

Examining Elder Mistreatment on Martha's Vineyard

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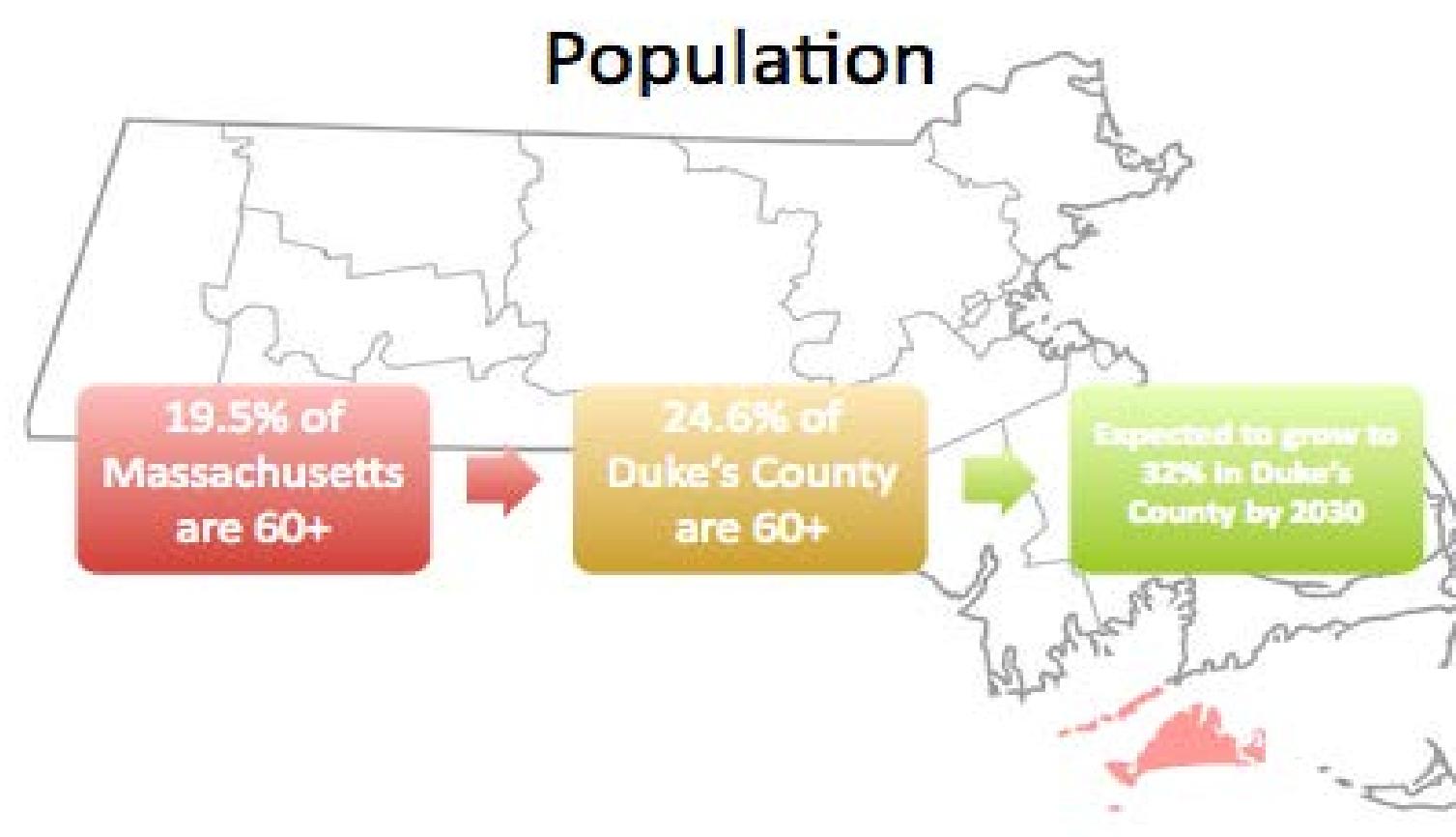
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Introduction:

Elder abuse exists when an elder is harmed emotionally, physically, or financially. Elder abuse can also come in the form of self-neglect or self-isolation, which is sometimes unintentionally self-inflicted. The physical geographical barriers of the island and other factors like the high cost of living and the lack of specialized medical care on the island provide additional challenges to the aging population living on Martha's Vineyard.



