

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | June 14, 2021

Department of Human Services recognizes World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Agency offers tips on how to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older citizens.

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services wants to recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which is tomorrow, June 15, by offering tips on how to help prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older North Dakotans.

Abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults happens – even in family-friendly North Dakota.

In 2020, the department’s Aging Services Division received 2,451 reports of suspected abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. After checking into reported concerns, adult protective services professionals confirmed that 66 individuals had been abused, 207 were victimized by others who exploited them, 109 were neglected by individuals caring for them, and 518 individuals were neglecting themselves. All were offered support and services to address the situation and improve their well-being.

Michelle Gayette, assistant director of the Aging Services Division, offers these recommendations to help protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Regularly call and visit older adults. Individuals who stay connected with their family, friends and community are less likely to feel isolated – which is a risk factor that scammers and other unscrupulous individuals exploit.

Encourage older adults whose abilities may be changing to seek out in-home care and support services such as help with housecleaning, chores, nonmedical transportation or personal care from reputable providers. Consider helping them find services.

If you see something concerning or suspicious, don’t assume someone else is going to take action. Reporting can be done by phone or online.

To find services and support providers or to report suspected abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, contact North Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Link toll-free at 1-855-462-5465, 711 (TTY), and select option No. 1 to find services or option No. 2 to report concerns.

The Aging and Disability Resource Link can also be reached by email at CareChoice@ND.gov and has a website <https://carechoice.nd.assistguide.net/> where people can search for services themselves if they prefer. If someone is in immediate danger and needs emergency services, call 911.

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Gayette said the passage of mandated reporter laws in 2013 and 2017 by state lawmakers has helped increase awareness and reporting. Reports of suspected abuse or neglect have increased 70 percent since 2013.

Vulnerable Adult Protective Services are available statewide through the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Program details, including information about how to report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation are available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/reporting.html.

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