justice Project Guide and the [Increasing Access to Healing Services and Just Outcomes for Older African American Crime Survivors Toolkit](#).*

3. How can we work to ensure we are not contributing to the barriers faced by African American older adults? Why is this important?

4. What is our organization or team doing to address and eliminate these barriers and traumas in our care and support? Identify efforts, policies, and/or methods utilized to intentionally assist older African American adults.



## Conversation #2: Deepening our awareness of culturally-specific organizations



1. What culturally-specific organizations exist in our community? What is their focus area?

*Facilitator's Note: Culturally-specific organizations can have more than one focus in addition to anti-violence, such as housing, mental health, family services, health, etc.*



2. Why are culturally-specific organizations so important? Why do they often use different approach from mainstream organizations?

3. How can we build a partnership? What steps are needed? What value would we gain through a partnership with a culturally-specific organization?



## Conversation #3: Challenges and concerns about engagement with culturally-specific organizations



1. What is our experience so far with collaboration? What has worked?
2. What potential challenges could we face in seeking partnership? How can we overcome them?
3. Does anyone have any concerns or fears about engaging with culturally-specific organizations? What would be helpful to alleviate those fears and concerns?





## Conversation #4: Next steps for engagement



1. What is needed to not only build, but to sustain a relationship or partnership with a culturally-specific organization? What help do we need now? What do we need in the future?
2. Identify the next steps needed to engage with a culturally-specific organization. What do we need to have in place when we reach out? Who do we need to contact?
3. Who is the person or persons responsible for each next step?
4. When will we reconvene to assess our progress and our feelings about the experience thus far?

# Resources for Navigating Difficult Conversations about Race, Power, and Collaboration

[Creating Safe Spaces for Courageous Conversations](#), Sage Thinking

[The Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations](#), Glenn Singleton

[Conversation Guide: Talking about Race, Racism, Care, and Caregiving](#), Caring Across Generations

[Racial Justice Resources for Activists, Advocates, & Allies](#), University of Cincinnati Libraries

[Facilitating Difficult Race Discussions: Five Ineffective Strategies and Five Successful Strategies](#), Derald Wing Sue, PhD

[Toolkit: Increasing Access to Healing Services and Just Outcomes for Older African American Crime Survivors](#), Juanita Davis and Katie Block

[Facilitator's Guide: Courageous Conversations](#), Atrium Health



# Collaborating for Justice for Older African Americans

## Appendix 2: Community Forum Toolkit

The Community Forum Toolkit is a Collaborating for Justice Guide companion piece to equip elder justice teams with resources to bring together partners working with and on behalf of older African Americans to develop a shared understanding of the community efforts already occurring and opportunities to further advance elder justice for the African American community. The toolkit includes a Facilitator Guide, sample agendas, and a sample PowerPoint template.

## Introduction

### What is a community forum?

A community forum is a meeting that brings together partners (organizations, initiatives, and individuals) working with and on behalf of older African Americans in your community. Each organization shares their work and learns more about what other partners are doing to create a coordinated community where older African Americans age with the safety, dignity, and justice that they deserve.

### Why a community forum?

The goal of the community forum is to develop a shared understanding of each partner's efforts to support older African American victims. By knowing more about what is already happening to support older African Americans in your community, elder justice community coordination teams will be better equipped to identify collaboration opportunities with community-based and culturally-specific African American partners.

### How can this Toolkit help?

This toolkit will support elder justice community coordination teams in engaging stakeholders in planning and hosting a community forum event. This event should be based on your community's needs – how you structure your community forum will be based on a number of factors, including the size of your community and number and types of partners, existing relationships, and community history.

This toolkit is intended to provide samples of materials for elder justice community coordination teams to make it easier to get started in planning a community forum that works for your goals and your community context.

### The Community Forum Toolkit contains 4 sections:

1. Facilitator's Guide: Planning and Hosting a Community Forum Promoting Elder Justice in the African American Community
2. Sample External Agenda – for Attendees
3. Sample Internal Agenda – for Planning Group
4. Sample PowerPoint Slides with Facilitator Notes

# Facilitator’s Guide: Planning and Hosting a Community Forum Promoting Elder Justice in the African American Community

Planning a community forum is an important step in determining how equitable collaborations can support the safety and well-being of older African American adults. By learning more about what is already happening in your community, your elder justice community coordination team can identify collaboration opportunities so that your work better reflects the needs of the African American community.

