

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor ~ Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner

**FROM THE COMMISSIONER**

Gladys Carrión, Esq.  
*Office of Children and Family Services*

**Enhanced Multi-disciplinary Teams to Prevent & Address Financial Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults**

**OCFS & Local Districts Among Key Partners in NYS Initiative Receiving Federal Approval**



I am very pleased to inform you that the U.S Administration for Community Living (ACL) has approved a New York State grant proposal to pilot an intervention to prevent and address financial exploitation and other forms of adult abuse, through the creation of Enhanced Multidisciplinary teams (E-MDTs). The E-MDTs will seek to provide improved, effective cross-system collaboration and specialized response, including investigation and intervention to protect adults at risk of such abuse. The teams will also provide training to bank and financial services staff about prevention of financial exploitation and reporting to Protective Services for Adults (PSA) and law enforcement of instances of such abuse.

The E-MDT model will be implemented in two areas: Manhattan and the Finger Lakes region. PSA will be a critical part of the teams, which will also include law enforcement, forensic accountants, and representatives of aging, financial services and non-profit providers, among others. ACL is funding this grant for a three-year period under its Elder Abuse Prevention Interventions Program.

The New York City Elder Abuse Center, hosted by Weill Cornell Medical Center, and Lifespan of Greater Rochester will serve as the two regional coordinators of the teams. The Manhattan team will build on the experience of current MDTs operating in New York City; the Finger Lakes team will seek to use technology to extend the reach of the E-MDTs' expertise to rural areas.

OCFS staff worked with staff of the state Office for the Aging, which submitted the grant proposal on behalf of the state, and our agencies will be working together to oversee the implementation of this initiative. Local commissioners in the participating districts provided strong documentation of their commitment and support of this proposal, and will be key to its success.



*November  
2012*

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## **FROM THE DIRECTOR:**

Alan J. Lawitz

*Bureau of Adult Services*

### **Working with Banks to Protect Vulnerable Adults**

I want to share some encouraging news about the willingness of banks to work with PSA and law enforcement to prevent financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.

1. I met this summer with Mike Smith, President of the New York Bankers Association (NYBA), and his senior managers, together with Lin Saberski of New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). NYBA has issued a “Best Practices on Reporting of Possible Financial Exploitation of the Elderly.” In this document, NYBA:
  - ◆ Expresses its concern that some of its elderly and dependent customers may be victims of financial exploitation;
  - ◆ States that each bank agrees to appoint a person or persons within the institution to accept reports of suspected financial exploitation of elderly or dependent customers from bank officers and employees, using a bank reporting form. The responsible person or persons will then determine whether a report needs to be filed;
  - ◆ If the responsible person(s) determine a report needs to be filed, a report will be made to PSA, local offices for the aging, law enforcement, OCFS, the Office for the Aging, or any other person or agency thought to be able to take appropriate action;
  - ◆ Advises of steps the bank can take to assist a customer when financial exploitation is suspected, and steps that may prevent financial exploitation;
  - ◆ Advises of some common indicators of financial exploitation;
  - ◆ Advises that time is of the essence and reports should be filed as soon as possible.

We are working with the NYBA to take steps to publicize this initiative as broadly as possible. We provided copies of the NYBA Best Practices document at the OCFS-sponsored Financial Exploitation Summit held in Albany in October. NYBA has agreed there is a great need for banks and financial providers to work in collaboration with PSA, law enforcement, and others within the PSA Delivery Network for the protection of vulnerable adults. NYBA President Mike Smith has also agreed to work with us to enhance banker education regarding financial exploitation, adult abuse and the role of PSA.
2. Lin Saberski and I also met this summer with Joy Feigenbaum, Executive Deputy Superintendent, Financial Frauds and Consumer Protection Division, New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS). Ms. Feigenbaum has advised that DFS investigators may be of assistance to PSA in financial exploitation cases of banking or insurance fraud, and that DFS will look favorably in providing Community Reinvestment Act incentives for increased bank activity in the areas of Elder Abuse awareness and prevention. We were pleased with this meeting, and look forward to following up in our future discussions with DFS.
3. We know that several local district PSA units are successfully networking with banks and financial providers. See “Partnering to Protect our Seniors” in this issue from Isaac Monserrate, Bronx APS Director, as one example.
4. Jenefer Duane of the new federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau participated in the October Financial Exploitation Summit. Jenefer is the founder and former CEO of the Elder Financial Protection Network, and has great success in California and across the nation promoting training of financial professionals in identification and intervention in financial exploitation cases involving vulnerable adults.

