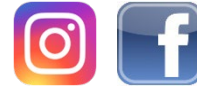




SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

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News Release

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JUNE IS WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

Resources Available to Support Older Adults Experiencing Abuse

In recognition of June as National Elder Abuse Awareness Month, the County of Santa Cruz is raising awareness that elder abuse can happen to anyone – a parent, friend, neighbor, acquaintance or you – and local resources are available to help.

Elder Abuse Awareness Month encourages communities to better understand what elder abuse looks like and how to get help. Through Adult Protective Services (APS), the County's Human Services Department advocates for older adults and people with disabilities experiencing abuse, helping them remain safe and independent. This work, along with preventative efforts, aligns with the County's recent Age-Friendly Community designation; its recent Community Needs survey to help build a comprehensive local Master Plan for Aging; and its collaborative work with the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz County, local municipalities, and community services partners that support older adults.

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 prevalent, with those experiencing elder abuse especially vulnerable due to social isolation. "Abuse can be prevented when family members check in with elderly relatives," said Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeff Rosell. "We encourage anyone suspecting elder abuse to reach out for help."

Only 1 in roughly 24 incidents of elder abuse in the US 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 stands ready to offer support," reassured Melissa Villalobos, a licensed social worker and County APS Program Manager. "It's easy to think abuse doesn't touch our community or our own families, but it can. Thankfully, families facing these challenges don't have to navigating this journey alone—they have our support."

As part of this awareness raising effort, the Government Building at 701 Ocean Street will be lit in purple lights on June 15, 2024, in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

If you suspect elder abuse, help is available. Call (831) 454-4101 or visit <https://santacruzhumanservices.org/AdultLongTermCare>. Your report is confidential.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE ♦ PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY ♦ ALLEVIATING POVERTY

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY BY IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS