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ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE AND DEPT. OF DISABILITIES, AGING & INDEPENDENT LIVING RECOGNIZE WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Day of Awareness Occurs Each Year on June 15th

MONTPELIER – Tomorrow, June 15, Attorney General T.J. Donovan and Deputy Commissioner Megan Tierney-Ward of the Dept. of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL) will recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Launched in 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect.

“Vermonters deserve to age with dignity,” said Attorney General Donovan. “Let’s continue to raise awareness about the problem of elder abuse in Vermont by talking to and helping our loved ones, friends, and neighbors.”

“World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is a great opportunity to bring focus to Vermont’s new [Older Vermonters Act](#) (Act 156),” said Deputy Commissioner Tierney-Ward. “The Act provides that all older Vermonters have the right to self-determination, safety, and protection; to direct our own lives as we age and to be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation. It is critical that we seek to better understand the many factors that affect the safety and protection of

Vermonters as we strive to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability - with dignity, respect and independence.”

In 2020, Vermont’s Adult Protective Services (APS) received 3,649 reports of abuse, exploitation, and neglect. During that year, APS found that in at least 177 cases, abuse, exploitation, or neglect had occurred. Notably, though, the number of Vermonters subject to abuse, exploitation, and neglect likely far exceeds those represented by APS statistics and it is believed that elder abuse is significantly underreported.

Additionally, many older Vermonters are socially isolated and COVID increased that isolation for so many. For these reasons, now more than ever, Vermonters need to be vigilant in engaging with older and vulnerable people in our communities, offering lifelines to those who may need help, and reporting abuse and exploitation when we see it.

The Attorney General’s [Elder Protection Initiative](#) (EPI) and DAIL recently produced a guide called “*Finding Help: Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect in Later Life.*” Relevant here, this guide lays out the various help options in Vermont that exist for older individuals experiencing abuse and exploitation, including:

- Elder abuse hotlines and helplines;
- Case managers and social workers;
- Domestic & sexual violence organizations;
- Legal services; and
- Other community-based organizations & professionals, including, health care providers, restorative justice centers, and religious leaders.

The guide – available [here](#) – also explains how to report elder abuse and exploitation to state agencies for response.

Attorney General Donovan launched the EPI in June 2018. The EPI consists of attorneys and investigators from the Attorney General's Criminal, Public Protection, and Human Services Divisions. The EPI's mission is to promote the safety and security of older Vermonters through enforcement action, legislation, public education, and community engagement. To visit the EPI's website, visit ago.vermont.gov/epi/.

DAIL's mission is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or live with a disability – with dignity, respect, and independence. Together, across DAIL's five divisions, and with hundreds of service providers and community partners, DAIL serves tens of thousands of Vermonters, promoting self-determination, respect for all, and full inclusion in the life of the community. Learn more at dail.vermont.gov.

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