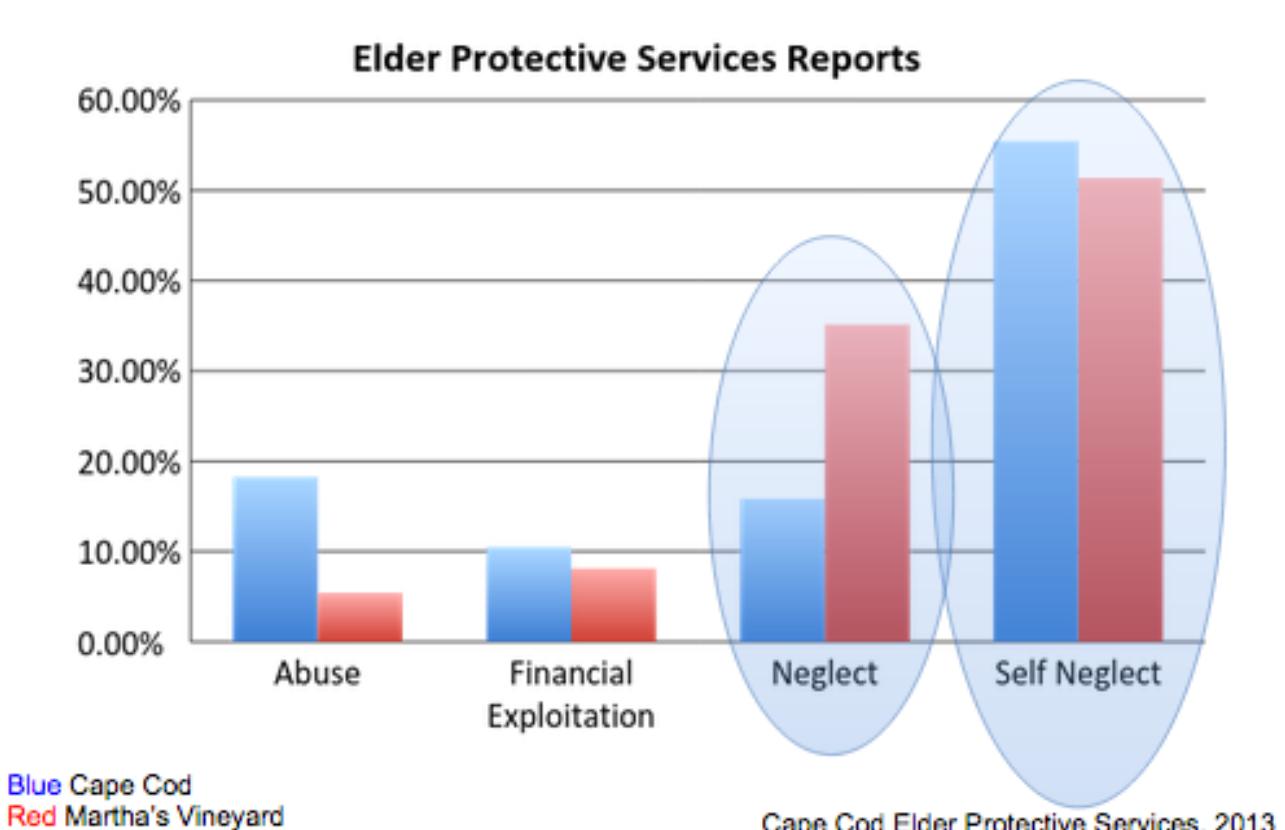
Objective:

Our team consisted of three second year nurse practitioner students and two second year medical students. The goal of our work on the Vineyard was to assess the presence of and perceptions around elder mistreatment on the island. To do this we interviewed agencies and individuals that are connected to the elder population on the Vineyard using a predetermined set of questions aimed to gather specific information about elder mistreatment within the community.

