

# Elder Abuse is a Crying Shame



A NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE COUNTY RESTORING ELDER SAFETY TODAY

Summer 2015

## Award-Winning Elder Abuse Forum in Perry Hall

The incidence of elder abuse is on the rise. Experts estimate that one senior in ten will experience abuse, neglect or financial exploitation in their lifetime. However, most cases of elder abuse go underreported. To increase public awareness of elder abuse, Baltimore County Restoring Elder Safety Today (BC-REST) our region's elder abuse prevention coalition, offers an annual forum to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), June 15. This year's event, at the Perry Hall Library, focused on the stories of those who have suffered from elder abuse, and how everyone can play a role in preventing elder mistreatment and connecting victims to help.

Joanne Williams, Director of the Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA), kicked off the event by announcing that BC-REST's WEAAD forum won a 2015 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties, for Community Education. This honor highlights the importance of elder abuse prevention efforts at the local level.

The large audience of community members and professionals watched a moving film entitled, "Age of Injustice." The film featured interviews with seniors who had experienced physical abuse, neglect and financial exploitation. Some of the seniors were victimized by paid helpers, others by family members who were entrusted with their care. In many cases, the older adults were afraid, embarrassed or unable to tell their families that the abuse was happening until they had lost their health or their life savings.

Jamaal Moses of the Baltimore County Department of Social Services (DSS), spoke about the vital role of DSS

Adult Protective Services in investigating suspected elder abuse and helping to restore safety for victims. He stressed the urgency of the problem, stating that "we have to do something about this today." He reviewed the types of abuse and the warning signs. Mr. Moses urged those present to call DSS if they suspect that an older or vulnerable person is being mistreated or neglected, by calling 410-853-3000. He exhorted the audience, "If you suspect it, report it!"

Tammy Bresnahan from AARP, the sponsor of the event, encouraged attendees to get involved in legislative advocacy on behalf of older adults.

Steveanne Ellis, Ombudsman Specialist for the Maryland Department of Aging, brought a proclamation from the Governor. She described the role of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office in responding to reports of abuse in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Anyone can call the BCDA Ombudsman Office at 410-887-4200 to share concerns. Ms. Ellis encouraged the attendees to be observant and report any suspicions of elder abuse. Her concluding message was, "We stand for dignity... we will not stand for Elder Abuse!"

Steve Roscher, Assistant Attorney General from the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, showed video footage of a tragic case in which a frail elderly woman was violently mistreated by a paid caregiver. His office successfully prosecuted the case. He joined the other speakers in urging everyone to monitor elders closely for signs of neglect and abuse, and report problems immediately. Our actions could save a life. For more information about BC-REST or elder abuse, call 410-887-4200.

*Article Submission by Roslyn Cooley Prayer*

# AARP Corner

## AARP Maryland Joins Petition Drive for Online Dating Sites to Crack Down on Fraud

*\$81 Million Lost Nationally to  
Scammers in Just One Year*

With romance scammers using the Internet to rob Americans of an estimated \$81 million per year, AARP's Fraud Watch Network is urging the online dating industry to institute new safeguards to better protect their users. AARP Maryland is inviting its members and the general public to become involved in the national campaign by signing an online petition at <http://www.aarp.org/romancescams>

Individual scammers and highly organized groups attempt to steal hearts and wallets from online dating site users every day," said Hank Greenberg, State President of AARP Maryland. "The sites don't yet do enough to protect their members from known scammers. Our petition asks the companies to take commonsense steps to help put a stop to the scammers' abilities to prey on the unsuspecting."

The Internet Crime Complaint Center reported receiving more than 6,400 complaints with losses totaling \$81 million regarding romance scams in just one year, 2013, its most recent annual information. To combat such losses, specific anti-fraud measures the Fraud Watch Network urges the online dating sites to implement include:

- Employ algorithms to detect suspicious language patterns used by scammers.
- Search for fake profiles across multiple dating websites.

- Issue alerts to any member who has been in contact with someone using a fraudulent profile.
- Educate members with tips on how to avoid romance scammers.

As part of its current campaign, the AARP Fraud Watch Network has posted tips to advise dating site members how to avoid online scams.

### Five ways to avoid online dating scams.

- Adopt an air of mystery. Don't provide your last name, your address or where you work until you've actually met -- and be wary of suitors who ask for any of this personal information too quickly.
- Be a turn off. If you're using a mobile app, turn off your location settings so cons can't figure out where you're located.
- Do your own cyber-stalking. Many scammers steal people's photos and assume their identities. Before you engage with anyone on a dating site, use Google's "search by image" feature to see if that person's image shows up in other places using a different name.
- Don't date a fictional character. Verify that the person is real. Do an online search to see if the things you read match up with his/her claims. Is what you read on the person's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn pages consistent with what you're being told?
- Get a second opinion. If an email from a potential suitor

seems suspicious, check it out. Cut and paste the e-mail into Google and see if the words pop up on any romance scam sites.

