

Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Since 2006, June 15 has been nationally designated as Elder Abuse Awareness Day, an opportunity to focus on the safety and security of older Americans.

“Many older adults can be vulnerable and face abuse, neglect and exploitation at alarming rates,” said Carol Brackett, prevention division chief in the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging (AAA). “Elder Abuse Awareness Day allows us to educate older adults and the public on ways to ensure safety and a high quality of life during the golden years.”

Last year, the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) investigated 2,384 reports of elder abuse – an increase of 33% over the previous year. However, this number does not tell the whole story: Experts believe that for every reported case, more than 20 go unreported.

While physical and emotional abuse and neglect are often the first issues thought of when it comes to senior safety, recent trends indicate that incidences of financial exploitation are increasing. Financial exploitation frequently happens when someone with close access to the senior applies “undue influence” on him or her, such as forcing the senior to sign forms without proper counsel, changing bank account beneficiaries or adding names to accounts as a joint owner.

“It’s important for older adults, and those close to them, to recognize that signs of abuse do not always take a physical form. If you notice that things seem ‘off’ with an older person– whether it is changes in mood, unexplained charges on a credit card, weight or health issues, or utilities unexpectedly being shut off – you can contact AAA protective services to speak with a professional and determine if this is something that should be investigated or there may be a need for other services” Carol added.

More information on older adult protective services is available on the [AAA website](#). Reports of suspected abuse or neglect of an older adult in Allegheny County may be made at (412) 350-6905. The identity of those making a report is kept confidential.