



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **IL Dept on Aging Raises Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Campaign Stresses Importance of Reporting Suspected Abuse; 24 Hour Hotline is (866) 800-1409 or TTY (888) 206-1327**

SPRINGFIELD - July 11, 2014. Governor Pat Quinn has issued a proclamation that July is Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month and the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) is raising awareness through its annual campaign. Elder abuse refers to a negligent act (physical, sexual, emotional, confinement, passive neglect, willful deprivation, or financial exploitation) by a caregiver or another person known by the victim that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult 60 years of age or older. (Text of the full proclamation follows the press release).

"No one likes to talk about it, but all too often it happens and most times it goes unreported. We encourage everyone to break the silence about elder abuse. If you are a victim or suspect someone you know is a victim, report it. The sooner we know about the abuse the sooner we can put a stop to it and help the victim," said IDoA Director John K. Holton, Ph.D.

IDoA operates a 24 hour hotline for the purpose of reporting the abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of an eligible adult. **The number for the 24 hour Adult Protective Services Hotline is (866) 800-1409 or TTY (888) 206-1327.** Trained professionals on the hotline take reports of abuse and promptly forward them to local protective service agencies and/or law enforcement. There are resources to help victims and all calls and information related to suspected abuse are confidential. In addition to older adults, IDoA extends protective services people with disabilities ages 18 to 59 who live in a domestic setting.

It is estimated about five percent of older adults fall victim to abuse each year. With more than two million older adults, ages 60 and older in Illinois, means 100,000 fall victim to some form of elder abuse each year. There are some specific indicators that may help point to abuse:

- 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 financial changes: bank account/practices, additional names on victim's bank signature card, unauthorized withdrawal of victim's funds using victim's ATM/credit card, & abrupt changes on a will or other financial documents

Since starting the statewide campaign to raise awareness and encourage reporting 10 years ago, IDoA has documented an increase in the number of reported cases. In FY13, IDoA received 11,756 reports.

Next month, IDoA will host the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Adult Protection and Advocacy Conference August 20 to 22, at the Oak Brook Hills Marriott, in Oak Brook. IDoA presents the annual conference, formerly known as the Elder Rights Conference, for service providers, advocates and other professionals to get information and learn the latest on the topic of elder rights.

For general information about programs to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, call the Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327 or log on to the website at [www.state.il.us/aging/](http://www.state.il.us/aging/).

Proclamation by Governor Quinn:

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

WHEREAS, Illinois has more than two million citizens over the age of sixty, meaning 100,000 or more older adults in Illinois could currently be victim of 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, the Illinois Department on Aging has strengthened protections of people with disabilities and older adults through its Office of Adult Protective Services; and,

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

WHEREAS, it is imperative that each community in Illinois refuses to tolerate these offenses 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 2014 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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