



News for Immediate Release

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Department of Aging Urges Pennsylvanians to Be Aware of Elder Abuse

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15

Pittsburgh –Secretary of Aging Brian Duke today reminded Pennsylvanians to know the signs of elder abuse and encouraged people to report suspected cases to authorities.

“Our highest priority is protecting vulnerable older adults from abuse and making others aware of the signs of neglect, abuse, abandonment and exploitation,” Duke said, addressing a group of older adults at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center’s Cumberland Woods Village in Allison Park. “Don’t hesitate to tell someone if you suspect abuse is happening.”

Governor Tom Corbett has proclaimed June as Elder Abuse Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. It is a time to remind every Pennsylvanian of the responsibility to protect the health, safety, dignity and rights of older adults through education and outreach, Duke said.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Debra Todd joined Duke at today’s event.

Todd is chair of the Supreme Court’s newly established Elder Law Task Force, formed to study issues relating to guardianship, abuse and neglect and access to justice being faced by older Pennsylvanians. The task force has one year to study the issues and make recommendations that address court rules, legislation, education and best practices.

“Today’s event gives us the opportunity to call attention to a growing problem in our society – a problem that affected more than 11 percent of those 60 and older nationwide in 2009,” Todd said. “Now is the time to put in place solutions that will allow older Pennsylvanians to age without worries that they will be abused or their money will be taken.”

Elder abuse can include neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial and material abuse. Signs of abuse can include bruises or broken bones, weight loss, or withdrawing large sums of money from an account without an apparent reason.

Last year, more than 18,000 cases of suspected abuse and neglect were reported to the Department of Aging’s protective services program. Nearly 40 percent of

those reports led to protective services for the victim. Many of the cases involved neglect, financial exploitation and emotional abuse.

The number of reported cases is expected to rise as Pennsylvania's population ages. The increase has prompted the Department of Aging to make changes to the Older Adult Protective Services Act. The goal is to provide greater consistency and additional protections for Pennsylvanians over the age of 60.

Anyone can confidentially report elder abuse by calling the 24-hour statewide Elder Abuse hotline at 1-800-490-8505, or by contacting their local Area Agency on Aging.

For more information on how to prevent and report elder abuse, visit www.aging.state.pa.us

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Editor's note: The text of the Governor's Proclamation for Elder Abuse Awareness Month in Pennsylvania follows:

PROCLAMATION
WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH IN PENNSYLVANIA
JUNE 2013

WHEREAS, The Department of Aging administers Older Adults Protective Services for Pennsylvanians 60 years of age or older in partnership with the commonwealth's 52 Area Agencies on Aging; and

WHEREAS, the department is committed to preventing and protecting our older residents from being victims of physical and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation and abandonment; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, there were more than 18,000 alleged reports of abuse in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, our elders should be commended for their role in creating and bolstering the fiber of our communities and nation, involved in meaningful interaction among the richly diverse members of our population, making Pennsylvania the best place to live and age well; and

WHEREAS, the health and well-being of older people in our commonwealth should be one of our highest priorities and of concern to all Pennsylvanians; and

WHEREAS, advancing public education regarding the signs of elder abuse, be it physical, emotional or financial, is vital to the goal of protecting our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians; and

WHEREAS, our state prospers from interactions with older adults in all facets of life, such as the workplace, community events, places of worship or academia, and perhaps most importantly, our own homes; and

WHEREAS, we can all benefit from the wisdom of older Pennsylvanians, who have accumulated a wealth of knowledge that helps our commonwealth meet the challenge of its future; and

WHEREAS, older individuals are among the most important assets of any prosperous community and it is every Pennsylvanian's responsibility to protect their health, safety, dignity and rights.

THEREFORE, I, Tom Corbett, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim June 2013, to be Elder Abuse Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. I urge every citizen to take time this month to pay homage to the contributions of our elderly population by learning to recognize signs of elder abuse and working together to end it in Pennsylvania.

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