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Adult Protection Team serves hundreds of vulnerable seniors and adults *Neglect, self-neglect and financial exploitation were leading concerns in 2012*

Littleton, Colo. – June 15 is [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#), a date that draws attention to thousands of seniors and adults with disabilities who are abused, neglected or financially exploited by caregivers or relatives. It also highlights many vulnerable adults who self-neglect because they are unable to care for their own medical, hygiene or nutrition needs.

“If you believe an elderly or disabled neighbor is being mistreated or is self-neglecting, please contact our abuse and neglect hotline at 303-636-1750 to make a confidential and anonymous report,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Nancy Sharpe. “Our Adult Protection Team will receive the referral and work to protect each at-risk adult and connect them to services for their safety and wellbeing.”

Arapahoe County is home to more than 41,000 adults age 70 and older— a population that is expected to double by 2025, according to the State Demography Office. In 2012, the County’s Human Services Department received and investigated 888 abuse and neglect reports concerning adults over age 18. This represented a 17 percent increase from 758 referrals in 2011. Most often, the referrals were made by a family member, hospital worker or law enforcement.

Self-neglect, neglect and financial exploitation were the most common concerns in 2012. County caseworkers found that 487 at-risk adults were self-neglecting, 287 were being neglected by a caregiver, 208 were being financially or otherwise exploited by person in a position of trust, and 131 were a victim of some form of abuse. The majority was over the age of 60 and many were frail, medically fragile, or suffered from dementia or a mental illness.

Adult protection cases are typically open for 90 days or less while the caseworker helps to connect the at-risk citizen to community-based services to keep them safe and supported. This could include applying for Medicaid and securing in-home care, housekeeping and transportation assistance. In some cases, the courts appoint a conservator to oversee the client’s financial assets and stop exploitation.

“Counties do anticipate an increase in our adult protection caseloads when the state’s new mandated reporter law goes into effect next summer,” said Commissioner Sharpe. Starting July 1, 2014, [Senate Bill 13-111](#) will require that nurses, chiropractors, law enforcement officers, dentists, nursing home staff, home health care workers and other professionals report known or suspected abuse or exploitation of anyone over the age of 70.

Colorado is one of three states that do not currently have this type of elder abuse mandated reporting. Commissioner Sharpe represented counties on a statewide [Elder Abuse Task Force](#) whose recommendations helped to usher in the new legislation.