

## **Understanding the Social and Behavioral Processes of Aging: Exploring the Mistreatment of Native Elders**

*Exploring the Mistreatment of Native Elders is a project focused on exploring the issues of mistreatment among rural and urban Native elders in order to evaluate measurement methodologies and develop recommendations for future research.*

**Lead Agency:** National Institute on Aging (NIA)/National Institutes of Health (NIH)

### **Agency Mission:**

- Support and conduct genetic, biological, clinical, behavioral, social, and economic research related to the aging process, diseases and conditions associated with aging, and other special problems and needs of older Americans.
- Foster the development of research and clinician scientists in aging.
- Communicate information about aging and advances in research on aging to the scientific community, health care providers, and the public.

### **Principal Investigator:**

Lori Jervis, Ph.D.

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### **General Description:**

Little is known about the prevalence/incidence of elder mistreatment in any U.S. population, let alone American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs). The few available studies on elder mistreatment among this group suggest that the phenomenon is likely common, but rigorous studies on its prevalence/incidence are sorely needed. Further, there is a dearth of knowledge about cultural understandings of elder mistreatment in AI/AN.

***Excellence:*** What makes this project exceptional?

Although this is the first year of the two year grant, Dr. Jervis is undertaking a project with generic implications for measuring elder mistreatment in any diverse population group. Further, she has been highly successful in gaining access to a typically difficult to reach population group.

***Significance:*** How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

The three specific aims of this project are: 1) to explore the feasibility of conducting a study of the prevalence/incidence of mistreatment among rural and urban Native elders, and to identify measurement approaches that can be employed; 2) to conduct a pilot study of the prevalence/incidence of mistreatment among Native elders in order to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of several methods of measuring mistreatment in this population; and 3) to use the information generated by the project to develop recommendations for future research that estimates the prevalence/incidence of elder mistreatment in AI/AN and other minority and diverse communities. The collaboration between researchers and Community Experts will ensure that scientific approaches to conducting a prevalence/incidence study of Native elder mistreatment will be grounded in local realities.

***Effectiveness:*** What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

By understanding the extent of elder mistreatment among AI/ANs, we may gain insights into interventions to prevent these events.

***Innovativeness:*** Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

There is a dearth of knowledge about cultural understandings of elder mistreatment in AI/AN or other minority communities. Since what constitutes mistreatment is culturally defined, this lack of knowledge likely hinders researchers' ability to detect and evaluate mistreatment.