

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Elder Abuse Awareness Day event is June 12 in Mandan

Speakers will talk about how to recognize and react to financial scams and abuse

BISMARCK, N.D. – Even in our close-knit, family-focused state, vulnerable adults can be abused, neglected and financially exploited. The West Central Vulnerable Adult Coalition is hosting an event June 12 in downtown Mandan to raise awareness about how to recognize and respond to scams and concerns about possible abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The coalition's Elder Abuse Awareness Day event features display booths and a short program at 6:30 p.m. at Dykshoorn Park. A representative from the North Dakota Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division will share information about how to avoid being scammed, and the Mandan Police Department will talk about how people can stay safe. Other coalition members will be on hand at tables to provide information on intervention services and other supportive services. The public is encouraged to register for door prizes at coalition members' booths.

The event is being held in conjunction with the musicians association's summer concert series at the Vern Cermak Band Shell. Hamburgers and bratwurst will be on sale beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the Dakotah Lions' food stand. Music will begin at 7:30 p.m.

In 2017, the North Dakota Department of Human Services received 1,921 reports of suspected abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of vulnerable adults, which was a 10 percent increase from 2016. According to department officials, individuals involved included total strangers, such as in the Jamaican lottery scam situation, as well as trusted individuals in positions of authority and decision-making roles, including family members.

Bill Willis of the department's Aging Services Division said, "People who live alone are at greater risk for social isolation, self-neglect, abuse and exploitation. We invite area residents to come and enjoy music and a meal while they learn more about services that can improve quality of life and help prevent and address abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of older individuals and other vulnerable adults."

Participating coalition members include the Aging Services Division, Dakota Center for Independent Living, Custer Health, Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health, Northland Care Coordination, AARP, the Retired Senior Volunteers Program, the Abused Adult Resource Center, the North Dakota Securities Department and Good Samaritan Society Home Care.

Willis said community awareness is vital in order to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults. "Prevention requires looking out for one another. We encourage neighbors, friends, family members and service providers to report any concerns," he said.

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To report suspected abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of older adults and other vulnerable adults, people should call toll-free 1-855-462-5465 (1-855-GO2LINK) or report online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/reporting.html. Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger and needs emergency services.

The West Central Vulnerable Adult Coalition is co-chaired by representatives from the North Dakota Department of Human Services and the North Dakota Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division. It was created in 2009 under the leadership of the department's West Central Human Service Center with grant funding from the National Center on Elder Abuse. The coalition works with law enforcement and other partners to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults by providing a coordinated community response.

Vulnerable Adult Protective Services are available statewide through the Department of Human Services' regional human service centers and local contracted partner agencies. Program details, including information about how to report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation are available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/vulnerable.html.

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