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Report concerns for the welfare of seniors and disabled adults *Call adult protection line at 303-636-1750 to report abuse, neglect or exploitation*

Littleton, Colo. – A senior in your community lives alone and you've noticed he is allowing his home to fall into disrepair and may be in need of a bath and clean clothes. An elderly friend mentions that her son regularly accompanies her to the bank and asks her to withdraw money. Your neighbor is caring for her developmentally-disabled brother, and you hear frustrated yelling coming from the home and later notice bruises on his arms.

These are just a few scenarios that might mean a senior or disabled adult is being neglected, abused, financially exploited, or is even self-neglecting.

In Colorado, more than 4,000 such incidents are reported each year to local county departments of human services and long-term care ombudsmen. Many more go unreported.

The victims are at-risk adults over age 18 who, due to age, or disability, are unable to protect themselves. For many, abuse, exploitation or neglect is caused by a caregiver or a member of their own family. Often the victim is totally dependent upon the abuser and is afraid to complain for fear of reprisal.

Nearly half of the individuals are actually self-neglecting, because they do not have the means or ability to see to their own household, medical, hygiene and nutrition needs, and don't realize that there are community resources available to help them remain independent in their home.

"Each of us has a responsibility to watch out for our elderly or disabled neighbors and take note of any warning signs that they are being mistreated or self-neglecting," said Arapahoe County Commissioner Frank Weddig. "You can report your concerns, no matter how small, to your county and remain completely anonymous. The adult protection team will respond to the concerns about the vulnerable adult and see to it that they are offered services to keep them safe and meet their needs."

In Arapahoe County last year, the Adult Protection unit supported a caseload of 725 individuals. Caseworkers will meet with an individual to understand their needs, and connect them with an array of community-based services, from housekeeping to support with medications to help with paying bills.

"As the County's population ages, more residents may experience a sensory, physical, mental or self-care disability, and it will be even more important to ensure they are supported and well-treated," Commissioner Weddig added.

By 2020, the 55+ population is expected to grow to nearly 137,000 from 80,000 in 2000, when this age group will comprise more than 27 percent of the County's total population.

If you suspect that someone you know is a victim of abuse, neglect, financial exploitation or self-neglect, please call Arapahoe County Department of Human Services at 303-636-1750 to make a confidential report.

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