

Vulnerable Adult and Elder Abuse Awareness Month: May 6 – June 20



Each year, more than two million vulnerable and older adults are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Research has shown that older adults who are abused, neglected and exploited are three times more likely to die within 10 years than those who are not.

According to recent testimony given at the US Senate Special Committee on Aging http://aging.senate.gov/hearing_detail.cfm?id=331550& elder abuse is grossly under reported because vulnerable and older adults who are being abused find it difficult to tell anyone due to shame and fear. Elder abuse affects men and women of all ethnic backgrounds and social status; it occurs in private residences and in facilities. Just ask the actor, Mickey Rooney, who gave his personal testimony at the Senate hearing and ended by saying “If elder abuse can happen to me, Mickey Rooney, it can happen to anyone.” <http://aging.senate.gov/events/hr230mr.pdf>

In 2010 there were more than 18,000 reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable and older adults made to North Carolina's 100 county departments of social services. Reports are made by doctors and other professionals and by family members and concerned citizens in our communities.

Anyone who suspects that a vulnerable or older adult is in need of protection is required by North Carolina General Statute (GS 108A-102) to report this information to the department of social services in the county where the adult resides.

Governor Bev Perdue has proclaimed May 6 through June 20 as Vulnerable and Elder Abuse Awareness Month in North Carolina. This timeframe ties the awareness period to both the Mother's Day and Father's Day weekends, in the hopes of reinforcing the spirit of respecting and valuing not just parents, but all elders.

Take an active role in protecting vulnerable and older adults

- Show the world that you care. Wear something purple to observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, 2011.
- **SPEAK OUT**- Don't ignore this problem-it's not going away. Advocate for funding of the Elder Justice Act passed in March 2010 and passage of the Elder Abuse Victims Act of 2011.
- **REPORT**- suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Adult Protective Services in the North Carolina county where the adult lives. Contact information for County Departments of Social Services is at this website: www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local
- **VOLUNTEER**- in local programs that provide assistance and support for vulnerable and older adults in your community and long term care facilities
- **EDUCATE**- yourself, family, and community about Elder Abuse by visiting the following websites:
 - Elder Justice Coalition website <http://www.elderjusticecoalition.com/>
 - National Center on Elder Abuse website www.ncea.aoa.gov
 - National Adult Protective Services Association website www.apsnetwork.org

National Long Term Care Ombudsman Association website www.ltombudsman.org
North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services at www.ncdhhs.gov/aging

– Lori Walston, DHHS Public Affairs

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