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Press Release

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New law to protect vulnerable seniors

Trenton-- In NJ, if you are a firefighter, an EMT, a nurse, an optician, a podiatrist, a dentist, or any licensed health professional, you are now required to report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of persons over age 18 years to Adult Protective Services. Every county in NJ has an agency that receives these reports and investigates. Often times, these reports require many visits to determine the facts and to address the needs of the victims.

This law now identifies new legal responsibilities for first responders and health care professionals. More than 18 different health care professions are now required by this law to report abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. These groups included acupuncturists, chiropractors, social workers, occupational therapists, audiology & speech therapists, to name just a few. Grace Egan, the Executive Director of the NJ Foundation for Aging noted, "This law creates a new focus on the silent victimization of vulnerable adults. Now, professionals who work with seniors are required to report which is the first step to ending this cycle of violence. National statistics indicate that only 1 in 20 incidences of abuse or neglect is reported. While this law does not go far enough to provide financial support for more needed services, it does create a legal requirement for professionals to report."

This law requires reporting of abuse against a vulnerable person who is living in the community. A "vulnerable adult means a person 18 years of age or older who resides in a community setting and who, because of a physical or mental illness, disability or deficiency, lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make, communicate, or carry out decisions concerning his [or her] well-being and is the subject of abuse, neglect or exploitation." To report abuse for vulnerable adult living in the community call **1 800-792-8820**, or 211 to find the contact information for your county Adult Protective Service Provider (APS). APS contact numbers are also listed on the NJ Foundation for Aging's website, www.njfoundationforaging.org/services.html

Reports of abuse against institutionalized persons are investigated by the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly. This office investigates and responds to complaints of abuse, neglect and exploitation of individuals 60 years of age and older who reside in licensed facilities within the State, both public and private. To make a report, call 1-877-582-6995.

To learn more about the work of the NJ Foundation for Aging visit www.njfoundationforaging.org, or call 609-421-0206. Established in 1998, it focuses on services and polices that enable older adults to live in the community with independence and dignity.

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