This facilitator's guide is designed to assist elder justice community coordination teams in planning and hosting a community forum aimed at bringing together stakeholders and community partners who work with older African Americans. The forum aims to address issues of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and foster collaboration among participants. This guide provides key steps for planning the community forum and offers tips for facilitating a successful event.

## **Step 1: Convene a Community Forum Planning Team**

- Identify key planning team members to plan and carry out the event. Planning team members will likely be existing members of your elder justice community coordination team. Elder justice professionals should be champions for racial justice and equitable collaboration with African American culturally-specific programs. African American community representatives should be champions for elder justice.
- Hold regular meetings and consider sub-committees for event categories such as marketing or logistics.
- Determine roles and responsibilities – create an event plan outlining who will be responsible for each task.



## **Step 2: Define Objectives and Outcomes**

- Clearly define the objectives of the community forum, such as raising awareness, sharing knowledge and resources, and building collaborative partnerships. What do you hope will happen as a result of the community forum?
- Establish measurable outcomes, such as identifying actionable strategies, fostering networking opportunities, and enhancing community support.

## **Step 3: Identify and Engage Stakeholders**

- Identify key stakeholders, including culturally-specific organizations, community-based and grassroots organizations, faith communities, African American community leaders, and older adults themselves.
- Develop a comprehensive list of potential attendees and partners. As you consider who to invite, remember to think within and beyond the typical elder justice partners to build a comprehensive network that reflects the holistic experience of older African Americans. Consider programs that serve African Americans across the lifespan, even if they are not focused on older adults, such as programs focused on health, mental health, housing, or other issues. Building collaborations with these organizations can assist the elder justice collaborative to reach African Americans in their community that they otherwise might not be able to.
- Consider the importance of African American community members who may not be affiliated with an organization – individuals who are considered credible informal leaders with a strong knowledge base about the issues, needs, and dynamics of the community.
- Send out invitations, outlining the purpose and expected outcomes of the forum, and emphasizing shared interests and the value of their participation.



#### **Step 4: Plan Logistics**

- Determine the date, time, and location of the forum, considering accessibility (visual, auditory, physical, etc.), transportation, and other logistical needs. Work around the schedules of key African American programs and organizations.
- Determine a registration platform to track attendees and target outreach strategies accordingly. Ensure your registration process includes an opportunity to request accommodations for accessibility.
- Arrange for appropriate venue facilities, planning for seating arrangements (speaker, panel, roundtables, etc.), audiovisual equipment, registration table, and signage.
- Plan for materials such as handouts, name tags, evaluation forms, and refreshments.

#### **Step 5: Develop an Agenda**

- Create a detailed agenda that keeps the group engaged and includes a variety of activity types, such as presentations, networking activities, small group breakouts, panel discussions, and large group discussion.
- Include breaks for accessibility and networking reasons.
- Invite knowledgeable speakers who can address relevant topics, including elder abuse issues, and the African American community context.
- As you prepare the content, account for various perspectives and levels of knowledge – for example, elder justice professionals will possess knowledge about elder abuse but may lack knowledge of the African American community context (historical, cultural, socio-political). African American programs that don't focus on elder justice will bring knowledge and lived experience on the African American community context but may have limited knowledge of elder abuse issues.
- Determine forum format – examples include speakers, panels, roundtable discussions, large group discussions, and Q/A sessions. Allocate sufficient time for interactive sessions, allowing participants to ask questions, share experiences, and engage in meaningful discussions.
- Include time to share information on next steps after the community forum.

## **Step 6: Promote the Event**

- Develop a comprehensive promotional strategy to raise awareness and encourage participation.
- Utilize various communication channels, including social media, local newspapers, community bulletin boards, and email newsletters, to reach a wide audience.
- Use networking of elder justice team members to share information with a wide range community participants.
- Don't forget the power of individualized invitations so stakeholders can hear from you the importance of their attendance and what they can expect from the event.
- Send reminders in advance of the event, including the agenda.

