

**Self-Neglect and Self-Determination:
When Should the Government Check on You?**

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The Learning Objectives are:

- To expand understanding of self-neglect as a sliding scale from robust wellness to inability to self-preserve, including use of a self-care assessment scale

- To examine the wide range of public policy and variety of legal interventions for self-neglect

- To understand when a report to Adult Protective Services is needed versus voluntary interventions

- To explore the impact of legal interventions on autonomy and self-determination and the resulting ethical dilemmas

- To increase sensitivity to the experience of being labeled, reported and investigated.

The relevance to the conference attendees is based on the prevalence of self-neglect reports received by APS, the complexity of the cases, the explosive nature of public and aging network reactions to difficult cases, and the secondary trauma to staff.

The main points to be covered in the presentation are the legal, definitional, ethical and critical practice problems posed by self-neglect cases. The central question is: just when should the government intervene to check on how well an older adult-or any of us-is taking care of him or herself? This presentation will take the position that keener self-awareness and increased understanding of the public policy implications, purpose and impact of an APS report can assist professionals and the community in making more appropriate referrals that will use resources more effectively in offering protection, and at times imposing court-ordered protection, for vulnerable elders and disabled adults.

This presentation is unique in that it develops a premise of caution about government intervention in individual lives. This is accomplished through the use of tools to examine self-care and an individual "Statement Regarding the Possibility of Future Neglect of Self," for the purpose of increasing self-awareness and developing practice skills in rapport building, assessment and case management. This presentation will expand upon the material I wrote for the January /February 2006 issue of *Victimization of the Elderly and Disabled*, "Government Intervention in Self-Care." The presentation will create the opportunity for the use of case material from both the presenter and the audience to enhance assessment and practice skills in highly difficult cases, including those of hoarders.