Alan

## Faith in Action Outstanding Partner of PSA in Livingston County

By Diane Deane, Commissioner,  
Livingston County Department of Social Services

Livingston County Department of Social Services (DSS) was awash in the color purple as it commemorated World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15 by honoring Faith in Action, a program of Catholic Charities of Livingston County.

Christa Barrows, Director of the Faith in Action program, has led and developed a team of dedicated volunteers to provide direct one-on-one supportive assistance free of charge. Some of the services they provide include transportation, help with errands, housekeeping, yard work, some home repairs, friendly visits, phone calls and short-term respite for family members providing care. The Adult Services Unit at DSS considers Faith in Action a great partner in identifying and preventing elder abuse. Adult Services caseworkers refer clients to Faith in Action to help meet client needs.

Audrey Rapp, Supervisor of the Adult Services Unit at DSS, and her staff nominated Faith in Action for a Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Partners in the Protective Services for Adults (PSA) Delivery Network, sponsored by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services. The Certificate of Recognition was presented to Christa Barrows at a reception held at DSS. Also present were Karen Smith, Director of Livingston County Office for the Aging, and members of her staff. The Office for the Aging is also a valuable and essential partner to protect and meet the needs of the vulnerable adults in Livingston County. Their various programs have enabled many Livingston County elderly residents to receive the assistance and support needed to maintain their safety and independence.



**Front Row L-R:** Kaaren Smith, Director – Office for the Aging, Christa Barrows, Director – Faith in Action, Diane Deane, Commissioner – DSS

**Back Row L-R:** Patti Schwegler, Case Supervisor – DSS, Audrey Rapp, Case Supervisor – DSS & Tabitha Brewster, Agency Administrator – Catholic Charities

## Successful PSA Interventions

### *Collaboration Between Fulton County Long Term Care Services And PSA Yields Results*

By Sheryda Cooper, Commissioner, Fulton Co. DSS, and  
Karen Glover, Supervisor, PSA Fulton County Department of Social Services

Fulton County Adult and Long Term Care Services would like to recognize **Kim Grandy**, a caseworker with the department who has worked in the Long Term Care Services area for 22 years, and **Tiffany Comeau**, a caseworker with the department for six years who has worked in Child Preventive / Foster Care and Adult Services, for their diligent efforts in working together, irrespective of their program areas, for the greater benefit of the clients the department serves.

During the past year, they have shared several cases where their expertise in Adult Protective and Long Term Care Services has resulted in successful interventions. One of their cases involves a woman who was unable to be maintained safely in her home. This client did not eat properly, did not take her prescribed medications properly, and had frequent falls. She was unable to recognize services providers who came to assist her at home, even the ones who had been coming in for years. Kim and Tiffany tried very hard to honor the client's wishes to remain at home. While Tiffany was making frequent home visits to assess and monitor the client's safety, Kim was working on arrangements for a Medicaid Pooled Trust to pay for additional homecare services. However, soon after the trust was established, the client was hospitalized and from there she was placed in a nursing home. Our commissioner has been appointed as Temporary Guardianship of Property for this client, and further court proceedings are pending. We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and energy of Case Aide **Dinah Dittmar**, who did the client's shopping, helped arrange for transportation, helped to monitor the client, and who served as rep payee for the client's benefits for five years.

Kim and Tiffany have not drawn a line between program areas and have worked in collaboration, with the ultimate goal of getting clients the services they need. Kim and Tiffany work in partnership with landlords, homecare agencies, and family and community services providers in order to maintain their clients' safety. They communicate well with each other, and their strategic planning of job tasks make for prompt responses to the situations that arise with their cases. Their genuine concern for their clients is well appreciated.

This past April Fulton County merged its Long Term Care Services and Adult Protective units. Kim and Tiffany are now working in the same unit. It is anticipated that the collaboration they have formed will be a model for other staff in this newly created unit.

## Successful PSA Interventions

### *Staten Island APS Assists Victims of Financial Exploitation*

By Elsie Jean-Baptiste, Director,  
Staten Island Borough Office, APS, HRA

Our office has been successful in assisting three clients who were victims of financial exploitation by relatives. I am thankful for the hard work, advocacy, and efforts made by caseworker **Suzette Salmeron** and supervisor **Manjeet Dewal** in ensuring the well-being of the clients below. The caseworker advocated on behalf of her clients with the relatives, banks, the police and the court.

