



Abuse and Neglect of Seniors & People with Disabilities Comes at a Cost to Everyone

Restore the Gatekeeper program for the remainder of the biennium

Abuse of vulnerable individuals comes at a steep cost, not only for the individual and their level of health, but also to the family, to society, to our health care and long-term care systems, to entitlement programs and our economic systems. **Studies show:**

“Elders who have been abused have a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated. While likely underreported, elder financial abuse costs older Americans **\$2.9 billion per year**. Yet, financial exploitation is self-reported at rates higher than emotional, physical, and sexual abuse or neglect.” – *National Council on Aging*

“Research has also shown that victims of elder abuse have had significantly higher levels of psychological distress and lower perceived self-efficacy than older adults who have not been victimized. In addition, older adults who are victims of violence have additional health care problems than other older adults, including increased bone or joint problems, digestive problems, depression or anxiety, chronic pain, high blood pressure, and heart problems.

The impact of abuse, neglect, and exploitation also has a profound fiscal cost. **The direct medical costs associated with violent injuries to older adults are estimated to add over \$5.3 billion to the nation’s annual health expenditures**, and the annual financial loss by victims of elder financial exploitation were estimated to be \$2.9 billion in 2009, a 12% increase from 2008.” – *National Center on Elder Abuse – Administration on Aging*

Elder abuse erodes the health, financial stability, and quality of life of older adults. One study found that elder abuse triples the risk of premature death and causes unnecessary illness, injury, and suffering. The consequences of abuse can squander the scarce resources of individuals, families, businesses, and private and public programs. Financial exploitation of older adults can cause large economic losses for older adults, families, and society. In addition,

abuse increases the reliance on federal health care programs such as Medicaid and Medicare. Research suggests that victims of elder abuse may be four times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home and three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital." – *White House Conference on Aging*

Community abuse is on the rise in Oregon and we need effective, and efficient strategies to mitigate this disturbing trend. The **Gatekeeper** program is a cost effective, evidenced based, community approach to lowering the incidences of abuse and neglect.

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 and lower abuse and neglect in our communities.