

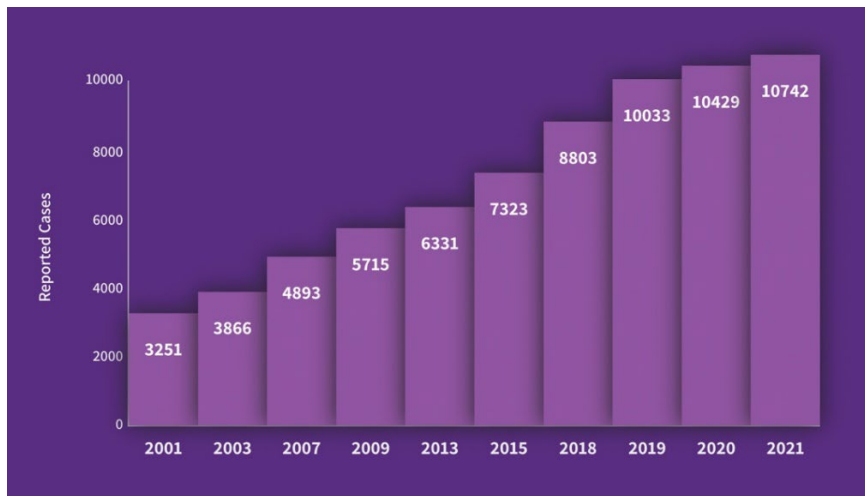
Invest in preventing abuse & fraud of older Wisconsinites.

The area of elder abuse is growing with an older adult population that is set to increase by 72% by 2040. According to reports submitted by Adult Protective Services agencies across Wisconsin, the increasing population of older adults is coupled with a rise in elder abuse cases, which have more than tripled from 2001-2023.

WAAN's Position:

Increase Grants for protection of elders' funding by \$350,000 annually to continue funding existing programs (Wis. Stat. 165.937)

Resources to support victims, enhance safety, and hold offenders accountable have not kept pace with this growing population.



Elder Abuse By the Numbers
Source: [Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources](#)

Funding shortages create ongoing challenges with increasingly complicated elder abuse cases.

The lack of invested resources in this area leaves many criminal justice partners unprepared to identify and address the issue. A modest investment in grant resources will help engage partners in elder abuse programs that are training professionals to detect, prevent, hold offenders accountable, and support victims.

We recommend an annual increase of \$350,000 in the 2025-2027 state budget for “Grants for Protection of Elders” to support current programs that no longer have federal funding options. Those programs include:

- Continuation funding for the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay’s Elder Justice Coalition program (federal grant expires in October 2025 with no continuation grant available),
- Civil Legal Victim Services programs (program funding was drastically reduced due to federal Victim of Crime Act [VOCA] cutbacks in 2024),

- Specialized training for law enforcement, social workers, prosecutors, judges, bankers, and health care professionals (there is no future funding to continue or expand these efforts),
- Specialized prosecutors and law enforcement positions which have been recommended by stakeholders as a necessary resource due to the unique dynamics in elder abuse cases and complicated financial exploitation cases (these specialized positions exist in other jurisdictions across the U.S., but don't yet exist in Wisconsin),
- Funds for elder abuse victim advocates programs (also impacted by recent VOCA cutbacks) to work on a county or regional basis,
- Public outreach, prevention, and awareness efforts to help identify abuse of older adults. National research has shown that only 1 in every 24 cases is reported.

These programs have made tremendous progress in recent years including:

- In-person training for over 1,300 law enforcement officers on how to detect, investigate, and collaborate with community partners to support victims of elder abuse.
- Development of new online trainings for Emergency Medical Services professionals, financial advisors, and financial institutions (Sept. 2024).
- In person training for over 400 direct service providers on how to detect abuse and service victims through collaboration.
- Training of over 300 individuals and 13 county led multidisciplinary teams on how to collaboratively work together at the local level on investigating and responding to elder abuse.
- Development of the "Scam Singo" financial elder abuse prevention educational program for older adults. This program is used by senior centers and older adult programs across Wisconsin.
- Partnerships with the Wisconsin Bankers Association and Credit Union League of Wisconsin to develop brochures for suspected victims of elder financial fraud.

A recent **needs-based assessment** completed by the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay demonstrates a need for continued education and training:

- 76% of law enforcement responded that they want training on criminal and civil cases.
- 88% of law enforcement want specialized training on investigating financial exploitation.
- 61% of financial institutions want training on how to identify red flags in financial elder abuse cases.
- 66% of health care professionals said that a lack of training or skills is a barrier to reporting and preventing elder abuse.
- 94% of prosecutors responded that they want to receive training on statutes related to protecting older and vulnerable adults.

Our work is not done! Help us build on the success of the state grant funds provided to the Wisconsin Elder Abuse Hotline. With a rising older adult population, the problem of elder abuse will continue to grow. A modest investment in continuation funding for these important programs will put Wisconsin in a better position to address the growing problem and will save taxpayers countless dollars on investigation, health care costs, and resources that could support other victims.

Find this and other WAAN issue briefs at: <https://gwaar.org/issues-and-initiatives>

(01-2025)

Core member organizations

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) • Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) • Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) • Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) • Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

Mission

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at <https://gwaar.org/waan>.