

Safe & Healthy County

June 2024



JUNE IS ELDER AND DEPENDENT ADULT ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

KNOW ABUSE

REPORT ABUSE



Mendocino County Adult Protective Services

24-hour Hotline: 1-877-327-1799

The Adult and Aging Services (AAS) division of Social Services would like to recognize June as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month. June 15th each year is recognized worldwide as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, or WEAAD. At the State level, and historically in Mendocino County, the entire month of June is recognized, and includes heightened awareness of abuse for Dependent Adults as well as individuals over the age of 60 hopefully leading to increased prevention efforts.

Statistics show that Elder and Dependent Adult abuse is severely underreported, with 1 in 10 instances of abuse or neglect being reported on average. In Mendocino County over 1,400 reports of abuse or neglect were received by Adult Protective Services (APS) in the last year, an increase of over 200 from the year prior. These 1,400 reports resulted in over 900 assigned investigations which required immediate or 10 day in-person response, with an assigned Social Worker determining if the abuse is confirmed, and creating a service plan with supports and referrals to community organizations.

This year, we would like to highlight one form of abuse experienced by seniors in our community which is self-neglect. Those on fixed income in an ever-expensive time are often challenged with affording everyday life. When unexpected expenses arise, such as costly repair bills or higher than usual utilities, things either go left unrepaired or other bills don't get paid. APS receives reports from concerned neighbors and family about seniors who have homes that are barely livable or utilities that have been shut off; historically we have been challenged to have means to keep these seniors in their homes. Since 2018 we have been blessed with a pilot program, Home Safe, which provides funds for homeless prevention for those individuals being helped by APS. Any senior who could experience first time homelessness at a time in their life when they are vulnerable is a great concern for our community.

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APS has been involved in multiple successful uses of Home Safe which has kept seniors in their homes and off the streets. Some examples of assistance we have provided with Home Safe funding are:

- Payment of delinquent property taxes
- Payment of overdue utilities and advocating to get power restored
- Payment of mobile home back rent
- Cleanup of homes that are deemed not habitable due to garbage and hoarding type issues

The APS Social Worker develops a Service Plan which includes fixing the problem at hand with the goal of keeping clients safely in their home. Social Workers also set up supports through referrals with community partners for things such as money management and in-home care.

With the budget challenges we are facing statewide, California is proposing to eliminate Home Safe funding availability on June 30, 2025. Home Safe has been an invaluable tool in the toolbox for our dedicated APS team, and we find ourselves wondering how we ever managed without it. As we look at honoring June 2024 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month, we would also like to advocate for the continuance of funding for the Home Safe Program statewide. Members of our community can reach out to their State Senator or Local Representative to advocate for this important program.