

**Psychological abuse** refers to “socially isolating, threatening, yelling at, infantilizing, or withholding affection or denying privileges to a person;”

**Financial or material exploitation** involves “the theft or conversion of money or objects of value belonging to the senior by a relative or caretaker;”

**Neglect** involves “failing to provide the necessities of life, including adequate heat, clothing, hygienic conditions and the denial of social interaction.”

Witnesses strongly agreed that greater uniformity in defining and categorizing the issue would allow for comparability of research findings, would support efforts to assess the effectiveness of new programs, and would enhance attempts to alleviate the problem. As explained by Michael Stones from Memorial University, elder mistreatment cannot be defined and understood in the simplistic way in which it has been treated. According to him, elder mistreatment has multiple meanings depending on the source of the definition and the context in which it is used. In lumping these together, confusion occurs.

In attempting to address the definitional issue, Stones developed a lexicon of terms. He concluded that there are three basic reference standards against which acts of potential or alleged mistreatment are judged. These reference standards are: legislative or statutory, organizational, and normative or community.<sup>24</sup> Legislative standards are “things that are against the criminal law or against the common law”. Organizational standards are how organizations regulate themselves such as a code of ethics of a professional association or the regulations of a nursing home. Normative standards are not necessarily forbidden by law but apply to actions viewed as contrary to community thinking.

Within each basic reference standard, the identity of the protagonist and antagonist and their relationship measured in terms of trust and responsibility are evaluated. The level of intent to commit specific harm and the severity of mistreatment are also rated. Taken together, it was argued, these factors could lead to greater precision in the development of terminology.

The Committee agrees that the absence of uniformity in defining mistreatment of the elderly has hindered the advancement of research.

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<sup>24</sup> Stones, 6:5.