

Everyone must face the realities of aging. Situations vary as do the ways people deal with growing older.

Regardless of the circumstances, however, most older people say they worry about crime. Many fear becoming victims of crime. As a group, older people can be a powerful and active force. As individuals, they often can be vulnerable and may need help.

Older people can be vulnerable to:

- ☐ Violent crimes—many older people are afraid that they are easy targets. Aware of their diminished strength and mobility, they realize that chances of outrunning or fighting off an attacker would be slim.
- ☐ Property crimes—burglaries, theft and vandalism can be especially distressing to older individuals whose security and well-being are tenuous. The ability to replace stolen or damaged property may be limited, and their lives may be permanently affected.
- ☐ Frauds and scams—some of the elderly can fall victim to fraudulent schemes and can be favorite targets for con artists. Often, the amount of money lost can be devastating.
- ☐ Elder abuse—mistreatment occurs both in domestic and institutional settings. Abuse does not have to be physical—passive neglect has left seniors in unclean, poorly heated housing, existing on inadequate diets.

The Triad solution: alone no more!

One of the main reasons that seniors may be vulnerable is that they are isolated within the community. Lines of communication break down. Contact with others, including law enforcement officials, may be infrequent. The Triad approach seeks to address and resolve this situation.

Triad, developed by national organizations (American Association of Retired Persons, International Association of Chiefs of Police, and National Sheriffs' Association), is organized and operated at the county level. Triad means:

- ☐ A three-way commitment among the chief(s) of police in a county, the sheriff and older and retired leaders.
- ☐ An agreement to work together to reduce criminal victimization of the elderly.
- ☐ Dedication to enhancing the delivery of law-enforcement services to older persons.

How does Triad work?

The core of the operation of Triad is an advisory council composed of law-enforcement members (county and municipal), along with older people of the community and people who work with the elderly. The council acts as an advisory group for the area's law enforcement personnel on crime and security issues concerning the elderly. It discusses and recommends programs, increases communication, and recruits older volunteers to help with its objectives. These include:

- ☐ Surveying seniors to determine their crime-related concerns.
- ☐ Locating or preparing a list of currently available services and programs for seniors.
- ☐ Planning and implementing additional crime prevention programs or services.
- ☐ Operating an ongoing channel for information exchange between the community's seniors and law enforcement, as well as advocating and advising on programs.
- ☐ Helping seniors become more fully informed about the workings of the criminal justice system.
- ☐ Recruiting seniors as volunteers for hands-on action in services and programs.

What can Triad do?

- ☐ Assisting with strategies to increase crime reporting.
- ☐ Provide assistance to victims—for moral support, to assist in access to personal services and counseling, and to act as a guide through the criminal justice system.
- ☐ Offer crime-prevention education addressing personal safety precautions.
- ☐ Demonstrate steps to make property less attractive and available to thieves and vandals.
- ☐ Develop ways to help detect and stop the abuse of older people, through "buddy networks" and other programs. Provide abuse prevention education.
- ☐ Train seniors about the nature of frauds and scams and how to recognize those who perpetrate them.

For more information about the Triad program

Find out how Triad can work in your community. Contact your local law-enforcement agency to see if a program is already in place, and if so, ask how you can participate. If no program exists, suggest that one be started.

For more information on how Triad can work in your community, write to:

Triad
National Sheriffs' Association
1450 Duke Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3490

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