



**State of New York
Office for the Prevention of
Domestic Violence**

**Gwen Wright
Executive Director**



**Greg Olsen
Acting Director**

**Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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State Agencies Collaborate to Develop and Promote Senior Center Based Domestic Violence Programs

Albany, N.Y. (Dec. 19, 2013) - The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) in collaboration with State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) has embarked on a campaign to develop and promote senior center based domestic violence prevention programs, pursuant to Chapter 339 of the Laws of 2011. As part of the campaign, the agencies have produced a brochure and desk reference that provide information on recognizing elder abuse and how to protect older adults from possible physical, emotional, and financial harm. These publications not only assist staff in identifying the signs of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation, they also provide links to appropriate resources for the potential victims. The documents will be made available on the OPDV and NYSOFA Web sites.

Elder abuse is defined as any abuse and neglect of persons aged 60 and older by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust. It includes physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and/or financial abuse.

As the population of older adults increases, so does the prevalence of elder abuse. Elder abuse is present in every community, at every income level, and in every social and cultural group. National data show that the oldest adults, aged 85 years and older, are more vulnerable to elder mistreatment; they are abused and neglected at two to three times their proportion in the older adult population. Elder abuse is severely underreported – the best statewide estimate is that for every case of elder abuse that comes to the attention of authorities, roughly 24 remain undiscovered.

As part of the strategy to address these staggering findings, Governor Cuomo signed into law Chapter 339 of the Laws of 2011, which required the New York State Office for the Prevention of

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Domestic Violence (OPDV) to develop materials to assist Senior Centers in developing and promoting elder abuse prevention programs. OPDV collaborated with the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) to develop these materials.

Gwen Wright, OPDV Executive Director said, “Domestic violence occurs in all populations and our vulnerable older adults are not immune to its effects. When an older adult is victimized by an intimate partner, they may not know who to turn to. By providing these resources to senior centers throughout the State, we hope that more center staff, seniors and their family and friends become aware of the signs of mistreatment of older adults and the safest ways to intervene.”

Greg Olsen, NYSOFA Acting Director said, “Adult victims of abuse and neglect often suffer in silence and are reluctant to reach out for help. This problem can be mitigated through educating family members, friends and professionals who come in contact with older persons to recognize and prevent potential abuse situations. I thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for signing legislation directing OPDV to educate senior center staff about recognizing signs and symptoms of abuse and, how to refer potential victims to appropriate resources to get help. NYSOFA is proud to partner with OPDV on this effort.”

OPDV (www.opdv.ny.gov) is the nation’s only state government agency dedicated to improving the response of state and local communities to domestic violence. The agency provides guidance to Executive staff on policy and legislation; conducts statewide community outreach and public education programs; and trains professionals on addressing domestic violence in a wide array of disciplines, including child welfare, law enforcement and health care.

The New York State Office for the Aging (www.aging.ny.gov) is part of the Executive Department in New York State and is the designated State Unit on Aging under the federal Older Americans Act and New York State Elder Law. The mission of the New York State Office for the Aging is to help older New Yorkers to be independent for as long as possible. The agency functions as the Governor’s advisor and independent advocate for older persons and their families. This role includes working with counties and other state agencies to plan and implement a better system of services and community supports to help residents age successfully in place.

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