

AG Schimel: Provides training for DAs on elder abuse prosecutions

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EGG HARBOR, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel, a 29-year prosecutor, is joining his colleagues today at the Statewide Prosecutors Education and Training (SPET) spring conference. SPET, a subset of the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Division of Legal Services, provides a biannual training for state prosecutors and this spring's training includes a half-day training on prosecuting elder abuse cases.

"Wisconsin's elderly population will increase 72% in the next two decades[1]," said Attorney General Schimel. "We have to raise awareness, increase access to support for victims, and strengthen the criminal justice system's response to this abuse. Prosecutors are the lynchpin of the criminal justice system, so we prioritized elder abuse prosecutions at this spring's training."

The training, which will be attended by 209 prosecutors from 62 Wisconsin counties, will be taught by former San Diego County prosecutor Paul Greenwood, a national expert on elder abuse.

"I applaud Attorney General Schimel for his pioneering efforts to raise awareness and implement preventative measures to combat this escalating crime of elder abuse," said Paul Greenwood. "In the 22 years that I have prosecuted such cases I have seen a dramatic increase in the variety and numbers of incidents of criminal elder exploitation and abuse. It is time for every state to face this growing problem and replicate the excellent steps that Attorney General Schimel has already taken. My role in my retirement years will be to motivate and encourage prosecutors across Wisconsin and the nation to aggressively prosecute and hold the perpetrators of this insidious crime accountable."

Yesterday, Attorney General Schimel was joined by local and national elder abuse

experts, including Mr. Greenwood, and elder rights advocates to recognize the abuse and exploitation of seniors, and how to prevent this abuse at a ceremony in Appleton. June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Attorney General Schimel has prioritized elder abuse, and in August 2017, launched the Attorney General's Task Force on Elder Abuse. The task force is charged with compiling the resources and knowledge of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to study the impact of elder abuse in Wisconsin and assess ways to improve outcomes for this growing population of citizens. In addition to developing strategies to address barriers in investigations and prosecutions of elder abuse, the task force will strengthen consumer protection for seniors and create recommendations for improved cross-system communications.

In addition to the task force's work, Attorney General Schimel has moved quickly to provide public safety tools to seniors and their loved ones. DOJ worked with law enforcement and aging and senior care experts and advocates to raise awareness about elder abuse and encourage citizens to report abuse against seniors. The public awareness campaign, first launched in January 2018 with radio ads, encourages citizens to report suspected elder abuse of any kind, teaches how to recognize elder abuse, and connects victims with resources. In May 2018, Attorney General Schimel launched a new website, www.ReportElderAbuseWI.org, and paid online outreach aimed at elder abuse victims.

In October 2017, Attorney General Schimel expanded Dose of Reality, a statewide prevention campaign designed to raise awareness about prescription drug abuse and its effect on the opioid epidemic, to include resources and information unique to seniors and caregivers.

The attorney general also started "Safe Seniors Camera Program," a new pilot project in Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago counties that allows Wisconsin residents, who suspect a caregiver is abusing their loved one, to use a covert camera to provide surveillance over someone who may have been harmed by a caregiver in their residence.

To report suspected financial, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, please contact your county elder adult-at-risk agency or call 1-800-488-3780. If you witness an act of abuse, neglect, or exploitation that requires immediate attention, please call 911.