DSAS Hosts the Elder Abuse Awareness Community Forum

On June 30, 2016 Adult Protective Services hosted its annual Elder Abuse Community Forum which was well attended by Aging Professionals and community partners from Cuyahoga County. Mr. Paul Greenwood, Deputy District Attorney, Office of the San Diego District Attorney and the Head of the Elder Abuse Prosecution Unit was the keynote speaker.

Elder financial abuse is a growing threat to our nation’s older adults. Research suggests that at least 20 percent of adults age 65 and over have been victimized by financial fraud and abuse. In 2010 alone, reported instances of scams and fraud against older adults resulted in losses of about $2.9 billion. Since most cases of elder financial abuse go unreported, aging experts and researchers believe this number is much higher than the actual total amount of money lost to these schemes and frauds. One study by Cornell University suggests that the prevalence rate of elder abuse, including financial exploitation, is some 24 times higher than what is currently reported.

These numbers are expected to grow as the older adult population in the United States swells to a record 71 million people over the next few decades. With many older adults living on limited incomes, a massive financial loss due to fraud could plunge them into financial, physical, and psychological trauma.

We felt that given the state of affairs related to this topic, and recent increases in reported incidents to Cuyahoga County’s Adult Protective Services, APS would dedicate our Elder Abuse Forum this year to this very topic. Deputy District Attorney Paul Greenwood spoke to an audience of close to 100 professionals, stakeholders, community partners, social workers and citizens on the causes of exploitation, undue influence and the propensity to see not only financial exploitation, but often other forms of elder abuse occur when exploitation is a factor.

Mr. Greenwood has been a Champion of prosecuting those in San Diego County California who commit crimes against the elderly for over 20 years. He discussed in depth what needs to be done to combat this epidemic, signs to look for and tips to try and circumvent older adult from becoming prey to this type of abuse. He was able to convey a strong message that elder abuse is a very real, very horrific and very prevalent concern to our society. It still does not warrant the attention it deserves and he urged that we all work steadfastly to bring this silent epidemic to the forefront of our societal concerns.

Submitted by Natasha Pietrocola

What’s Inside...

- DSAS Strategic Plan 2020
- Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs - iTunes Gift Card Alert
- DSA Adult Protective Services Social Worker of the Year
- DSAS Awards Four $25,000 Planning Grants to Encourage Senior Center Innovation
- DSAS Services
- DSAS Events Calendar

Armond Budish
Cuyahoga County Executive
An incredible journey started in February 2016. MCS Consulting Service (MCS) joined DSAS as the consultant for DSAS Strategic Plan 2020. Dr. Marlene Stoiber Burroughs, President, MCS, participated in the creation of DSAS as an independent agency on March 30, 1992 and the initiation of the Community Office on Aging. We are fortunate to have a wealth of historical knowledge, insight and a keen eye for statistical data.

Marlene Robinson-Statler, Executive Officer, and Marlene Stoiber-Burroughs along with the MCS team members have been working diligently on the DSAS Strategic Plan 2020. The Team lead by Marlene Stoiber-Burroughs, Ph.D includes Deborah Beckwith, M.Ed, Sue Biagianti, MSSA, LISW-S, Betty Pinkney, Ph.D, and Mark Salling. Many hours were spent on the environmental scan, which included focus groups, key informant interviews, an e-survey, analyses of census data, and a literature review.

Some highlights from the environmental scan:
• The aging network is in transition with more Medicaid-funded long term services and supports being provided by managed care organizations.
• Older adults are at serious risk of not having basic needs met, especially around nutrition, housing, economic security, and protective services.
• There are an increasing number of Medicare beneficiaries with both chronic conditions and functional limitations who need a coordinated, seamless combination of medical care and long term services and supports (LTSS), necessitating the aging network to strengthen its ties to the medical community.
• Older adults and their families are unprepared for the risk of needing long term services and supports (LTSS) and the current system is unsustainable as support needs rise.
• By 2030, one of three residents of Cuyahoga County will be 60 years and older, with most of the growth after 2020 in the cohort 75 years and older who begin to rely more heavily on the long term services and support system.
• Stakeholders who responded to the e-survey perceive Cuyahoga County’s capacity to address the long term service and support needs for seniors and as well as services for adults who are victims of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation as inadequate or critically inadequate.

