



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## NEWS RELEASE



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### **RECOGNIZING WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY**

#### Resources available to support older adults experiencing abuse

In light of this week's recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, the County of Santa Cruz is highlighting that elder abuse can happen to anyone – a parent, a friend, a neighbor, an acquaintance, or you – and raising awareness about local resources available to help families.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day encourages communities worldwide to better understand what elder abuse looks like and how people experiencing abuse can get help. Through Adult Protective Services, the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department's Adult & Long-Term Care (ALTC) Division advocates for people experiencing abuse and works with them to help them stay safe and independent.

Elder abuse includes physical or emotional abuse, caregiver neglect, abandonment, isolation, or financial abuse which can involve scams or fraud. Fraud and scams perpetrated against older adults is becoming more and more prevalent. Many people who experience elder abuse are especially vulnerable due to social isolation.

"Abuse can be prevented by family members taking the simple step of checking in with elderly relatives," said Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeff Rosell. "We encourage all residents or families who suspect abuse to reach out for help."

It is estimated that only 1 in 24 incidents of older abuse in the United States is reported to authorities. When older adults experience a crisis, whether due to abuse by another person or because they are having difficulties caring for themselves, they may not know how to get help. They may be ashamed, fearful of the government, or worried they will lose their independence.

"The County is here to help," said Melissa Villalobos, a licensed social worker, and an Adult Protective Services Program Manager. "We might think it doesn't happen in our

community or even in our family, but it can. Fortunately, families going through this are not alone.”

If you suspect elder abuse, reach out to the County Adult Protective Services for support by calling (831) 454-4101 or by visiting [santacruzhumanservices.org/AdultLongTermCare](http://santacruzhumanservices.org/AdultLongTermCare). Your report is confidential.

#### About the Human Services Department Adult & Long-Term Care Division

The Adult & Long-Term Care (ALTC) Division assists older adults and people with disabilities to maximize self-sufficiency, safety, and independence. ALTC provides casework services and resource information that offers a choice of community services and care options.