

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 12, 2014

Contacts: Benjamin Johnson
Phone: (614) 466-6650
Email: benjamin.johnson@jfs.ohio.gov

Ohio Department of Aging
Phone: (614) 728-0253
Email: aginginfo@age.ohio.gov

On June 13, Wear Purple to Raise Awareness of Elder Abuse

Use World Elder Abuse Awareness Day to learn the warning signs and know how to report abuse

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) join Governor John R. Kasich in observing June 15 as Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ohio. To help show support for vulnerable adults, both agencies encourage all Ohioans to wear purple on Friday, June 13, as well as learn the signs of elder abuse and know what to do if you suspect someone you know is being abused, neglected or exploited.

“Elder abuse is an insidious but preventable problem,” said ODJFS Director Cynthia C. Dungey. “It spans socioeconomic class, race and gender. The more we spread the word about how to recognize and report it, the easier it will be to stop it from occurring and to make sure our elderly friends and family members get the help they need.”

“Our elders deserve to be respected as vital members of society who continue to grow, thrive and contribute,” said Bonnie K. Burman, Sc.D., Director of the Ohio Department of Aging. “The prevention of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation requires a community approach. Only when community members are educated and empowered to recognize and report the signs of abuse can they truly protect their elders.”

Potential signs of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation include:

- Signs of physical harm
- Sudden behavioral changes
- A caregiver who refuses to allow visitors to see the adult alone
- Hazardous or unsanitary living conditions
- Dehydration, malnutrition or poor personal hygiene
- Previously uninvolved relatives showing sudden interest in the adult’s rights, affairs and possessions
- Unexplained, sudden transfers of assets or finances to an individual
- Unexplained disappearances of funds or valuable possessions
- Abrupt changes in a will, financial documents, bank accounts or banking practice

ODJFS supervises the state’s Adult Protective Services program, which helps vulnerable adults age 60 and older who are in danger of harm, are unable to protect themselves and may have no one to assist them. County departments of job and family services receive and investigate reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation and evaluate the need for protective services. Last year, county agencies received more than 14,000 reports of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation. However, it is estimated that only one in five incidents is reported.

If you suspect an elderly adult is being abused, neglected or exploited, contact the department of job and family services in the county where the adult lives or where the incident occurred. For a directory of county agencies, go to http://jfs.ohio.gov/county/County_Directory.pdf.

If you feel someone is in immediate danger, call local law enforcement immediately.

Older Ohioans who could use some support to continue to live safely in their communities can contact their local area agency on aging. Area agencies can connect elders to community-based services and supports to maintain or increase their independence and help prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation. Visit www.aging.ohio.gov or call (866) 243-5678 to be connected to the area agency on aging serving your community.

Individuals who live in nursing homes or other care facilities also have the right to receive quality care and remain free from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Long-term care ombudsmen advocate for the rights of consumers and help resolve issues with care providers. For assistance, call (800) 282-1206. Visit www.stepup.ohio.gov to learn how you can volunteer to support the ombudsman program.