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Growing Concern Over Elder Abuse in Ohio Prompts New State Awareness Campaign

*Ohioans are encouraged to call Ohio's elder abuse referral line
1-855-OHIO-APS (1-855-644-6277) with potential concerns.*

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Safeguarding Ohio's older adults is the focal point of a new statewide awareness campaign from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS.)

According to ODJFS, elder abuse can include physical, sexual or psychological abuse, as well as neglect, abandonment or financial exploitation. The campaign aims to make more Ohioans aware of common elder abuse signs.

"Older adults deserve to live in dignity, and we must do more to make sure they don't become targets," said ODJFS Director Matt Damschroder.

According to Damschroder, the COVID-19 pandemic made it tougher for many to see signs of physical abuse or neglect. It also resulted in isolation that made seniors more susceptible to financial exploitation and online scams.

The most recent Ohio statistics show a 12 percent increase in exploitation reports and an eight percent increase in abuse and neglect cases. In all, ODJFS received 31,000 reports in the last fiscal year.

Several national studies show most elder abuse cases involve someone the victim knows. That can make reporting difficult. Last year, more than 2,100 individuals refused recommended services; another 500 died prior to or after a response.

"It can be difficult to reach people impacted by abuse," Damschroder said. "That's why it's so crucial for people to call us with concerns."

The state referral line is 1-855-OHIO-APS (1-855-644-6277) or people can visit <https://aps.jfs.ohio.gov>. Callers do not need to provide proof and can choose to remain anonymous.

In 2019, Ohio expanded the number of mandatory elder abuse reporters to include more individuals in the financial services, legal and medical professions. Social, medical, and mental health care professionals must report suspected abuse, neglect (including self-neglect), or exploitation. Other mandated reporters include attorneys, peace officers, senior service providers, coroners, clergymen and professional counselors.

Ohio has many services to help older Ohioans, according to Ohio Department of Aging Director Ursel McElroy. "Ohio's aging network provides an array of services and supports for older adults and their families that can help reduce the risk of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation by meeting various needs," said McElroy.

McElroy suggests individual call 1-866-243-5678 to be connected to their [area agency on aging](#) and learn about services and supports where they live. Services include caregiver support, home delivered meals, transportation services, in-home care and more. Older Ohioans may also benefit from the [Staying Connected check-in service](#), which can help prevent elder abuse and isolation by providing a free, daily status call and the opportunity to connect to services and a friendly chat.

The Ohio Office of the State Long-Term Care [Ombudsman](#) advocates for long-term care consumers in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other care settings, including their own homes. If you suspect elder abuse or other problems in a care facility, call the Ombudsman at 1-800-282-1206.

By 2030, more than 25 percent of Ohio's population will be 60 and older. A University of Chicago study's "conservative projections" suggest one in eight older people are victim of elder abuse. Two out of three victims are women. Nearly 90 percent of elder abuse occurs in the home.

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