DSAS 2020 will build on the current strategic plan that expires at the end of December 2016 which had 4 major goals:
• Create programmatic centers of excellence
• Raise DSAS’ public profile
• Establish DSAS’ leadership role in the community
• Strengthen DSAS’ funding and service capacity

The next steps are meetings with county leadership, the DSAS Strategic Plan Steering Committee, and the DSAS Advisory Board. DSAS 2020 will be completed in November and implemented January 1, 2017. Submitted by: Marlene Robinson-Statler

Cuyahoga County
Department of Consumer Affairs
iTunes Gift Card Alert

The Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs warns county residents of all ages to hang up on imposter scams that seek payment in iTunes gift cards.

Consumers across the country have been frightened into sending thousands of dollars’ worth of iTunes gift cards to scammers who pose as police, attorneys, debt collectors or IRS agents.

Scammers who previously targeted grandparents have expanded their target groups to include younger consumers, including those who owe money on student loans.

In a typical call, a consumer is told to purchase iTunes gift cards to:
• Avoid arrest for an unpaid student loan or other debt
• Pay bail or court fees for a relative who has been jailed
• Avoid being jailed or fined for unpaid taxes

No legitimate government agency or debt collector accepts payment in iTunes or other gift cards.

“Scammers’ game plan is to get you so upset that you overlook holes in their story,” said Sheryl Harris, Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs. “They push you to pay fast, while you’re still in a panic, so you won’t check out what they’re saying with someone else, be that a relative, police, the IRS or your lender.”

Protect yourself:
• Hang up on any caller who makes threats or asks you to pay fines, debts, fees or bail with an iTunes card.
• Never read off the numbers or codes from a gift card to someone who calls you demanding payment – that’s all a scammer needs to steal the card’s value.
• Know that, by law, debt collectors are not allowed to threaten you with jail or scare you into making payments. No government office accepts iTunes payments.
• Don’t tell scammers how you spotted them – it helps them perfect their game. Just hang up.

Report scam calls to the Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs at 216-443-7035 or www.consumeraffairs.cuyahogacounty.us.
Last month, Cuyahoga County DSAS awarded four planning grants of $25,000 each to senior center collaboratives as a part of its challenge to Cuyahoga County senior centers to re-imagine how they do business and serve seniors in their neighborhood. The Cuyahoga County Senior Center Innovation Project not only encourages innovation, it also provides limited funding and technical assistance to support newly created senior center collaboratives as they develop transformative programming for 21st century older adults. With a neighborhood senior center at the hub, these senior center collaboratives will use the next six months to develop plans for taking their senior center to the next level. Later this year, these same four collaboratives will compete for two implementation grants of $50,000 each, which will be awarded in early 2017.

The following collaboratives received planning grants:

- Triad of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention – includes the City of Brecksville, North Royalton, City of Independence, Broadview Hts., and Seven Hills.
- Communities Assisting Residential Elderly (C.A.R.E), through Community Partnership on Aging – includes Cleveland Heights, Maple Hts., Solon, South Euclid, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village and Highland Heights.
- South East Regional Collaborative (SRC) – includes Murtis Taylor Human Service System, East End Neighborhood House, Harvard Community Services Center and University Settlement.
- Coordinated Programming Initiative (CPI) – includes Rose Centers for Aging Well, LLC, Benjamin Rose Institute, Empowering and Strengthening Ohio’s People, Fairhill Partners and the Greater Cleveland Foodbank.

Stay tuned for more information regarding Senior Center Innovation, including highlights of each of the senior center collaboratives listed above.

Submitted by: Denise Rucker-Burton
Services and Solutions for Better Living

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**DSAS SERVICES**

**Adult Protective Services** - Investigates all allegations of abuse, neglect, self neglect, and/or financial exploitation of adults 60+.

**Options for Independent Living** - Designed to fill the gap in Cuyahoga County senior services and Adults with disabilities by assisting persons to live and function independently in their homes.

**Home Support Services** - In home service provided by Nurses and Home Health Aides to ensure a seniors well-being and safety, including homemaker and respite services.

**Information Services for Aged and Disabled Adults** - Assists seniors with benefits and medications with our comprehensive Benefits Check Up, Home Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP), Buderer Drug Repository Program and DSAS Utility Assistance Program.

One Call Does It All!
216.420.6700

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**DSAS Events Calendar**

- September - National Senior Center Month
- September 29, 2016 - Senior Center Knowledge Forum Part II
- October 7, 2016 - Conference on Aging, Holiday Inn Independence, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, CEUs provided