



Pat Quinn, Governor ■ Charles D. Johnson, Director
421 East Capitol Avenue, #100, Springfield, IL 62701-1789
160 North LaSalle Street, Suite N-700, Chicago, IL 60601-3031
www.state.il.us/aging

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2009

CONTACT:

Kimberly Parker
312/814.1577

State Department on Aging urges residents to “Break the Silence” to increase awareness about Elder Abuse

Launches Elder Abuse Awareness Campaign for July

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director Charles D. Johnson today launched the fifth annual statewide “Break the Silence” campaign and announced that July is *Elder Abuse Awareness Month* in Illinois, with a proclamation from the Governor. It is estimated as many as 80,000 older adults in Illinois are elder abuse victims each year. Elder abuse is defined as neglect, physical injury, mental, sexual, or financial exploitation to an adult 60 years of age or older. IDoA encourages victims, as well as anyone who suspects abuse, to call the state’s 24 hour **Elder Abuse Hotline at (866) 800-1409**, to speak with trained professionals who are prepared to help.

“Each day in Illinois someone is the victim of elder abuse but most do not receive help because the cases often go unreported,” said IDoA Director Johnson. “Our seniors deserve to feel safe and to be treated with respect. We want people to know there’s help available. If you are a victim, know or suspect someone who is being victimized, pick up the phone to get them some help. No one should have to go it alone.”

More than 11,000 reports of elder abuse were made during FY 2009, which reflects an almost 20 percent increase in reporting since the campaign was initiated. If you suspect someone is being abused, the following indicators may point to a problem:

- Untreated injuries, sprains or dislocations, scratches and cuts
- Sudden changes in behavior and/or withdrawal in social settings
- A caregiver’s refusal to allow visitors
- Dehydration, malnutrition, poor personal hygiene, untreated health problems, hazardous or unsafe living conditions; and
- Sudden changes in bank account or banking practices, the inclusion of additional names on a victim’s bank signature card, unauthorized withdrawal of the victim’s funds using the victim’s ATM or credit card and abrupt changes in a will or other financial documents.

Since the start of the “Break the Silence” campaign the number of reports of elder abuse has continued to increase. In FY 05, the year prior to starting the campaign, 8,584 reports of elder abuse were received. In FY 06, during the first campaign year, the number of elder abuse reports increased to 9,191. During the second year of the campaign in FY 07, the number of reports increased to 9,535. In FY 08, which was the third year of the campaign, 10,583 reports were received.

When someone calls the Illinois Department on Aging's 24-hour Elder Abuse Hotline at (866) 800-1409 or TTY at (888) 206-1327, trained professionals take reports of elder abuse and forward them promptly to local senior protective service agencies or law enforcement. All calls and information related to elder abuse are strictly confidential.

While senior protective service agencies investigate cases of abuse for elders that live in the community, the Long Term Ombudsman investigates allegations of abuse or neglect in nursing homes. For more information on how to detect and prevent elder abuse, please visit www.state.il.us/aging.

The "Break the Silence" campaign includes outreach efforts such as billboards and mass-transit advertisements, public service announcements and senior community fairs to increase awareness and visibility of this important issue. In addition, the Illinois Department on Aging is hosting the 23rd Annual Elder Rights Conference, July 15-17, 2009, in Lincolnshire, to educate professionals on topics including elder abuse prevention.

The full text of the Governor's proclamation follows:

WHEREAS, according to the Illinois Department on Aging, between four and five percent of persons in the United States, aged sixty and older are subject to some form of mistreatment or abuse, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as financial exploitation and neglect of basic care needs; and

WHEREAS, Illinois has approximately two million citizens over the age of sixty, meaning that as many as 80,000 Illinois seniors could currently be suffering from some form of abuse; and

WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Illinois Department on Aging and its network of service providers to increase public awareness of this plight against our most vulnerable elderly; and to promote increased reporting of elder abuse; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the citizens of Illinois recognize the signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and report suspicions of abuse; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that each community in Illinois refuses to tolerate this offense against our older citizens by creating greater awareness of the prevalence and severity of elder abuse in hopes of eradicating it from society:

*THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim July 2009 as **ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all citizens to recognize this crisis and join in working toward its prevention.*