



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

Senator Gallivan Stands United with Erie County Leaders to Stop Elder Abuse

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State Senator Patrick Gallivan, (R) 59th District joined Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, Acting Erie County District Attorney Michael J. Flaherty, Jr., Erie County Sheriff Timothy B. Howard, Erie County Social Services Commissioner Al Dirschberger, Erie County Senior Services Commissioner Randall Hoak and Karen Nicolson, CEO of Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled or Disadvantaged of WNY in taking a stand against elder abuse. June kicks off World Elder Abuse Awareness Month, a call-to-action to help stop the abuse, neglect and exploitation of an estimated 5 million elderly people nationwide.

Elder abuse can take on many forms. It can be physical, sexual, psychological, financial and involve neglect. No elderly person is immune, but not everyone comes forward to report the problem.

"As our senior population grows, unfortunately so does the number of cases of elder abuse," said State Senator Patrick Gallivan. "We have a responsibility to do everything we can to guard against these despicable acts, whether the abuse is physical, psychological or financial. In the Senate, I have been proud to sponsor legislation to make sure those who abuse and exploit our senior citizens do not go unpunished, and I want everyone to know that state and local government agencies will continue to work with law enforcement to protect those who cannot protect themselves."

“There are few crimes so disturbing as those that target our vulnerable elderly population,” says Acting Erie County District Attorney Michael J. Flaherty, Jr. “It is so important that we work together to prevent those crimes from happening in the first place; by the time they get to us, it is often too late to undo the harm. Whether it’s financial exploitation, physical abuse, neglect or any other affront to the dignity of our seniors, we want the public to know that our office is here to defend and protect those who can’t protect themselves.”

“My Domestic Violence Unit responds to numerous elder abuse reports each year, but unfortunately we believe that hundreds go unreported,” states Sheriff Timothy Howard. “I am very glad to stand here today with my fellow elected officials to raise the awareness of Elder Abuse and to let victims and their families know the sheriff’s office, its trained advocates, and our partners are here to protect you.”

“Only 1 out of every 24 cases of elder abuse is actually reported. It is up to our community to come together to stop elder abuse by learning to recognize the signs and symptoms and taking action when we see it,” says Karen Nicolson, Esq., CEO, Legal Services for the Elderly.

The Facts:

- 260,000 older adults in NYS state are victims of at least one form of elder abuse
- For every 1 case of elder abuse that is reported in New York State, 24 cases go unreported
- \$36 Billion nationally is lost to financial exploitation of older adults every year

Who are the Perpetrators of Elder Abuse?

- In a study of 4,156 older adults, family members were the most common perpetrators of financial exploitation of older adults (57.9%), followed by friends and neighbors (16.9%), followed by home care aides (14.9%).

Erie County Department of Social Services Adult Protection Program Statistics for 2015:

Number of referrals assigned for Assessment: 1,208

Number of referrals concerning:

Financial exploitation: 320

Physical abuse: 82

Mental / psychological abuse: 153

Neglect by caregiver: 163

Total number of cases served (assessments plus ongoing cases from prior year) in 2015: 1,652

Who can help?

Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled or Disadvantaged of Western New York (LSED)

LSED is a nonprofit agency, incorporated in 1978, that provides free legal services to seniors and low-income individuals in eight Western New York counties. The agency has a staff of lawyers, paralegals and social workers who work tirelessly to ensure access to justice for their clients. LSED's Elder Abuse Prevention Unit assists its clients in obtaining orders of protection, revoking powers of attorney, safety planning and recovering stolen funds. LSED can be contacted by calling (716) 853-3087.

Erie County Department of Social Services

The Adult Protection component of the Erie County Department of Social Services provides a variety of specialized protective services to vulnerable adults, ages 18 and older whose condition or circumstances make them vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others. Any concerned person, family member, friend, neighbor, law enforcement officer, health professional, clergy or financial institution employee who observes an individual having difficulty in providing for their most basic needs; such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or personal safety are urged to call Adult Services at (716) 858-6877 to inquire about making a referral.

Erie County Sheriff's Office

The Erie County Sheriff's Office (ECSO), Domestic Violence Unit provides victims of domestic violence/elder abuse access to necessary services and the courts as well as trained Deputies and Detectives to recognize signs and symptoms of elder abuse. The ECSO has one Unit Coordinator, three Domestic Violence Advocates, and a Domestic Violence Advocate through Crisis Services who is specially trained to

help victims of sex crimes. For support and general information about domestic violence and elder abuse individuals can call the ECSO Domestic Violence Unit at (716) 858-7999.

For more information on elder abuse and events being held in Erie County for World Elder Abuse Awareness Month, head to <http://erie.gov/ElderAbuseAwareness/>. In honor of World Elder Abuse Day on June 15, the Peace Bridge and Buffalo City Hall will be bathed in the color purple!