



News Release

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ADULT FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION REPORTS INCREASE 20 PERCENT IN SFY 2017

(RICHMOND, Va.) — The number of financially exploited Virginians last year leaped more than 20 percent from the previous year.

That was among the findings in the annual review by Adult Protective Services, which reports on allegations that Virginians age 60 or older, or incapacitated Virginians age 18 to 59, are abused, neglected or exploited. Overall, in state fiscal year 2017, local departments of social services received 27,105 reports, of which 55 percent were substantiated by investigation.

Financial exploitation had the highest jump among the categories of abuse, neglect or exploitation, accounting for 11 percent, or 1,394 cases, of substantiated reports. Additionally, the new review found that the total number of allegations jumped 15 percent from the previous year and those substantiated rose 12 percent.

“This increase suggests that people know more about the signs of adult abuse and call adult protective services when they are concerned about the welfare of a family member, neighbor or friend,” said Paige McCleary, director of the Adult Protective Services Division at the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.

This is the first APS report since DARS released a report on the growing issue of adult financial exploitation at the request of the General Assembly, which had directed the agency to convene stakeholders and develop recommendations to fight the problem. That 2016 report estimated the cost to elderly and vulnerable Virginians at \$28.2 million but possibly as high as \$1 billion, as many cases go unreported.

McCleary said the rise in reports is straining resources to respond to allegations. “Our funding to provide critical help to adult victims is so limited,” said McCleary. “If the reports continue to climb, Virginia’s APS system will be overwhelmed and unable to provide the amount of help that is needed.”

McCleary said she expects the number of financially exploited Virginians to continue to rise, in part due to a law that took effect last July requiring all reports of financial exploitation received by the state APS hotline or local departments of social services, regardless of the amount of financial loss, to be reported immediately to local law enforcement.

“The increasing number of substantiated cases for financial exploitation is further evidence of the growing problem for older Virginians and Virginians with disabilities,” said DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock. “The statistics also show that the issue itself is gaining more attention and that more people are informed about what signs to look for.”

Individuals who are victims of financial exploitation are often targeted by a relative or someone they know, and are usually age 60 or older.

The 2017 Adult Protective Services Division annual report, which includes figures for regions and localities, is online at <http://bit.ly/2EfnQB0>. Suspicions of adult abuse, neglect or financial exploitation may be reported to a local department of social services or by calling the toll free APS hotline at 888-832-3858.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org or follow DARS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vadars or Twitter at @vadars.