## **Step 7: Prepare for Community Forum Facilitation**

- Determine who will facilitate the event; consider a third-party facilitator if possible.
- Assign key roles for event facilitation: notetaker, facilitator/s, timekeeper/s, tech support, etc.
- Familiarize yourself with effective facilitation techniques, such as active listening, summarizing key points, managing time, and encouraging participation from all attendees.
- Plan strategies to cultivate an inclusive and respectful environment (e.g., setting ground rules for discussions, ensuring equal opportunities for everyone to contribute, and valuing diverse perspectives).





## **Step 8: Day-of-Event Management**

- Arrive early to set up the venue, check audiovisual equipment, and arrange materials.
- Greet participants and provide them with necessary materials, including agenda copies, name tags, and evaluation forms.

## **Step 9: Facilitating the Forum**

- Introduce the forum's purpose, agenda, and ground rules at the beginning, and highlight the importance of active engagement and networking.
- Follow the agenda closely, ensuring time management and keeping discussions focused.
- Encourage active participation by posing open-ended questions, facilitating group discussions, and involving participants in activities and exercises.
- Summarize key points and themes periodically to ensure clarity and maintain the flow of the forum.
- Manage any conflicts or disruptions in a calm and professional manner, ensuring a safe and inclusive environment.

## **Step 10: Evaluate and Follow-Up**

- Assign someone to take detailed notes during the forum to capture key discussions, ideas, and action items.
- Encourage participants to complete evaluation forms to gather feedback on the event, speakers, and overall experience.
- Compile the information gathered, including themes that emerged and any identified strategies or commitments made during the forum.
- Share themes with participants and a plan for further collaboration opportunities.



## Learn More: Resources for Planning and Facilitating a Community Forum

[Leading a Community Dialogue on Building a Healthy Community](#), Kansas University

[Guide to Building an Elder Fraud Prevention and Response Network](#), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

[Strategies for Facilitators Of Community Meetings](#), Great Schools Partnership



**Community Forum Promoting Elder Justice  
in the African American Community**  
**Sample External Agenda for Attendees**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Notes for Facilitators</b>
<b>Networking</b>	<b>8:30-9:00am</b>	
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>9:00-9:10am</b>	
<b>Introductions &amp; Ground Rules</b>	<b>9:10-9:30am</b>	
<b>Overview &amp; Purpose</b>	<b>9:30-9:50am</b>	
<b>Community Dialogue</b>	<b>9:50-11:45am</b>	
<b>Closing &amp; Next Steps</b>	<b>11:45am-12:00pm</b>	

**Community Forum Promoting Elder Justice  
in the African American Community**  
**Sample Internal Agenda for Planning Team and Speakers**

Item	Time	Notes for Planning
On-Site Set-up	7:30-8:30am	Arrive early to set up tables, put out materials (signs, name tags, agendas, etc), set up/test tech, put out refreshments, etc. Ensure requests for accessibility accommodation are fulfilled.
Networking	8:30-9:00am	Greet attendees as they arrive and register them. Allow them time to put on their name tags and network.
Welcome	9:00-9:10am	Welcome attendees to the event; share housekeeping information, review the agenda, and share the meeting objectives. <i>(PPT Template slides 1-2)</i>
Introductions & Ground Rules	9:10-9:30am	Introduce facilitators for the day, facilitate brief introductions by attendees, to include their name, affiliation, and interest in the forum). Set ground rules either by sharing sample ground rules or facilitating a conversation about ground rules. <i>(PPT Template slides 3-6)</i>
Overview & Purpose	9:30-9:50am	Outline background information, including overview of elder abuse and the importance of engaging holistic partners in supporting older African Americans. <i>(PPT Template slides 7-14)</i>

Sample agenda continues on next page

Item	Time	Notes for Planning
Community Dialogue	9:50-11:45am	Facilitate conversations to learn more about what is currently happening to support older African Americans in your community, the important issues that need to be addressed, and opportunities in your community to promote elder justice for African Americans. The community dialogue should be tailored to your community needs (size, how familiar partners are or not, community dynamics). Options include roundtable discussions and report-out, panel discussion with key community members followed by dialogue session, or in some cases, large group discussion. <i>(PPT Template slides 15-17)</i>
Closing & Next Steps	11:45am-12:00pm	Thank participants for attending. Explain what they can expect next in terms of information-sharing post-forum, collaboration opportunities, or other plans. <i>(PPT Template slides 18-19)</i>



# Collaborating for Justice for Older African Americans

Welcome to the  
Community Forum!