1. Client #1 is elderly, mentally impaired and was left a trust fund of close to \$1 million by her parents. Client #1 had taken boarders in her property that is worth \$900,000. The boarders had essentially taken over the client's property and were taking her money. Instead of the boarders paying the client rent, the client was forced to pay the boarders out of her trust fund. We were persistent in our advocacy for this client and, as a result, the court appointed a guardian who evicted the boarders and saved the client's property and her funds.
2. Client #2 is an elderly woman whose home is worth \$600,000 and has more than \$300,000 in funds, not including her pension. The client suffers from dementia and was being financially exploited by the grandson of a brother-in-law. The brother-in-law enabled the grandson to financially exploit the client. APS was successful in having the bank freeze client's assets while we explored an Article 81 petition on behalf of the client. The court appointed a guardian to safeguard the client's property and funds.
3. Client #3 is an elderly woman who was being physically harmed by her son. The son was also exploiting the client financially. The client was assigned two guardians. One is an attorney to manage her property and the other is a relative to handle the finances. The attorney guardian is in the process of evicting the client's son.

## World Elder Abuse Awareness Presentations in Albany County

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Patty Smith-Willsey, Director of Adult Services, Albany County Department of Social Services, presenting in Guilderland Senior Center



Paula Vielkind and Albany County District Attorney David Soares at Senior Center in Cohoes



Alan Lawitz speaking at Ravena Senior Center

## **Partnering to Protect Our Seniors**

By Isaac Monserrate, LMSW,  
Director, Bronx Borough Office, APS, HRA

On May 15, 2012, the APS Bronx Field Office, in partnership with the Bronx District Attorney's Office and the Weinberg Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, held a breakfast and training session on elder financial abuse especially designed for the banking industry and its fraud investigation departments. Among those in attendance were the vice presidents of the various bank fraud departments participating in this critical initiative, including Citibank, HSBC, MCU, Chase, Emigrant and TD.

The meeting provided a unique opportunity for all parties to discuss the impact of elder financial abuse and forge a partnership with the banking industry. As part of the training and as a resource funded by the Weinberg Center, a special quick desk reference placard for the banks to distribute to tellers and managers was developed and disseminated to the bank representatives. The card describes "suspicious activity," includes warning signs of elder financial abuse, and has sections on What to Do and Who to Call.

A second phase of this collaboration will be to conduct trainings at the local community banks' branches.



