



Media Release

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Elder Maltreatment Symposium Raises Awareness about Abuse, Exploitation

In the United States, people above the age of 65 are the fastest growing segment of the population. But as this population grows, so does the rate and risk of elder abuse and maltreatment. Maltreatment can take on many forms: financial exploitation, physical or emotional abuse, or neglect. The number of abuse victims has risen over the past decade and the trend is expected to continue, with more than 2 million Americans victimized every year. Last year, Arkansas investigated more than 4,000 calls that came into its Adult Protective Services hotline.

What's worse is that the U. S. Administration on Aging estimates that 84 percent of elder maltreatment cases in the country go unreported.

In an effort to better protect the elderly in Arkansas, the Department of Human Services' Division of Aging and Adult Services held the Elder Care Symposium in downtown North Little Rock today. More than 125 people from across the state attended, including representatives from the Arkansas Attorney General's Office, Adult Protective Services, and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Criminal Justice Department.

The conference focused on several topics, including Medicaid fraud, how to recognize abuse, and how to report suspected maltreatment.

"These are topics that we as a society often don't talk about," said DAAS Director Krista Hughes. "But until people are aware of these issues and how to prevent them, we as a society are never going to make an impact."

Advocates for the elderly spoke at the event and gave ideas and resources for victims, family members, and caretakers. Phyllis Watkins works for Alzheimer's Arkansas.

"My hope is that through such public events, we can develop new means of preventing elder abuse, such as more effective ways to assist families who are affected by dementia," said Watkins. "One of

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the first steps toward alleviating the problem is to publicly recognize that elder maltreatment is happening in our own communities.”

Charles Thompson, an assistant DAAS director who is over Adult Protective Services, said he believes the symposium will have a positive impact on the elderly and those caring for and protecting them.

“We’ve heard about the cases of elder maltreatment rising, but when you actually put a face and a name to those cases, it all becomes so much more real,” said Thompson “That’s why we held this symposium- to get the information out there and get the victims the help they need

There are many warnings signs that may indicate a senior is being abused or exploited in some way. They include:

- Unexplained bruises, broken bones, and burns.
- Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness, and unusual depression.
- Sudden changes in a senior’s financial situation.
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, and unusual weight loss.
- Strained or tense relationships, frequent arguments between the caregiver and elderly person

If you or someone you know is being abused, neglected or financially exploited, please call the Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-800-482-8049.