**PowerPoint Template Slides**



### **HOW TO USE THIS POWER POINT TEMPLATE**

This template is intended to be a starting place for planning your community forum. Depending on your agenda, you can add, delete, or edit slides. Refer to the Facilitator Guide including Internal Agenda for more information.

All font in the color red should be updated with your community's specific information.



## Community Forum Objectives

We want **(NAME OF COMMUNITY)** to be a coordinated community where older African American adults age with the safety and dignity they deserve.

We can't be coordinated until we know what is currently happening in **(NAME OF COMMUNITY)**.

Let's get to know one another better!

2

**Facilitator's Notes:**

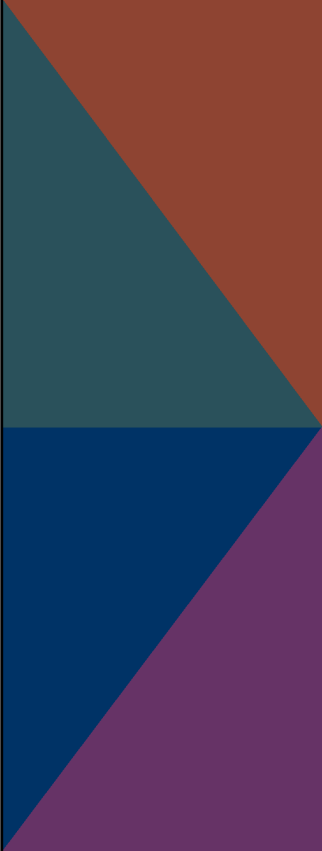
Provide information about the goals of the community forum. Update content on this slide as necessary.





**Facilitator’s Notes:**

Community Forum facilitators should introduce themselves and their affiliation



## Your Hosts

Use this slide to describe the organization or elder justice community coordination team that is hosting the community forum.

Describe the purpose, structure and goals of the organization or elder justice community coordination team so participants understand the context for the event.

4

**Facilitator’s Notes:**

Describe who is hosting the community forum including who was engaged in planning (example; The Elder Abuse Multidisciplinary Team). Provide information about the hosting agency/group, including their mission, purpose, goals and what they are working on. Explain how this community forum fits into the hosting agency/group’s goals.



# Introductions and Shared Interests

Name

Your Affiliation

What brings you here?

5

**Facilitator’s Notes:**

Use this time to allow attendees to briefly introduce themselves. Adapt the format of this activity according to the size of the group, time available, etc.



## Ground Rules

- Listen to understand
- Let others share without interruption
- Commit to learning
- Avoid assumptions
- Share the time
- Encourage others to participate
- Stay on topic and on time
- Limit side conversations
- Remember impact vs intention

6

### Facilitator's Notes:

Develop ground rules for the meeting so attendees know what is expected of them and to create a space where everyone feels comfortable sharing and learning.

Depending on the time you have

- Option 1 (shorter time): Use the ground rules listed on the slide and ask for additions or edits.
- Option 2 (longer time): In a large group discussion, engage in a free think about ground rules. As the following questions.
  - What meeting norms and practices will support your authentic participation today?
  - What do you need from the facilitator and other meeting participants to feel comfortable sharing, reflecting, and learning? What does this look like?

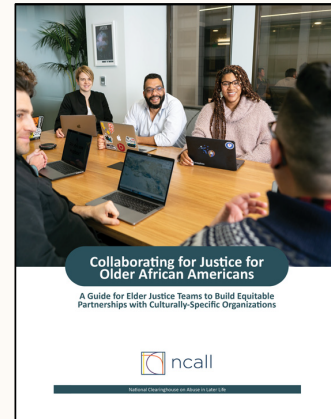
Write the ground rules on white paper or on this slide; review and get group agreement before proceeding.

Learn more about setting ground rules: [Setting ground rules for productive discussions | UMN Extension](#)

# Collaborating for Justice

This project is part of a guide developed by the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) to support communities in improving responses to older African American victims of abuse through equitable community collaboration.

The Collaborating for Justice Guide contains guiding principles for collaboration between mainstream organizations and African American programs and a toolkit on planning a community forum as a starting point for advancing collaboration.





## We All Play a Role in Addressing Elder Abuse

- Elder abuse is a hidden yet growing problem.
- 5 million older adults are impacted annually.
- The issue is becoming more urgent as the U.S. population of older adults is rapidly growing.
- The older adult population is becoming more racially diverse than ever before.

