



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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LSSI Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse

In Illinois last year, more than 7,000 older adults experienced abuse, often at the hand of their loved ones — the people they trust most in the world.

Senior Protective Services, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), provides services to individuals experiencing abuse. Contracted through the Illinois Department on Aging and Northwestern Illinois Area on Aging, LSSI administers services to individuals residing in Carroll, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside Counties.

“July is Elder Abuse Awareness Month in Illinois, and LSSI wants to create awareness around this issue,” says Andrew Andersen, Senior Protective Services coordinator at LSSI. “We want to take the opportunity to inform the community that elder abuse is a problem in our society and teach individuals how to recognize it.”

Abuse and neglect of older persons is largely under-recognized and is not commonly talked about. “People aren’t aware of the problem, because they don’t know how to recognize it,” says Andersen. “In addition, it is sometimes difficult for first-responders or others to identify abuse. Society needs some sort of proof that these folks need help,” he adds.

Unfortunately, no community or country in the world is immune from this costly public health and human rights crisis. In fiscal year 2009, Senior Protective Services investigated 221 suspected elder abuse reports in Carroll, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside Counties. The investigations of suspected elder abuse in this four-county area found that about 31 percent of the victims were male and 69 percent were female. The victims were all 60 years old or older, with the medium age of an elder abuse victim being nearly 79 years old. The investigations also found that more than 80 percent of the reported abusers were relatives of the victims.

It is estimated that there are at least 10 cases of elder abuse for every one that is reported. “This means that the vast majority of victims are suffering, often for years, because no one knows or cares to report the problem,” says Andersen.

As defined by Illinois law, elder abuse consists of the following seven categories: physical, sexual, emotional, confinement, physical neglect, deprivation and financial exploitation. When an elder cannot report for himself or herself, the law mandates the reporting of suspected abuse by service providers in many fields, including social service, law enforcement, public service and medicine, including paramedics and emergency medical technicians.

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“Help is out there for those experiencing abuse,” says Andersen, “through service providers, such as LSSI, as well as tough state laws that protect elders.”

If you or someone you know aged 60 and older is being abused, please call LSSI at 815/626-7333 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the week, or call the Illinois Department on Aging’s Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-8966 anytime, 24 hours a day. All reports are confidential, and anonymous reports are accepted.

Founded in October 1867, LSSI is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), as well as an agency of the United Way. LSSI serves people through an array of services at approximately 83 program sites across Illinois.

For more information on LSSI’s Senior Protective Services, please call 815/626-7333. For more information about Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit www.LSSI.org or LSSI’s Facebook page.

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