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Social Services | Public Health | Behavioral Health

news release

June 5, 2023

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month and June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Every year an estimated 5 million, or 1 in 10 Americans aged 60 and older, have experienced some form of elder abuse, according to the National Council on Aging, and Elder Abuse Awareness Month provides an opportunity to shed light on this important topic.

Join the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Adults Protective Services (APS) in bringing attention to elder and vulnerable adult abuse and neglect. Staff will be tabling at the Arcata Farmers' Market throughout the month and will have coloring sheets honoring elders at the Humboldt County Library's Eureka branch and other outreach events.

APS provides protective services to elders aged 60 and older and dependent adults 18 to 59 who are unable to protect their own interests or care for themselves. Types of abuse include physical and psychological abuse, financial exploitation, neglect and abandonment, sexual abuse and self-neglect.

Humboldt APS is made up of social workers, social services aides, analysts and vocational assistants and receives an average of 132 reports of suspected abuse or neglect monthly.

Elder abuse is a widespread problem that can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences. The pandemic heightened the challenges faced by elders and dependent adults, increased isolation and loneliness and made it more difficult to access vital services and resources.

For Americans to thrive in their later years, they need to be kept safe from abuse and fraud. Signs of abuse and neglect may include changes in behavior, disposition or physical condition. Things to look for include a lack of basic amenities, cluttered and filthy living environments, unexplained changes in behavior, unpaid bills and harassment.

By checking in on elders in your family and community you can act as a protective factor to decrease the likelihood of abuse and neglect. If you suspect an elder or dependent adult is being abused and/or neglected, please call APS. Staff work to keep our elders safe while honoring individuals' rights to independence, dignity and self-determination.

Adult Services Program Manager Keri Schrock said, "While it is wonderful to have a specific month and day dedicated to increasing awareness of elder abuse, we must maintain awareness every day and take action to make sure the elders in our community lead lives of high quality."

People of all ages and abilities can be advocates and a voice for older Californians. If you suspect elder or dependent adult abuse, call APS at 707-476-2100 or toll free at 866-527-8614. For more information, visit <https://humboldt.gov/APS>.

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