

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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[ssoublet@acgov.org](mailto:ssoublet@acgov.org)**Housing Costs Add to Pressure for Elder Abuse Victims**  
Alameda County Launches Regional Efforts to Protect Seniors

Oakland, CA – A year after launching its campaign targeting financial abuse of elders, Alameda County officials are leading a regional effort to raise awareness again, especially as rising housing costs are intensifying pressures on these vulnerable populations.

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month, which was recognized June 19, 2018 with a proclamation by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. The County's Social Services Agency (SSA) has relaunched the award winning ["Don't Worry Mom" public service announcement](#) highlighting elder financial abuse and steps the public can take to help combat the problem. Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco Counties have also launched a joint public awareness campaign targeted toward BART commuters: KNOW ABUSE, REPORT ABUSE. Posters that bring attention to the signs of elder abuse are displayed in trains running throughout the Bay Area.

Lori A. Cox, SSA's director, said, "It's fair to say that we all desire to live long, productive and rich life lives well into age 80, 90, and beyond. That's what we work for most of our lives: retirement years free from financial worries, affording the luxury of travel and health independence. We all deserve that, right? But for too many elders, their dreams have turned into nightmares. Robbed of their finances along with their dignity, the golden years are anything but."

She added that financial, physical, and emotional abuse of elder and dependent adults may leave victims feeling shamed, humiliated, isolated, and confused. "The scenario in our ad campaign – where the victim's own son is secretly robbing her – is all too common in real life, with these atrocities committed by family members or others very close to the victim."

Randy Morris, SSA's Adult and Aging Services director, noted, "Rising housing costs in Alameda County and the surrounding region disproportionately impact older adults, who are the fastest growing segment of the County's population. The Adult Protective Service (APS) division of SSA is often the first to respond to imminent evictions and displacement. Seniors and adults with disabilities who are the victims of financial exploitation, physical abuse, or caregiver neglect are at greater risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless than those who are not victims of abuse or neglect."

He added that, through direct interventions and linkages to services, over the past year APS has effectively prevented homelessness and maintained housing for 109 vulnerable adults who have been victims of abuse or neglect in Alameda County.

It is estimated that only 1 in 14 incidents of abuse actually come to the attention of officials; awareness is critical in combating this silent epidemic. According to the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, about 5 percent of the older population has suffered from some form of abuse.

As the population of seniors in the U.S. continues to increase, so will the issues related to elder abuse in Alameda County. "It is up to every resident to do their part to stop it, we all have a role to play" says Morris. **To report suspected elder or dependent adult abuse in Alameda County, call 1-866-CALL-APS.**



(Please see next page for Elder Abuse Prevention Tips)

### ***Ways to Reduce Elder Abuse***

- Avoid isolating elders. This can cause depression, sadness, and loneliness that will increase the chances of neglect or abuse.
- Stay in touch. Communication is the best early detector of elder abuse.
- Keep elders active. Staying active in advanced years can prolong an elder's life and decrease the chances that they will be vulnerable to abuse.
- Don't allow a caretaker or family member to impulsively alter an elder's will, or add their name to financial accounts or land titles. These are people who put an elder at risk for financial exploitation.
- Inform elders to be wary of solicitations from the telephone, internet, or mail. These are likely to be scams designed to steal an elderly person's money.
- When you know something, do something. Report abuse when you suspect it. **To report suspected elder or dependent adult abuse in Alameda County, call 1-866-CALL-APS.**