

CONNECTIONS

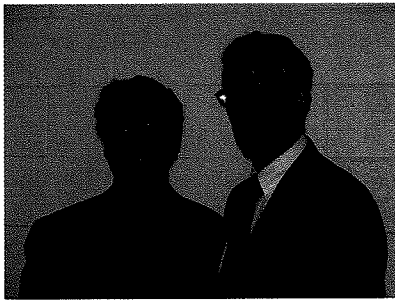
THE SUBURBAN ELDER JUSTICE COALITION NEWSLETTER

Sponsored by AgeOptions

September 2010



Connecting Older Adults with
Community-based Resources and Options



Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart and AgeOptions CEO Jonathan Lavin co-hosted the "Suburban Chiefs of Police Elder Abuse Forum" on June 15, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. They were joined at the event by over 130 participants representing Police Departments and Elder Abuse Provider Agencies from all over Suburban Cook County. They look forward to hosting the event again next year.

Resource Corner

If you encounter an individual whom you believe is a victim of self-neglect:

For individuals 60 and over:

Contact the Illinois Department on Aging, Senior Help Line at (800)525-8966 or contact your local Elder Abuse Provider Agency

For Individuals under the age of 60:

Contact the Department of Human Services Home Services Program at (800)843-6154

Welcome to the September 2010 edition of **CONNECTIONS**: The Suburban Elder Justice Coalition Newsletter. This quarter's newsletter focuses on self neglect. Please pass this issue of **CONNECTIONS** on to your colleagues and neighboring police departments. If you have any questions about the Coalition or to join, contact Katie Schmit, Elder Rights Specialist at AgeOptions.

What you will find in this issue of **CONNECTIONS**

- Self-neglect and the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act
- Older Adults Lacking the Help they Need: A Letter to the Editor
- Resource Corner
- Announcements and Training Opportunities

Self-neglect and the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act By Kerry Peck and Brandon Peck, Peck Bloom LLC.

Self-neglect has been at the forefront of the public's attention in recent weeks through a chain of hoarding cases. The press has reported on the recent death of a woman in Evanston due to hoarding and the rescue of an elderly couple trapped in their home in Chicago due to hoarding. The inclusion of self-neglect in the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act provides footing for the investigation of these scenarios by including hoarding as part of its statutory definition. Under the current law elder abuse and law enforcement agencies may investigate suspected cases of self-neglect and hoarding expanding these agencies' overall ability to help seniors.

The Elder Abuse and Neglect Act was enacted in Illinois in order to protect seniors from various forms of abuse and exploitation. However, the term self-neglect was not included in the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act until 2007. Prior to the inclusion of this term, elder abuse and law enforcement agencies had little recourse when they suspected an individual was suffering from self-neglect. Under the current law, agencies are now able to investigate instances in which they believe an older adult is suffering from self-neglect.

The definition of the term self-neglect refers to an individual unable to meet the essential functions of daily life on their own leaving them exposed to physical and mental harm and substantially threatens their health. These activities may include; failing to obtain essential food, clothing, shelter, health care, all which can lead to a decline in their physical, emotional health and safety. Self neglect can be related to dementia, substance abuse, poverty, isolation or depression and is most often seen in cases of elderly people living on their own, those who resist help or those who lack access to support services.

The inclusion of the term self-neglect in the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act is a vital addition to the Act, which previously only included commonly known types of elder abuse, such as; physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and financial exploitation. Although this may seem like a self-inflicted

Announcements and Training Opportunities

Hoarding Behavior Among Older Adults - Webinar

October 12, 2010

12:30 - 2:00pm CST

Presenter: Carmen Morano, PhD.

Associate Professor, Hunter

College School of Social Work,

Senior Research Fellow,

Brookdale Center for Healthy

Aging and Longevity

To sign up for this webinar go to:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/971644130>

The fee for this webinar is \$25.

We Must All Work Together: An Elder Abuse Conference for 1st Responders

October 20, 2010 • 9am - 1pm

Harrah's Joliet Casino

151 North Joliet St., Joliet, IL

Register by October 1, 2010 at:

www.willcosheriff.org/elderabuse

21st Annual NAPSA Conference "Healing the Culture of Abuse"

November 8-10, 2010

San Diego, CA

For more information visit:

www.apsnetwork.org

Please remember to send Katie any announcements, resources or case examples you would like shared in future editions of **CONNECTIONS**.

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issue, as these seniors are unable to care for themselves, they become easy prey for exploiters. Also, the results of self-neglect can be just as detrimental to seniors as elder abuse. The vulnerability of self neglect can only snowball into further issues if not reported.

Self-neglect is now a reportable event under the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act. The laws of the Elder Abuse and Neglect Act provide, that if a report is made in good faith regarding an alleged instance of self-neglect that individual shall be immune from criminal or civil liability. Therefore, concerned individuals and agencies are now able to report suspected instances of self-neglect without fear that they will be prosecuted for their actions or intrusions into an individual's personal life. Governmental agencies like the Illinois Department on Aging have started statewide programs such as the "Elder Abuse and Neglect" program to educate the public on how to report elder abuse and neglect and what professionals need to know.

If you have any ideas or suggestions on how the Coalition can better support your efforts or work to protect our older adults, please send them to Katie Schmit, Elder Rights Specialist at AgeOptions.

Older Adults Lacking the Help They Need Published in the Daily Herald, 8/9/2010

The recent death of a 79-year-old Skokie woman in a home so filled with trash that rescuers had to remove her body through a hole in the roof is an example of self-neglect. It is also an example of Illinois recognizing a problem, enacting enlightened legislation to address it, but failing to provide the resources necessary to get it off the ground.

Those of us who provide services to older adults successfully advocated for expansion of the existing Elder Abuse and Neglect Act which technically went into effect on Jan. 1, 2007. Yet it required state funding before the legislation could take effect. The Skokie woman, now a news story, could have been assisted if it had been funded.

Without state funding, reports of self-neglect are intermittent, there is no public information to explain that there are competent people trained to work on cases to improve individuals' situations, and the mandates for reporting these dangerous situations have never gone into effect.

In suburban Cook County, community agencies working with AgeOptions and the Illinois Department on Aging are experienced and prepared to work with elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation cases. In a four-month period, 431 cases of elder abuse (not self-neglect) were reported with 178 substantiated. Those cases of domestic violence were all skillfully investigated and most were resolved by the program. None of these has been reimbursed by the state.

There is a commanding reason Illinois must obtain the resources to respond to citizens' needs. Further cuts to the state budget and further lagging of reimbursements are all statements that self-neglected, abused and exploited older persons are acceptable "collateral damage" to the Illinois budget situation.

Jonathan Lavin, CEO and President
AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County

