



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## State agencies encourage Ohioans to recognize warning signs of elder abuse and know how to report it

*June 15, 2018, is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*

**Columbus, Ohio** – Because older adults are the fastest-growing segment of Ohio’s population, the Ohio Department of Aging and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services ask all Ohioans to learn the warning signs of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation and know how to report it if they suspect that an older loved one or neighbor might be a target. **June 15, 2018, is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.**

“From 2015 to 2040, Ohio’s overall population is expected to grow by just two percent, while our 60-plus population will grow by 40 percent,” said Beverley Laubert, interim director of the Ohio Department of Aging. “While we work every day to empower elders to remain independent and vital, we also know that they are often the targets of abuse. We are committed to empowering individuals, families and communities so that no elder is victimized again.”

“Elder abuse is an insidious but preventable problem,” said Cynthia C. Dungey, director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. “It spans socioeconomic class, race and gender. The more we spread the word about how to recognize and report it, the easier it will be to stop it from occurring and to make sure our older friends and family members get the help they need.”

The agencies want all Ohioans to know who they can turn to if they feel that they or their loved ones might be victims of abuse or exploitation.

If you feel that someone is in immediate danger of harm, call local law enforcement immediately.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services supervises the state’s **Adult Protective Services** program, which helps vulnerable adults age 60 and older who are in danger of harm, are unable to protect themselves and may have no one to assist them. County departments of job and family services receive and investigate reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation and evaluate the need for protective services. To report suspected abuse, call the statewide, toll-free help line at 1-855-644-6277 (1-855-OHIO-APS).

[MORE]

The Ohio Department of Aging is home to the **Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman**, which advocates for people receiving home care, assisted living and nursing home care. Paid and volunteer staff work to resolve complaints about services, help people select a provider and offer information about benefits and consumer rights. To report suspected abuse in a nursing home or assisted living facility or by staff of a home care agency, call the State Ombudsman's Office toll-free at 1-800-282-1206.

In addition, **area agencies on aging** around the state can connect elders to community-based services and supports to maintain or increase their independence and help prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation. Call toll-free 1-866-243-5678 to be connected to the area agency on aging serving your community.

Learn more about elder abuse at [www.aging.ohio.gov/elderabuse](http://www.aging.ohio.gov/elderabuse).

### **What types of things are considered abuse?**

- *Neglect* occurs when an individual's basic needs for safety and well-being (such as medical care, adequate nutrition, socialization) are not being met. This can be through the action or inaction of the individual or another person.
- *Exploitation* is the unlawful or improper use of another person's resources for monetary or personal benefit, profit or gain. People who exploit older adults can range from total strangers to trusted friends and family members.
- *Physical abuse* is the intentional use of physical force that results in injury, pain or impairment. It includes pushing, hitting, slapping, pinching and other ways of physically harming a person. In care settings, it can also include placing an individual in incorrect positions, force feeding, restraining or giving medication without the person's knowledge.
- *Emotional abuse* occurs when a person is threatened, humiliated, intimidated or otherwise psychologically hurt. It includes the violation of an adult's right to make decisions and the loss of his or her privacy.
- *Sexual abuse* includes rape or other unwanted, nonconsensual sexual contact. It also can mean forced or coerced nudity, exhibitionism and other non-touching sexual situations.

### **Warning signs of potential elder abuse, neglect or exploitation:**

- Bruises, cuts or other signs of physical harm;
- Sudden behavioral changes, such as becoming less social;
- A caregiver who refuses to allow visitors to see the adult alone;
- Hazardous or unsanitary living conditions;
- Dehydration, malnutrition or poor personal hygiene;
- Previously uninvolved relatives showing sudden interest in the adult's rights, affairs and possessions;
- Unexplained, sudden transfers of assets or finances to an individual;
- Unexplained disappearances of funds or valuable possessions;
- Abrupt changes in a will, financial documents, bank accounts or banking practice; and
- Over- or under-utilization of prescribed medications or missing medications.

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The **Ohio Department of Aging** serves and advocates for the needs of Ohioans age 60 and older, as well as their families, caregivers and communities. Programs include home and community based long-term supports and services, as well as initiatives to promote health and wellness throughout the lifespan.

The **Ohio Department of Job and Family Services** manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

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