## **MEET THE EASTERN REGION PSA SUPERVISORS**

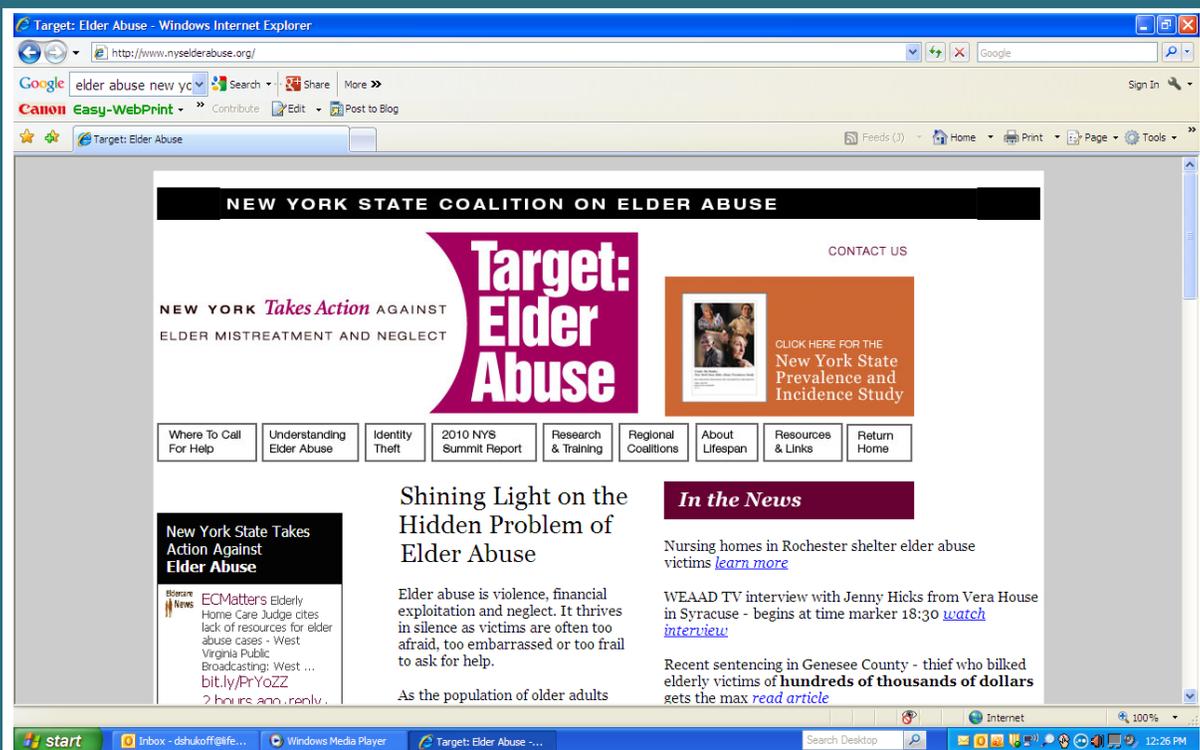


L-R : Rich Holcomb(Clinton); Julie Pearl (Warren), hosting; Janice Brenner (Otsego); Bonnie Fewtrell (Schenectady); Robin Metzger (Albany); David Hunt (Schoharie); Kristin Bintz (St.Regis Mohawk); Karen Glover (Fulton); Robin Stoddard (Essex) ; Patty Smith-Willsey (Albany)

## **AND THE WESTERN REGION PSA SUPERVISORS**



Sitting, L-R: Barbara Gaetano (Niagara); Deborah Vosberg (Wyoming); Cheryl Venditte (Genesee)  
Standing, L-R: Marc Mueller (Erie); Paula Diliberto (Niagara); Kim Cooley (Orleans); Dione Harrinton (Orleans); Linda Glenn (Cattaraugus)



## New Online Statewide Clearinghouse for Elder Abuse Resources Established

By Denise Shukoff, Special Projects Coordinator  
Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc.

The New York State Coalition on Elder Abuse has a new website – [www.nyselderabuse.org](http://www.nyselderabuse.org). Please check it often for new information and updates on critical issues, events, funding opportunities, best practice solutions, county-specific resource lists (including PSA intake numbers), and links to many additional resources from around the state, around the country, and around the world.

One of the priority recommendations developed during the 2010 NYS Elder Abuse Summit called for establishing a statewide clearinghouse for elder abuse resources to increase the quality of services provided to older adults at risk. In December 2011, a small coalition subcommittee (including representatives from OCFS) was formed to begin working on developing a website to meet the goals of that recommendation. Subcommittee members participated in many phone conference meetings, sharing information and ideas on the design and content of the site. The new website was launched on June 15, 2012, in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

The Coalition website has been well received and is growing in popularity. We started with just the basics, but knew it would be very much a work in progress. As with any new venture, there will be additions and changes as we move forward. In keeping with the summit recommendations and the wishes of the subcommittee members, the website will be updated regularly to reflect the needs of those working on behalf of vulnerable older adults. However, to make this a successful and useful website for all, your ongoing input is needed.

We are all very excited about taking this *next step* in targeting elder abuse in New York and welcome your comments, corrections, questions and suggestions. Please send them to Denise Shukoff, Coordinator of the New York State Coalition on Elder Abuse, [dshukoff@lifespan-roch.org](mailto:dshukoff@lifespan-roch.org), Phone (585) 244-8400 ext. 186, Fax (585) 244-9114.

## **Suffolk County Department of Social Services Streamlines Social Admissions Process**

By Timothy Ferguson,  
Director of Adult Services, Suffolk County DSS

In January 2011, Suffolk County APS introduced a procedure to manage Social Admission requests. It was developed with input from local hospitals and focused on the identification of case goals for clients being socially admitted, while streamlining the approval process. Last year, 53 Social Admissions were approved with an average stay of 6.4 days. Six of the Social Admissions lasted more than 20 days, as sometimes plans made at the outset could not be completed and alternative plans had to be made. The new procedure resulted in a significant improvement in terms of the average length of stay in the hospital when compared to the average length of stay (during 2010) of 11.4 days.

