



NEWS RELEASE – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Elder Abuse Awareness Day Observed in June

Did you know that every day 10,000 people turn 65 in the US alone? That trend is going to continue for nearly the next 20 years. Our demographics are shifting, and we will soon have more older adults in the US than ever before. At the same time that the population is growing, we know that a startling number of older adults face abusive conditions. Every year, an estimated 5 million, or 1 in 10, older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. And that's only part of the picture: experts believe that for every case of elder abuse or neglect reported, as many as 23.5 cases go unreported.

June 15th is recognized as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in an effort to unite communities around the world in raising awareness about elder abuse. The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) encourages the community to learn more about elder abuse and become more aware of the risk factors and warning signs.

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. The specificity of laws varies from state to state, but broadly defined, abuse may be:

- **Physical Abuse** - Inflicting, or threatening to inflict, physical pain or injury on a vulnerable elder, or depriving them of a basic need.
- **Emotional Abuse** - Inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress on an elder person through verbal or nonverbal acts.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
- **Exploitation** - Illegal taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable elder.
- **Neglect** - Refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable elder.
- **Abandonment** - The desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.

The National Center on Elder Abuse also adds that those at risk could vary as, like other types of domestic violence, elder abuse is extremely complex. Generally, a combination of psychological, social, and economic factors, along with the mental and physical conditions of the victim and the perpetrator, contribute to the occurrence of elder maltreatment. Risk factors may include a history of domestic violence, personal problems of abusers, isolation, caregiver stress, and personal characteristics of the elder.

What's important is being aware of the risk factors and warning signs associated with elder abuse. Warning signs could include physical marks or physical mistreatment; behavioral changes; and sudden changes in financial situations. If you or someone you know has been the victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect, it is important to report the suspected abuse immediately. Call your doctor or confide in a family member or friend you trust, or call your local Job and Family Services agency to report elder abuse occurring in the community. To report abuse in long-term care facilities, call the AAA7 Ombudsman Program at 1-800-582-7277. If someone you know is in immediate, life-threatening danger, call your local police department or sheriff's office, or 9-1-1 immediately.

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. provides services on a non-discriminatory basis. These services are available to help older adults and those with disabilities live safely and independently in their own homes through services paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, other federal and state resources, as well as private pay. The AAA7's Resource Center is also available to anyone in the community looking for information or assistance with long-term care options. Available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, the Resource Center is a valuable contact for learning more about options and what programs and services are available for assistance.

Those interested in learning more can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277 (TTY: 711). Here, individuals can speak directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency also offers an in-home assessment at no cost for those who are interested in learning more. Information is also available on www.aaa7.org, or the Agency can be contacted through e-mail at info@aaa7.org. The Agency also has a Facebook page located at www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7.

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