8

### **Facilitator's Notes:**

Describe the context of elder abuse.

For more information on elder abuse and abuse in later life, visit the NCALL website's Resource Library for fact sheet series: [Publications - NCALL - The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life](#)

# Cultural Context



"Interpersonal relationships are culturally constructed, and any attempt to understand elder mistreatment ... should take into account cultural context."

M Li, R Chen, XQ Dong, 2020

9

## **SAMPLE SCRIPT:**

As the older adult population diversifies, it becomes imperative for us to ensure that our community responses to elder abuse account for the culture and background.



## Focusing on the African American Community

For some African Americans, traditional helping systems aren't viewed as supportive:

- Criminal Justice System
- Human Services
- Others: Healthcare, Housing, Education

Culturally-responsive and culturally-specific programs often have the expertise, credibility, and knowledge to best serve the African American community.

10

### **Facilitator's Notes:**

Facilitators should work with African American community partners to plan facilitation of this section. Facilitators not representing the African American community should develop racial literacy to be able to speak on these issues confidently. Careful review of the Collaborating for Justice Guide along with the enclosed references will support you in this.



## Social, Political and Economic Context



“In addition to culture, services and community responses will be most effective if they understand and recognize the social, political and economic realities.”

Vann, 2002

11

### **SAMPLE SCRIPT:**

Our services and responses to elder abuse must not only include an understanding of the importance of culture, but also the importance of the social, political, and economic realities of the older adults in our community.



## What is the Social, Political and Economic Context?

Historical and present-day racialized oppression and subsequent trauma has resulted in the marginalization of African Americans in communities across the United States.

- Individual
- Interpersonal
- Institutional

As a result, there persist racial disparities in many areas: health, education, economics, housing, politics.

12

### **SAMPLE SCRIPT:**

Let's talk about the social, political and economic context specific to the African American community.

Historical and present-day racialized oppression and subsequent trauma has resulted in the marginalization of African Americans in communities across the United States. The country's long and devastating history of racism and discrimination deeply impact African Americans over the course of their lifespan from slavery and Jim Crow racial segregation laws, to redlining policies and divestment of African American neighborhoods to over policing and subsequent over- incarceration of African American men; institutions and systems aimed to rob African Americans of their humanity and undermine their success.

These racial harms are not just historical; they persist to this day. In large and small ways, public policies and institutions often reflect or repeat this history, contributing to perpetuating a system of unfair advantages for white people and disadvantages for Black, Indigenous and other people of color. These policies have resulted in disparities and inequities across many dimensions of the African American community: education, employment, housing, health, politics, persisting across generations in the lives of older African Americans and within the African American community.



## In the Context of Abuse

For older African Americans, the experience of abuse, neglect, and exploitation does not occur outside of the context of the family, particularly when the person causing harm is a partner, adult child, or other family member. Addressing the older adult's priorities first will build trust and support their safety.

13

**SAMPLE SCRIPT:**

For older African Americans, the experience of abuse, neglect, and exploitation does not occur outside of the context of the family, particularly when the person causing harm is a partner, adult child, or other family member. The priority for the older African American adult may be to get help for their loved one first and foremost. Additionally, African American older adults may have other priorities that take precedence over the abuse, such as housing, health, mental health, or other concerns.



## Collaboration Is Key

- Supporting older adults impacted by abuse is complex and requires multidisciplinary responses.
- Supporting older African Americans requires understanding the historical, cultural, and political context.
- Culturally-specific programs have this understanding - they play a vital role in meeting the needs of older African American survivors and these programs must be considered essential partners.

14

### **SAMPLE SCRIPT:**

Understanding this context is key not only to services, but also to collaborations.

We collaborate because elder abuse is complex and we know that the more we work together, the more likely we will be effective at meeting older adult's needs.

(Discuss examples of collaboration)

Elder justice community coordination teams continually seek ways to build comprehensive community responses to improve the safety and well-being of older adults affected by abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This must include intentionally and proactively engaging with those closest to the problem. That is why culturally-specific programs are such essential partners.



## Building a Holistic Network

Think within and beyond the typical elder justice partners to build a comprehensive network that reflects the holistic experience of older African Americans.

