



PRESS RELEASE

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State Kicks off Campaign to Protect Seniors From Abuse

IL Dept on Aging Urges People to “Break the Silence” and Report Suspected Incidents of Elder Abuse

SPRINGFIELD – July 1, 2011. Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director Charles D. Johnson today kicked off *Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month*, in Illinois. Elder abuse refers to a negligent act (physical, sexual, emotional, confinement, passive neglect, willful deprivation, or 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.

“If you know an older adult is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. 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 to speak with trained professionals who are prepared to help,” said Director Johnson. “No one should have to suffer.”

The number for the 24 hour Elder Abuse Hotline is (866) 800-1409 or TTY (888) 206-1327. Trained professionals on the hotline 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 and there are resources to help victims.

This is the seventh year of the statewide campaign. Governor Pat Quinn issued a proclamation about the “Break the Silence” campaign. (See the full proclamation following the press release.)

It is estimated 80,000 to 100,000 older adults in Illinois are victims of elder abuse each year, but most incidents go unreported. 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.

Since Illinois began the “Break the Silence” campaign to raise awareness and stress the importance of reporting suspected cases of elder abuse, 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 - 10,848 reports were received; and
- FY10 - 10,308 reports were received.

The “Break the Silence” elder abuse awareness and prevention campaign efforts includes public service announcements, and outreach to local newspapers, TV and radio. In addition, IDoA will host the 25th Annual Elder Rights Conference, July 6 - 8, at the Westin Chicago River North, in Chicago, 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.

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 100,000 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, the State of Illinois has strengthened protections against elder abuse, specifically in the area of financial exploitation against older adults; 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 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 2011 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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