

# Dept. of Justice: Holds financial elder abuse and white collar crimes training for investigators

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APPLETON, Wis. – Today, the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) is holding a two-day training regarding financial elder abuse and white collar crimes for law enforcement partners in Appleton, Wisconsin. The training is being offered for free to local investigators to learn about different scams and types of fraud that target the elderly.

“Our elderly population is increasing rapidly and so are the crimes that are being committed against them,” said Attorney General Schimel. “Law enforcement in Wisconsin needs to be ready and trained for the increasing number financial elder abuse and white collar crimes, which is why we are holding free trainings for our partners so that we can be prepared for the future.”

The Appleton training is the first of three trainings that will be held sponsored by DOJ through consumer protection settlement funds. The trainings will have topics that include: communicating with elderly victims and witnesses; Scams and types of fraud targeting elderly; Sources of information including resources; Case initiation and development; Records examination; Preparation of an investigative file; State statutes and prosecutions; and more. Additionally, two more trainings will be held in Wausau and Pewaukee in October.

A report from 2015 estimates that elders lose nearly \$35 billion annually to elder financial abuse. The report also shows that the impact of financial exploitation extends beyond just economic damage, with 954,000 seniors skipping meals due to the abuse.

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 made up of representatives from Wisconsin Department of Justice, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, the Wisconsin State Legislature, law enforcement, Wisconsin Court System, Board on Aging and Long Term Care, Wisconsin Bankers Association, crime victim services, adult protective services, senior living facilities, and senior citizen advocacy organizations.

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.

Attorney General Schimel also 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, <https://reportelderabusewi.org/>, and engaged in online outreach aimed at elder abuse victims.

Last month, Attorney General Brad Schimel released a new training video aimed at educating tellers and other banking professionals on how to spot financial elder abuse and report it, alongside the Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Credit Union League, and Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

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 the "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.

To learn more about elder abuse, go to <https://reportelderabusewi.org/>.