

To: All Missouri Professionals Interested in Protecting Older & Disabled Adults

From: The Elder Abuse & Financial Exploitation Response Coordination Committee

Date: March 26, 2020

*"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."*

- Mahatma Gandhi

### **Suggested Talking Points re: Vulnerable Adults, Exploitation, Abuse & COVID-19**

- These are unprecedented and uncertain times for everyone, but these uncertainties may particularly affect our older and disabled adults.
- As COVID-19 precautionary measures necessarily confine us to our homes, these precautions may prevent the only means of social interaction for many of our older and disabled adults, particularly those who live alone or in residential care facilities.
- With decreased social interaction, and greater social isolation, older and disabled adults become acutely vulnerable to scammers and other abusers.
- Residential care patients, who now have extremely restricted access to outside visitors, may be particularly isolated and in need of remote social support.
- Scammers may capitalize on the adult's loneliness, desire to help or increased confusion during these unsettling times.
- Scams may include false medical preventions, treatments or equipment, fraudulent charity requests, COVID related emails and phone calls that contain phishing attempts.
- Other abusers, particularly family and caregivers, including those who live in the home with older and disabled adults, may be more likely to lash out as other outlets are decreased or nonexistent and stress rises. Economic stress on family and caregivers will only increase the temptation to exploit vulnerable people with financial assets.
- Even in the best of times, older and disabled adults have many barriers to reporting abuse or seeking help.
- As other outlets and social contacts diminish, the opportunities for the older or disabled adult to report abuse or seek help become fewer or non-existent.

### **What You Can Do:**

- Make contact by phone with the older and disabled adults in your communities, even if they have families, partners or other resources. Let them know you care and that they are not alone.
- If possible, without subjecting the older or disabled adult to the additional stress of new technology, try to use a video conferencing apps or other means to have eye contact or other varied types of communication.
- Help at-risk older and disabled adults identify safety resources and develop an action plan if they feel anxious, scared or lonely.
- Be alert to possible scams and report them to the appropriate authority. Please see the attached resource sheet for additional information on reporting options for perceived scams, abuse and misinformation.
- If you are aware of an older or disabled adult who may be subject to bullying, abuse or exploitation, call the Missouri Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-800-392-0210.