

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Elder Abuse Awareness Day events planned

BISMARCK, N.D. – Abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of older adults happens – even in North Dakota, where family bonds are strong and elders are respected. The West Central Vulnerable Adults Coalition is sponsoring events in Steele and Mandan, N.D., in conjunction with Elder Abuse Awareness Day to remind people that if you see something, report it.

West Central Human Service Center's Regional Aging Services Program Administrator Katie Schafer who coordinates the coalition's work said, "We invite older adults and others to come and learn about personal and financial safety."

She said coalition members from the department and the North Dakota Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division will share information about how people can protect themselves from abuse, scams, and financial exploitation on Friday, June 12, at 12:45 p.m., Central Time, at the Steele Senior Center, 202 First Ave. N.W.

On June 15, which is Elder Abuse Awareness Day, coalition members are sponsoring an event at 2 p.m. Central Time at Edgewood Vista – Mandan, located at 2801 39th Ave. S.E. The event will include presentations from the North Dakota Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, law enforcement, and Vulnerable Adult Protective Services on personal and financial safety. Schafer said attendees at this event can bring expired prescription medication for safe disposal by the law enforcement officials in attendance.

Snacks and coffee will be served at both events, and participants will be able to register for door prizes and to browse booths to learn about services available for seniors.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services received about 1,500 calls on possible abuse, neglect, and exploitation last year according to Elder Rights Program Administrator Michelle Gayette.

"We know abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults is under-reported," Gayette said. "That is why it is important that people know how to recognize it and how to report it."

Gayette and Schafer encourage people to learn more. The coalition created an informational pocket card with funding from AARP: "Abuse Hurts at Any Age... Recognize it, and Report It," which is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/Info/pubs/docs/aging/elder-abuse-pocket-card.pdf.

People who suspect an older adult is being abused or neglected can report it by calling toll-free 1-855-462-5465 (1-855-GO2-LINK) – select option 2. More information is available on the department's website at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/reporting.html.

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