



## Proven, cost-effective strategies to prevent elder abuse

*The Gatekeeper program is a community based approach to lower abuse and neglect*

**In Oregon**, rates of abuse reported for seniors and elderly are on the rise. The Oregon Department of Human Services states in their latest annual report on adult abuse and investigation a 10% increase in the number of investigations conducted on behalf of vulnerable Oregonians including seniors and people with disabilities. The report noted a marked increase in abuse in communities versus facilities, with abuse in communities making up the majority of the increases in reporting.

Nationally, **less than a quarter of abuse cases are reported**. Community awareness and outreach are key strategies, as noted in the recent DHS report – and cost effective.

Research into the outcomes of the Gatekeeper program has shown significant improvements for individuals served with an increase in reporting of potential abuse incidents, lowering of social isolation, decrease in depression symptoms, and a decrease in suicide ideation. It is community prevention and intervention at work in a cost effective strategy.

**What is the Gatekeeper Program?** The Gatekeeper program is a community abuse prevention program that was created for people who need help but may be unable to get that help on their own. While many seniors and people with disabilities are independent, healthy and active, many are living alone, have little contact or interaction with others and may not know how to ask for help if they are in a situation that is unsafe. It is a cost effective approach to lowering abuse.

**Who is a Gatekeeper?** A Gatekeeper is a community member who, during the normal course of their job, would have contact with a vulnerable individual. This could be a grocery store clerk, bank teller, pharmacist, utility reader or mail carrier. Gatekeepers receive training on danger signs that could indicate potential abuse or neglect. Upon identifying these danger signs for an individual, a Gatekeeper is able to make contact with Aging and Disability network and the situation can be investigated. The individual can also be connected to services and supports to help increase their independence and safety. Area Agencies provide the Gatekeeper program.

**Gatekeepers prevent abuse.** Since the Gatekeeper statewide initiative began in 2014, **over 800 businesses and organizations and over 2,000 individuals** have become Gatekeepers. **Over 2,100 Gatekeeper calls have been received by ADRCs.** In **Multnomah County alone, 251 calls required follow up by Adult Protective Services** due to possible abuse or neglect. These referrals are critical in lowering the incidences of abuse and neglect for seniors and people with disabilities.

The Oregon Legislature discontinued funding for the Gatekeeper Program for the 2015-17 biennium. However, with heightening rates of abuse reporting, the Gatekeeper Program is a wise investment to help decrease rates of abuse and neglect for seniors and people with disabilities.

**Reinstate \$850,000 in funding for Oregon's Gatekeeper program within Area Agencies on Aging to increase safety and independence for seniors and people with disabilities.**

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