



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

State & County Leaders Stands United with Advocates to Stop Elder Abuse

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- [Elder abuse prevention](#)



Senator Patrick Gallivan, Erie County District Attorney John Flynn, County Executive Mark Poloncarz, Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Senator Chris Jacobs, Assembly Member Monica Wallace, Sheriff Tim Howard and Karen Nicolson, CEO of Center for Elder Law & Justice, announced the launch of “Elder Abuse Awareness Month” in Erie County. One June 1, they joined other advocates and community partners at Old County Hall to draw attention to a serious social issue that includes an increase in the number of cases involving abuse of local senior citizens. The announcement kicks off a month of community education and events aimed at preventing elder abuse.

Of the 2,836 referrals received by Erie County Adult Protective Services in 2017, 1,895 were for adults aged 60 and over.

The financial exploitation of seniors is on the rise. A recent report from New York’s Office of Children and Family Services indicates that in a year period, it was estimated that the monetary value of assets taken from seniors in the state ranged from a low of \$352 million to a high of \$1.5 billion.

For this year’s Elder Abuse Awareness Month, the group is addressing senior isolation, which is often a factor in elder abuse cases. Through an effort called the Caring Cards Challenge, the group is seeking to collect 3,000 cards, letters and pictures from the community, which will be delivered to Meals on Wheels recipients, homebound seniors and seniors who were subjected to abuse in the past. The

deliveries will be made on June 15, which is designated as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Many schools, offices and individuals have joined in the Caring Cards Challenge. The group hopes that the project will encourage people to engage with seniors in their neighborhoods and communities and look out for the signs of abuse. For those who wish to participate in the Caring Cards Challenge, more information can be found on Center for Elder Law & Justice's website, www.elderjusticenyc.org/weaad.

Roswell Park, the Electric Tower, and Niagara Falls will be illuminated purple on Friday, June 15, in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Peace Bridge will be illuminated on June 16.

"Few crimes are more disturbing than the abuse of our seniors, and sadly, many of these crimes go unreported," Senator Patrick M. Gallivan said. "By raising awareness, we can help identify victims of physical, emotional and financial abuse and hold the perpetrators accountable. Seniors should also know that they are not alone. Resources are available to assist victims and more importantly to help prevent such abuse in the first place."

"Elder abuse is a very serious issue that impacts vulnerable residents of our community," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz. "We must do what we can to protect these individuals from anyone who for unknown reasons want to cause harm or distress to an older person. Raising awareness of elder abuse and highlighting ways to challenge such abuse from occurring is something we must all do as responsible citizens."

"Our office has a dedicated team of prosecutors who are committed to defending the most vulnerable members of our community and getting them the justice they deserve," said Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn. "It is important that people recognize the signs of the abuse, whether it be physical or financial, and to call our office if they suspect an elderly person is being victimized."

Assemblywoman Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes said, "I'd like to thank the Center for Elder Law and Justice for the service that they provide to our seniors. In my eyes, there's no better time to recognize this than World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. We've collaborated on numerous community initiatives to ensure senior safety and financial security including targeted scam awareness and free wills; Karen Nicholson and her staff have been outstanding."

Senator Chris Jacobs said, “Our Senior Citizens have contributed so much to our society, and they have earned the right to safely and securely enjoy their golden years in the communities they helped build, surrounded by friends, family and loved ones,” said State Senator Chris Jacobs. “The fact that abuse and exploitation of seniors is on the rise is very disturbing, and Elder Abuse Awareness month across Erie County is an ideal way to educate citizens and get them engaged in ongoing efforts to support and protect our seniors.”

Assembly Member Monica Wallace said, “World Elder Abuse Day brings much needed attention to the challenges faced by older adults in Western New York and around the world. Too often, seniors are victimized by financial predators, physical abusers, and with intimidation due to their vulnerability and isolation. As a member of the Assembly Aging Committee, I am focused on assisting seniors who are victimized by abusers through partnering with organizations like the Center for Elder Law and Justice, which works every day to combat isolation and abuse.”

“Incidents of elder abuse continue to increase and is truly a national problem as it is a local problem,” stated Erie County Sheriff Timothy Howard. “Often law enforcement is reacting to an incident, but I am warning elder abuse offenders, my office will arrest anyone exploiting our seniors, and I urge family, friends, and neighbors to report suspected abuses.”

“Elder abuse, including the social isolation of seniors, is something the community needs to know more about,” said Karen Nicolson, CEO for the Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ). “In addition to providing legal assistance for victims of elder abuse the team at CELJ, in conjunction with The Council on Elder Abuse, is educating the community to look for the signs of physical abuse and financial exploitation.

With increased awareness, we are all better positioned to care for our aging population with dignity and trust.”

Kathy Kanaley, Erie County’s Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator said “The EMDT in Erie County has been meeting monthly for the past year. The fast growing and complex issues of financial exploitation of our older adults requires the collaboration of a variety of professionals. With the District Attorney’s Office, law enforcement, financial institutions, the Erie County Department of Social Services, CELJ and others, we have intervened, investigated and stopped financial exploitation in 18 cases so far.”

Where to go for help:

- To report suspected abuse in the community, contact your local Adult Protective Services agency. The Erie County Adult Protective Services phone number is (716) 858-6877.
- To report abuse or neglect in a nursing home or other facility, please contact the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Center at (518) 549-0200.
- The Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline toll-free number is 1-855-373-2122.
- The Erie County Sheriff's Office (ECSO), Domestic Violence Unit provides victims of domestic violence/elder abuse access to necessary services. For support and general information about domestic violence and elder abuse individuals can call the ECSO Domestic Violence Unit at (716) 858-7057.
- Center for Elder Law & Justice provides free legal assistance to seniors in eight Western New York Counties. Their number is (716) 853-3087.