

# Illinois Department on Aging



Governor Pat Quinn  
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## **IL Department on Aging urges people to “Break the Silence” and report suspected incidents of Elder Abuse**

*State kicks off a month long campaign to raise awareness about elder abuse*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director Charles D. Johnson is urging people to recognize some of our most vulnerable seniors – the victims of elder abuse. Director Johnson is calling attention to the plight of these victims in observance of this month’s Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention campaign in Illinois. This is the sixth year of the statewide campaign, as proclaimed by Governor Pat Quinn. (See the full proclamation following the press release.) The *Break the Silence* campaign encourages anyone who suspects elder abuse to call for help. Call police or 9-1-1 if someone you know is in immediate, life-threatening danger. If the danger is not immediate, but you suspect that abuse has occurred or is occurring, call the state’s 24 hour **Elder Abuse Hotline at (866) 800-1409**, to speak with trained professionals who are prepared to help.

Elder abuse refers to a negligent act (physical, sexual, emotional, confinement, passive neglect, willful deprivation, and financial exploitation) by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult 60 years of age or older.

“It is estimated as many as 80,000 older adults in Illinois are elder abuse victims each year, but most incidents go unreported,” said IDoA Director Johnson. “If you are a victim, know or suspect someone who is being victimized, pick up the phone to get them some help. The bottom line is that no one should have to suffer.”

When someone calls the 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. There are resources to help victims. And all calls and information related to elder abuse are strictly confidential.

If you suspect elder abuse, there are specific indicators that may help point to a problem. Look for:

- Untreated injuries, bruises, burns, sprains or dislocations, scratches and cuts
- Sudden changes in behavior, unusual depression and/or withdrawal in social settings
- Tense relationships/frequent arguments with the caregiver or a caregiver’s refusal to allow visitors
- Dehydration, unusual weight loss, poor hygiene, untreated health problems, unsafe living conditions; and
- Sudden changes in financial situations: bank account/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.

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The *Break the Silence* campaign has helped to raise awareness and stress the importance of reporting suspected cases of elder abuse. Since Illinois began the annual campaign, numbers of reported cases have increased. In FY 05, the year prior to starting the campaign, only 8,584 reports of elder abuse were received.

- FY 06 (first year of the campaign year) - 9,191 reports were received
- FY 07 - 9,535 reports were received
- FY 08 - 10,583 reports were received
- FY 09 - more than 11,000 reports were received

The *Break the Silence* campaign outreach efforts include public service announcements, letters to the editor and senior community fairs to increase awareness and visibility of this important issue. In addition, IDoA is hosting the 24th Annual Elder Rights Conference, July 14-16, 2010, in Schaumburg, to educate professionals on topics including elder abuse prevention.

For more about program services to assist older adults in Illinois, including information on how to detect and prevent elder abuse, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327 or visit [www.state.il.us/aging](http://www.state.il.us/aging).

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 elder abuse reporting; 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 2010 as **ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all citizens to recognize this crisis and join in working toward its prevention.

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