

PREVENTING ELDER ABUSE

The NC-DAAS (Division of Adult and Aging Services) which is a division of the NC-DHHS (Dept. of Health and Human Services) is tasked with the job of stopping elder abuse. When investigating the details of what to do to stop elder abuse I found the chain of organizations from the federal level to the local level is not insurmountably large to navigate, but can be a source of frustration if one does not know the correct search words. Entering “elder abuse” or “abuse” into the website search engines will yield papers and documents on the subject. Entering the words “elder rights protection” will yield organizations committed to the rights of elders of which one of those rights is the right to be free of elder abuse.

To fully understand the state organization it is best to understand the federal organization link. The federal link is the NCEA (National Center on Elder Abuse). The NCEA is a permanent organization of the Administration on Aging (AOA) since 1992; therefore it operates at the federal level. The NCEA serves as a national resource that has two basic functions: 1) Prevent and address elder mistreatment; 2) Multi-disciplinary library and consortium for experts to collaborate in elder abuse, neglect and exploitation issues. The NCEA is essentially a library and central point of contact for information and expertise for policy and prevention activities of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The NCEA Mission Statement from the NCEA website, http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/stop_abuse/get_help/state/index.aspx is as follows:

“National, state, and local partners in the field will be fully prepared to ensure that older Americans will live with dignity, integrity, independence, and without abuse, neglect, and exploitation.”

The North Carolina State organization that flows education and resources to the people from the federal organization is the NC-DAAS, Division of the NC-DHHS. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC-DHHS) through the control of the State Board of Education sponsors and funds the Division of Aging and Adult Services, (NC-DAAS). NC-DAAS works to support the mission of the NC-DHHS with regard to promoting independence and enhancing

the dignity of life for older adults and disabled persons which is in agreement with the mission of the NCEA (above).

The Mission Statement of the NC-DAAS is that of the NC-DHHS, and is as follows from the NC-DAAS website at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/mission.htm> :

DAAS works to promote the independence and enhance the dignity of North Carolina's older adults, persons with disabilities, and their families through a community-based system of opportunities, services, benefits, and protections; to ready younger generations to enjoy their later years; and to help society and government plan and prepare for the changing demographics.

The NC-DAAS has a search engine that is organized by counties. The searcher clicks on their county to access information at the local level. In the case of my county of Alamance (site of the revolutionary “Battle of Alamance”) the searcher is connected to the contact information of the Adult Protective Services Supervisor. On that same web page is a full description of the abuse reporting process. So the NC-DAAS is fulfilling its mission to promote the “protections” part of their mission statement through its partnership with the county. Other link listings on the local Alamance site reveal a host of services available to adult and disabled persons. Hence the NC-DAAS is fulfilling its mission of promoting “community-based systems of opportunities, services and benefits”. One other link that is very useful at the NC-DHHS Level is “tool kit” located on the right side of the NC-DHHS webpage to resources that help the consumer evaluate the abuse situation at this link: http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/afs_aps_tool.htm .

The home page of the NC-DAAS is very informative. The left side menus supplies links to much general information for elderly as well as adult children and professional care givers. The right side index lists links to specific topics that detail information on: Special Assistance Training, Adult Care Home Discharge Teams, 15 links on “what we do” which includes on-line manuals and forms for all services of the NC-DAAS including a “Community Evaluation Form” in MSWord as well as pdf version and many other tools. Also contained on the website is an extensive list of contact information for NC-DAAS employees responsible for services from A – Z! I could write volumes on this web site but one thing I

couldn't find was any statistical evidence that they are meeting their mission; however, from the information published and the links provided on the website, they are well on their way.