In fiscal terms, 61 percent more clients received Social Admission services at a cost which was 8.4 percent less than the previous year. The hospitals have also expressed thankfulness for a streamlined and more understandable approval process.

This year: statistics for the length of stay in Social Admissions for 2012 are a bit higher than those for 2011 but lower than the average length of stay during 2010. We have already had half a dozen cases with lengthy hospital stays despite the joint efforts of APS staff and hospital social work staff. The unwillingness of family members to cooperate is the primary reason there has been this many longer placements.

Suffolk County's revised Social Admissions policy follows:



### **Suffolk County's Inter-Agency Procedure: Social Admissions**

**Purpose:** to clarify what type situations are appropriate to consider a Social Admission to a hospital, whether the request is initiated by the hospital or by the Department of Social Services. Secondly, this document is to clarify procedural steps that will lead to documentation of all needed information to pay for the Social Admission and to assure prompt planning to identify and fulfill a plan to appropriately place the client requiring the Social Admission to a safe and appropriate setting.

#### **Requirements for a Social Admission:**

- The hospital social work staff will identify clients who can be safely discharged home or who are able to privately pay for a stay at the hospital, before processing a request for a Social Admission.
- Before moving forward on a Social Admission request, a physician must determine that the patient has been medically evaluated and cleared for discharge from the hospital.
- Hospital staff must ascertain that the patient does not have a "safe and appropriate discharge plan" before requesting a Social Admission of the client to the hospital.
- A plan must be in place, recognized by Hospital Social Work staff and the APS Worker. The plan describes immediate actions for all involved to do in order to assure the length of stay in the hospital via Social Admission is minimized.



### **Procedure when Adult Protective Services initiates the Social Admission Request**

- APS staff will determine if there is another service; for example, home care that will protect the client and eliminate the need for a Social Admission to a hospital.
- If there are no services which can protect the client and the client is at risk of harm in his/her residence, the client is to be referred to the hospital, which is familiar with the client due to past contact with the client. If no such hospital exists, then referral is to be made to the hospital which is geographically closest to the client's home.
- The hospital must make a medical evaluation of the referred client as described above, before proceeding with a Social Admission. If there is no medical need, this determination is shared with the referring APS caseworker, who then generates the approval letter and other needed documents.
- The APS worker is responsible to take the lead in developing a discharge plan, jointly with the social work staff at the hospital. APS Director will not approve a social admission without an identifiable plan of action to immediately commence.

### **Procedure when Hospital Staff initiates the Social Admission Request**

- Patient is medically cleared by a physician and determination made that there is no safe and appropriate discharge plan.
- Hospital staff will call the Adult Protective Services Intake Unit (854-3190, 854-3196 or 854-3195).
- If there is a need for a Social Admission after normal working hours, a call is made to Emergency Services Unit at 854-9100. This is to place the Department of Social Services on notice that an approval of Social Admission is being requested. It is done with the understanding that the actual decision to approve the request will occur after the APS worker visits the client in the hospital and completes an assessment. If approved by APS, the starting date of the approval will be the date of the notice given to Emergency Services.
- The hospital will fax a copy of the "Hospital Face Sheet" along with the form "Social Admission Request" to the APS Fax number (854- 3206).
- Upon receipt of fax from the hospital and progress notes from Emergency Services, the APS Intake worker will call the hospital social work office and ask to speak to the social worker assigned to the case. At this point a formal referral is taken.
  - At Good Samaritan Hospital, the number to call is: 376-4111.
  - At Southside Hospital the number to call is: 968-3424
- APS Intake completes the intake and assigns to a team, who sends a worker to the hospital to assess. APS worker confers with APS director, who makes the final decision to approve the Social Admission. If not approved, the Director will call the hospital social worker assigned to explain the decision and why it was made.
- If approved, APS will backdate approval to the date the initial call was made to APS Intake Unit or to Emergency Services.
- APS Worker will call the hospital social worker, who outlined the plan for discharge on the Social Admission Request form submitted to APS, when the initial request for a Social Admission was made. It is understood that the plan listed may be tentative or even include multiple plans for discharge at this very early stage of the case.

Whether the initial referral came from APS or the hospital, social workers from both organizations will work together to bring about a safe and appropriate discharge as soon as possible. It is understood that Social Admissions last for a maximum of 30 days.