Social Determinants of Health for Elders in Duke's County

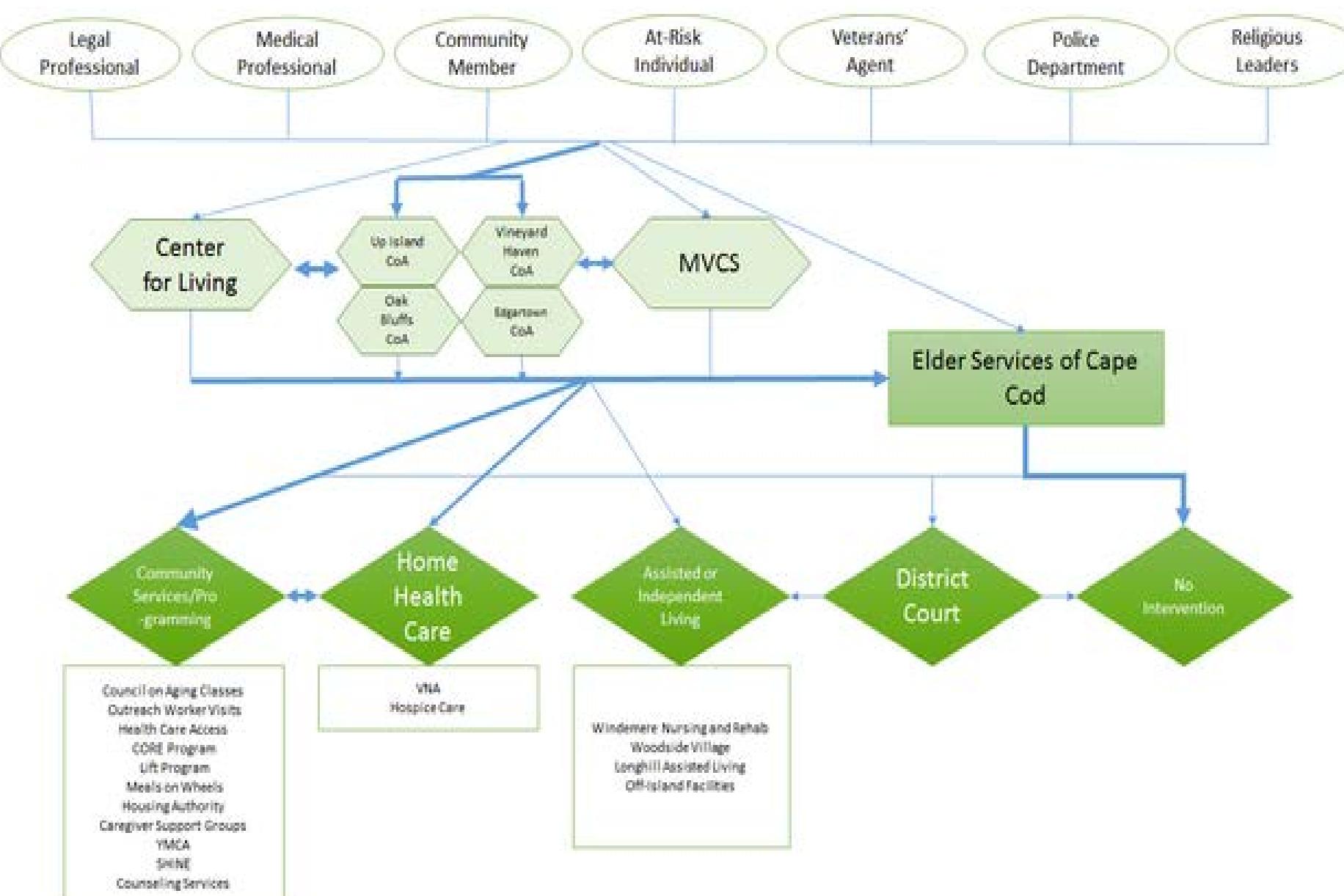


Prevalence of Types of Abuse



Results:

- Overall, Martha's Vineyard is a very welcoming community for elders.
- Everyone we spoke to agreed that elder abuse does exist on the island. However many individuals we spoke to were under the assumption that elder abuse referred only to physical abuse and did not know of the many other forms of elder abuse that exist (emotional, financial, self-neglect, care giver neglect, etc.)
- There are a plethora of available services on the island available for elders: Councils on Aging, Meals on Wheels, VNA of Cape Cod, Caregiver Support Groups, Center for Living, YMCA, CORE program, etc.
- Areas of improvement in the care of the elders that could lead to a decrease in the incidence of elder abuse include:
 - Mental health services
 - Affordable elder housing
 - Transportation
 - Additional home care services
 - More trained health care workers and home care aids.



Conclusions:

While elder abuse currently seems to be handled properly when it is put on someone's radar, it has the potential to become a significant problem with the huge expansion of the elder population that is expected to occur on the island in the coming years. However, there are some barriers present that limit the amount elder abuse reported. These barriers include:

- ♦ Lack of follow-up and transparency with elder services
- ♦ Lack of communication between resources
- ♦ Lack of education about elder needs and about elder reporting

Strengths of the Community:

- ♦ Community atmosphere and involvement
- ♦ Number and variety of resources
- ♦ Keeping clients in their homes for extended periods of time
- ♦ Advocates for elder abuse

Future Work:

We believe that additional care giver support groups for those care givers on and off island would greatly benefit the elder population. Also general education of the community about elder mistreatment and the addition of trained professionals for elders on the island would improve the quality of life of those who choose to spend their golden years on the Vineyard.

