



**Department for
the Aging**

Donna M. Corrado, PhD, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NYC Department for the Aging announces the release of a Public Awareness Campaign on Elder Abuse

A city-wide subway and bus advertising campaign depicts the pain, suffering and fear inflicted by elder abuse and urges New Yorkers to report it when they suspect it.

NEW YORK, NY (April, 2016)—The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) announced today that the agency will launch a city-wide campaign to raise awareness about elder abuse – a form of abuse that involves victimization of an older person by a loved one – and to encourage all New Yorkers to report suspected abuse to 311. The campaign will feature stark black and white portraits of elders who have been robbed, beaten, threatened, or neglected by a family member. Launching on buses on April 18 and in subway cars on April 25, the photos will appear in advertising space throughout the mass transit system, helping to give a voice to abused seniors who are too often silenced by fear, shame and humiliation.

Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery stated, “It is said that a civilization’s greatness is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable. We must do everything we can to help our seniors stay safe – and empower them to report abuse and seek help. Our elders are the pillars of our communities and this campaign allows us to educate all New Yorkers on this important issue.”

DFTA Commissioner Donna Corrado highlighted the campaign’s message that all New Yorkers should be involved in fighting elder abuse. “Elders can be abused physically, emotionally, psychologically, and financially. It takes many forms and anyone can be a victim,” she stated. “In a city committed to a better quality of life for its older residents, it’s important to combat elder abuse through all means possible, from services to prevention and public education. DFTA’s campaign urges New Yorkers to report elder abuse when they suspect it to 311 so the abused person can get help. Whether we are friends, neighbors or professionals we can all play a role in reducing the prevalence of elder abuse and its impact on elder victims’ well-being.”

Commissioner Cecile Noel of the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence applauded the campaign as a "city-wide effort to raise awareness about elder abuse and to make victims and survivors aware that they can call 311 to get the resources and services they need. Elder abuse and domestic violence are often two sides of the same coin," she pointed out, "and we want all victims and survivors to know that they are not alone and that there is help, including walking into any of the City's Family Justice Centers for free and confidential assistance. This campaign is a welcome effort to spread this message far and wide."

Elder abuse has been called a growing epidemic. "Under the Radar," a New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study conducted by the New York State Office of Family and Children Services, reported findings that 76 out of every 1,000 older New Yorkers is a victim of elder abuse in a one year period. In New York City, 9% of all residents age 60+ are elder abuse victims.

Elder abuse is often obscured from view. Because it most often occurs in a trusting relationship between the older person and an adult child, grandchild, other relative, spouse or partner, many victims are reluctant to report it and many witnesses are uncertain what to do. For every 24 older New Yorkers experiencing elder abuse, only one incident is reported to authorities such as law enforcement, social services or medical care.

Commissioner Corrado highlighted the new Carrier C.A.R.E.S program as an example of how everyone needs to be involved when older New Yorkers are in danger. C.A.R.E.S is a new outreach program of the United State Post Service and National Association of Letter Carriers in partnership with DFTA and the Human Resources Administration (HRA). The program instructs letter carriers how to recognize signs that an older person on their route might be having a problem that requires a quick call to 311 or 911.

Subway and bus ads will air in one flight until May. Additional posters will be placed in 25 bus shelter panels and 25 kiosk panels, city-wide.

Council member Margaret Chin of the City Council's Committee on Aging stated that she is "extremely gratified by this city-wide effort to raise awareness about these crimes perpetrated against some of our most vulnerable residents. Elder abuse is a growing epidemic often hidden from public view. I thank the Administration for committing resources for this campaign and for baselining vital funding to ensure that more elder New Yorkers are protected from this growing form of abuse."

NY State Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz stated, "As Chair of the Assembly's Aging Committee, I've been working hard to increase awareness of the many forms of elder abuse in

the hope of turning the tide on this tragic problem. Outreach is crucial and I have a bill pending that would authorize the NYS Office for the Aging to conduct a statewide campaign to educate the public about elder abuse. I commend the New York City Department for the Aging for implementing this public awareness initiative. It has the potential to save lives and spare many thousands of seniors the danger and heartache of physical, emotional and financial exploitation.”

Dr. Mark Lachs, a geriatrician, expert on elder abuse, and Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College noted "DFTA's campaign to raise awareness about the growing epidemic of elder abuse will help protect the rights and dignity of one of our cities most cherished resources: older New Yorkers. Dr. Lachs was the Co-Principal Investigator of The New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence study, “Under the Radar,” conducted in collaboration with DFTA's Director of Research Dr. Jackie Berman, who served as the other Co-P.I. Lifespan of Greater Rochester was the third collaborator on this study.

Risa Brechman, Director of the NYC Elder Abuse Center/Weill Cornell Medicine, also applauds the Department’s campaign. “Elder abuse is a significant problem with far-reaching costs. Victims have triple the risk of premature death than non-victims and it depletes the resources of victims, families and communities – as well as programs like Medicare and Medicaid. DFTA’s add campaign takes an important impressive step toward preventing abuse by promoting public awareness about it. But the campaign goes every further. DFTA also urges people who suspect elder abuse to call 311 or 911 so victims can be helped. There are solutions. Together we can make a difference,” Brechman stated.

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