

# **NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services**

**600 East Boulevard Avenue – Department 325, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contacts: Cherry Schmidt, Regional Aging Services Program Administrator, 701-328-8787, or LuWanna Lawrence, Assistant Public Information Officer, 701-328-1892

## **Coalition for the prevention of elder abuse and exploitation is hosting shred-a-thons to help seniors prevent ID theft**

BISMARCK, N.D. – In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the West Central Vulnerable Adults Coalition is hosting two shred-a-thon events on Wednesday, June 15, 2011, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Bismarck Senior Center, 315 N 20<sup>th</sup> St. and at the Mandan Golden Age Services, 301 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW. Staff from the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division and trained coalition partners will meet with seniors to help them identify documents they need to keep for personal records and to safely shred other papers that, if disposed of casually, may increase the risk of fraud and identity theft.

"Our coalition was created in 2009 to raise awareness of and to prevent abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of seniors and vulnerable individuals," said co-chair Cherry Schmidt, the regional aging services program administrator at the Department of Human Services' West Central Human Service Center. "Instances of financial exploitation, including fraud and identity theft, do occur in North Dakota. We hope this event reminds people about how they can guard against these serious problems."

Schmidt, who worked to build the coalition, co-chairs it with Parrell Grossman, director of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division.

"Seniors may be reluctant to dispose of any financial documents, and these events will provide them the opportunity to do so with assistance and guidance," said Grossman. "Consumer education is the key to preventing fraud, and I am pleased that my office is able to partner with the coalition on this important effort."

Coalition partners include representatives from financial institutions, clergy, higher education, other social service providers, legal services, law enforcement, medical and public health providers, and service providers.

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) awarded the N.D. Department of Human Services a \$10,000 grant to develop the coalition and to support its work. In addition to current initiatives underway in Bismarck-Mandan, coalition members who reside or work in Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan, and Sioux counties plan to expand their efforts to the 10-county region.

Schmidt said the coalition's efforts include working closely with law enforcement and other agencies to address some of the challenging issues facing many of our more vulnerable residents, establishing a speakers bureau, and identifying emergency housing options for vulnerable individuals who may be impacted by abuse or neglect.

For information about the coalition or to report an incidence of elder abuse or neglect, contact Schmidt at 701-328-8787 or 1-888-328-2662. For information about preventing identity theft, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 701-328-3404 or 1-800-472-2600.

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