15

### **SAMPLE SCRIPT:**

The issue of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation is complex; older adults impacted by it often have varied support systems which may include non-traditional sources. Some communities have culturally-specific African American programs or initiatives; for those that do, very few, if any, have elder abuse explicitly as their mission. However, many of these programs serve people across the lifespan, whether their mission is focused on health, mental health, housing, or other issues. Building collaborations with these organizations can assist the elder justice collaborative to reach, identify, and serve older African Americans in their community that they otherwise might not be able to.

## Question Set 1: Getting a Baseline

What is currently happening in **(NAME OF COMMUNITY)** to support older African American adults?

How do you partner with the African American community? What does your involvement look like?

- Services and initiatives
- Partners
- Outreach strategies

16

### **Facilitator's Notes:**

The following three slides contain discussion questions in three topic areas. The Facilitators should determine in advance how to work through these questions.

## Question Set 2: What are the Issues?

- What are the most important issues that must be addressed to support the safety and well-being of older African Americans?
- What do you believe our community needs to do to improve the safety and well-being of older African Americans?

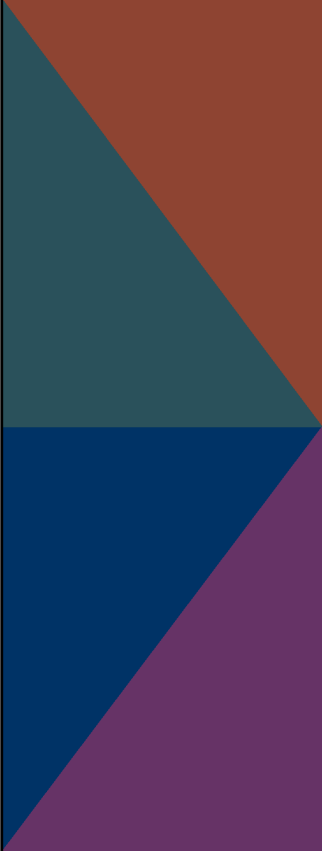
17

## Question Set 3: What are Our Opportunities?

- What current resources exist to address these needs?
- What's stopping us from doing what needs to be done?
- What opportunities exist? / What would it take to make it happen?

18





# Closing

Thank you for coming!


Information about Elder Justice  
community coordination team

How they can get involved

19

**Facilitator's Notes:**

Thank attendees for coming and tell them how they can stay involved.



## Next Steps

Use this slide to outline what the participants can expect next. For example:

What will be done with the information they shared? Will it be summarized and sent out to the group?

Will follow-up meetings be scheduled?

20

**Facilitator’s Notes:**

Prior to the event, plan how you will use the information you gather. Here, tell the attendees what they can expect next and how this will advance equitable collaborations.

## Appendix 3: Acknowledgments

NCALL would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the individuals who generously participated in the development of the Collaborating for Justice Guide, contributing their valuable insights and knowledge that shaped the structure and content of this resource. Without their unwavering support and willingness to share their time, expertise, and experiences, this project would not have been possible.

With special appreciation, we would like to thank the project team who guided the development of the process and provided expert feedback along the way, including Dr. LaTrice Buck of INSPIRE Consulting, Umi Hankins, Antonia Drew Norton of The Asha Project, and Bonnie Brandl. Their commitment to this project and to ensuring it resulted in a meaningful resource to equip communities in supporting older African American survivors was evident throughout all aspects of their work with us.

NCALL is also tremendously grateful for the participants of the interviews, listening sessions, and roundtables, including culturally-specific program leaders and members of elder justice community coordination teams from across the country. They engaged in thoughtful conversations and provided insights into elements of equitable collaboration that we would not otherwise have learned and their contributions were absolutely invaluable. Thank you to Mike Austin, Lisamarie Bristol, Dr. LaTrice Buck, Shelly Carlson, Jan Cummings, Dr. Patricia Davenport, Antonia Drew Norton, Ayonna Johnson, Kalimah Johnson, Dinah LaCaze, Linda Lofflin Pettit, Khi-Lynn Louis, Latonya Maley, Shawn Muhammad, William Muhammad, Courtney O'Hara, Terence Ray, Maria Santiago, Lindsey Silverberg, Charles Sperling, Jessi Trauth, and John Tully.

Finally, we would like to thank the United States Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime and Laura Ivkovich, Elder Justice Coordinator, for their support of this project.

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