

Can we build a shelter in an independent apartment within an assisted living facility?

Yes! An apartment in the community can be designated as an elder abuse shelter. The SPRiNG Alliance can assist your organization in designing and implementing appropriate security and other systems.

Do you have policies and procedures that you can share?

Yes! The SPRiNG Alliance is happy to share all of the protocols, systems and methods we have created.

Can an organization receive funding for a shelter project?

Yes! Elder abuse shelters have been one of the most successful fundraising opportunities for facilities that have replicated the shelter. Funders and foundations are extremely responsive to the vision of a non-profit long-term care facility taking in vulnerable older adults in need of immediate shelter as well as planning, legal services and support. There are also many collaborative fundraising opportunities with community, statewide and national agencies with overlapping missions.

What is the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale?

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice is the nation's first comprehensive elder abuse shelter, providing short-term refuge to people who experience elder abuse in the five boroughs of New York City and Westchester County. The shelter is housed within the Hebrew Home at Riverdale, a non-profit, non-sectarian long-term care facility. Professional and lay leadership of the Hebrew Home embrace the shelter as an outgrowth of a defining element of the Hebrew Home's mission: to protect and serve vulnerable older adults. The Weinberg Center provides the leadership for the global network of elder abuse shelters represented by the SPRiNG Alliance. For more information about the Weinberg Center, visit weinberg-center.org.

For more information or a list of alliance group members, visit springalliance.org.



The Harry and Jeanette
Weinberg Center for Elder Justice

AT THE HEBREW HOME AT RIVERDALE



Joining the Global Elder Abuse Shelter Movement

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the SPRiNG Alliance?

The SPRiNG (Shelter Partners: Regional, National, Global) Alliance is a worldwide professional network of elder abuse shelters. The Alliance's mission is to create a network of regional elder abuse shelters and other similar service models with close working relationships, shared resources and technical assistance, common standards of excellence and a vibrant community of support. The group has monthly phone calls and an annual symposium.

Where are elder abuse shelters located?

The elder abuse shelter model is highly adaptable to suit the needs of individual communities. Generally, elder abuse shelters are created within existing healthcare communities, sometimes at a single location and sometimes at several different healthcare communities providing different levels of care throughout the catchment area, which take turns housing clients. Shelters are generally "virtual," meaning clients are housed in the appropriate area within the community based on their medical needs. Utilizing existing resources in this way creates an efficient model with low variable costs.

Who is eligible for admission to an elder abuse shelter?

There are many definitions of elder abuse, some of which are extremely broad. Only a specific subset of people who experience elder abuse is generally eligible for elder abuse shelter programs. A potential shelter client must be currently unsafe due to ongoing or imminently threatened elder abuse and must have no other safe shelter alternative. Shelter professionals conduct a preliminary investigation prior to admission to confirm that potential residents meet these criteria. An elder abuse shelter is not a homeless shelter or an emergency geriatric psychiatric unit.

Where do client referrals come from? What is a typical admissions procedure?

Elder abuse shelters generally receive referrals from a variety of community agencies, including hospitals, police, Adult Protective Services, community-based service providers and District Attorneys' offices. Once a potential client has been referred, shelter teams work together to investigate the individual's history and circumstances. The team then makes a collective informed decision about admission based on whether a bed is available that meets the potential client's required level of care.

What is the average length of stay at a shelter?

Shelter clients generally spend between 60 and 120 days at the shelter.

How do healthcare communities with shelter programs receive payment?

If clients using shelter services are eligible for Medicaid or other government benefits for people at the poverty level, shelter programs seek compensation via those programs. Where possible and appropriate, shelters sometimes receive private pay from residents. Shelters raise and provide scholarship dollars to ensure that no one is turned away due to inability to pay. Using the healthcare community's preexisting infrastructure keeps variable costs low, so that individual client expenses are relatively minimal.

How is an elder abuse shelter program staffed? Can a shelter operate without a lawyer on staff?

It is important that an elder abuse shelter have a dedicated staff member who is overseeing and responsible for the project. The shelter can then use the pre-existing care team within the larger facility in which it operates, as well as that facility's security, administrative and legal personnel. As the shelter program grows, dedicated staff members in all of these areas may be added as resources allow, but they are not immediately necessary for basic shelter operations. It is also feasible to utilize an area law school or a pro-bono service of a law firm.

What sort of security procedures and personnel are required to start a shelter program?

While security is a genuine issue when operating a program providing refuge to people who experience abuse, it is rarely a cause for serious concern if proper policies are consistently implemented. At many SPRiNG Alliance shelter programs, a client may not receive any visitors for two weeks following admission. After that, an updated list of visitation restrictions is maintained for each client and shared with all security personnel, who have protocols in place to alert the entire staff when necessary.

Are shelter residents obligated to address their abuse via the criminal justice system?

One of the SPRiNG Alliance's core values is respect for every older adult's right to self-determination. Therefore, shelter professionals counsel each client about the advantages and consequences of pursuing criminal charges against the person who has committed the abuse, but the decision to do so rests with the client, as long as the client is legally capable of making such a decision. If a client decides to participate in a criminal prosecution, shelter staff supports that client both legally and emotionally. It should be noted that criminal prosecution of people who commit elder abuse is difficult. Therefore, the availability of assistance with civil legal services is an important component to the shelter model.