



## FACT SHEET

June 2011

### **What is elder abuse?**

Elder abuse is a devastating but often overlooked problem. It can lead to emotional as well as physical pain and suffering, shattered trust, financial ruin, and even increased risk of death. Elder abuse can include physical assault, psychological aggression, sexual coercion, financial exploitation, and caregiver neglect. The tragedy of elder abuse was recently brought home by the high profile cases of Brooke Astor case in New York City and 90-year-old screen legend Mickey Rooney, who gave dramatic testimony in front of Congress.

### **How widespread is it?**

A recent study found that 14% or 1 in 7 people over the age of 60 were victims of elder abuse in a one-year period. The most common abusers are family members. Most abuse is not reported.

### **What is the LA County Elder Abuse Forensic Center?**

This innovative Center brings together a multidisciplinary team, including law enforcement, adult protective services, district attorneys, public guardian, and mental health & health care professionals to work some of the most complex elder abuse cases in LA County. Team members draw from their expert scientific and legal knowledge to comprehensively examine cases and generate roadmaps for case investigation and resolution. In addressing the complex elder abuse cases brought to the Center since it began operating in 2006, team members have provided 128 medical evaluations and 144 neuropsychological assessments.

### **Why is the Center important?**

Elder abuse is often a complex crime. This complexity makes it difficult to stop the abuse and challenging to prosecute when a crime has occurred. When reviewing abuse cases, the Center targets the 3 “P’s” of prevention, protection, and prosecution, and the 3 “R’s” of recognition, remedies, and restitution.

In recognition of the need to better address elder abuse, Congress passed the Elder Justice Act, which establishes a more comprehensive Federal response to fighting elder abuse, including the establishment and support of Elder Abuse Forensic Centers. Because of its impressive track record, the LA Center is poised to be a national leader in this effort. For example, systematic evaluation has revealed that the Center: is highly valued by team members as a vehicle to collaboration, offers valuable services and insights to those who present cases, and dramatically increases prosecution rates. By mid-2011, the Center had heard over 650 cases.

### **How did the Center come into being?**

In 2003, the LA County Board of Supervisors instructed Community and Senior Services (CSS), in collaboration with the District Attorney and the Sheriff, to explore the feasibility of developing a Forensic Center to improve communication and collaboration between agencies responsible for investigating crimes against the elderly. In response, the LA Center was established in 2006 with a grant from the Archstone Foundation. As the second Elder Abuse Forensic Center in the US, there has been both national and international interest in learning about this innovative model.