### Protect yourself. 10 ways you can spot a romance scammer. Watch out if you "meet" someone who:

- 1) wants to leave the dating site immediately and use personal email or instant messaging to communicate with you
- 2) makes several spelling and grammar mistakes when communicating
- 3) sends a personal photo that looks like something from a glamour magazine
- 4) professes love too quickly
- 5) claims to be from the U.S., but is traveling or working overseas
- 6) makes excuses about not being able to speak by phone
- 7) plans to visit, but cancels at the last minute because of a traumatic event or a business deal gone sour
- 8) asks for money for a variety of reasons (travel, medical emergencies, hotel bills, hospitals bills for child or other relative, visas or other official documents, losses from a financial setback)
- 9) requests you to wire money or to cash a check or money order and send money back or to a third person; and
- 10) makes several, ongoing requests for more money.

To volunteer or if you have questions email [mdaarp@aarp.org](mailto:mdaarp@aarp.org) or call 1-866-542-8163.

Article submitted by:  
Jen Holz, Assoc. State Dir of Outreach  
AARP Maryland



# BALTIMORE COUNTY RESTORING ELDER SAFETY TODAY

BC-REST is a coalition working to educate and empower the community to identify and prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation in Baltimore County, through strategic alliances, advocacy and resource development. Our accomplishments include:

(1) Working with a task force to re-introduce **Project Safe**, a program to educate financial institutions and the public about financial exploitation.

(2) Hosting a “shred-a-thon,” giving seniors an opportunity to safely dispose of old documents that contain personal and financial information, thus preventing identity theft.

(3) Celebrating **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** with a rally and seminar to energize public officials and concerned citizens to fight elder abuse.

(4) Making **presentations** to groups including senior centers, community associations and neighborhood fairs.

## How Can I Get Involved?

\* **Call** 410-887-4200 to get on our mailing list. You will receive our newsletter and alerts about upcoming events.

\* **Inquire** about having your organization become a member of BC-REST, by calling 410-887-4200.

\* **Schedule** a presentation on elder abuse for your group by calling our office.

\* **Check out** our website, [www.bcpl.info/stopelderabuse](http://www.bcpl.info/stopelderabuse)  
Like us on face book – “Baltimore County Restoring Elder Safety Today.”



## Who is mandated to report of Elder Abuse in the state of Maryland?

Maryland law requires that law enforcement agents, human service professionals and health care practitioners report any suspected cases of elder abuse.

## Can I Report Elder Abuse?

**Anyone** who witnesses or suspects any case of elder abuse should report it immediately.

## How Do I Report Elder Abuse?

**Contact 911 or the local sheriff.**

**To report suspected abuse in the community or an assisted living facility call:** Baltimore County Department of Social Services – Adult Protective Services - 410-853-3000 – *make a language selection, then press #2 for adult services.*

**To report suspected abuse in a nursing home call:** Baltimore County Long Term Care Ombudsman - 410-887-4200.

**For information about elder abuse call:**

Baltimore County Department of Aging at 410-887-2594. You may reach any of these offices with Maryland Relay 711.

## DISCOVER THE POWER OF AGE Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit

October 28-29, 2015

[www.seniorexpoonline.com](http://www.seniorexpoonline.com)



## BC-REST Newsletter Committee:

Roslyn Cooley Prayer  
Barbara Korenblit  
Alan Spiegel

## FREE PRESENTATIONS ON ELDER ABUSE

BCREST can provide educational presentations to your community group, place of business, civic organization or congregation, if there is an interest in learning more about Elder Abuse.

Contact BCREST to schedule a presentation by calling the:  
**BALTIMORE COUNTY OMBUDSMAN OFFICE AT #410-887-4200**

## Types of Elder Abuse

**Physical Abuse** – Use of force to threaten or physically injure a vulnerable elder.

**Emotional Abuse** – Verbal attacks, threats, rejection, isolation, or belittling acts that cause mental anguish, pain, or distress to a senior.

**Sexual Abuse** – Sexual contact that is forced, tricked, threatened, or otherwise coerced upon a vulnerable elder, including anyone who is unable to grant consent.

**Exploitation** – Theft, fraud, misuse or neglect of authority, and use of undue influence as a lever to gain control over an older person’s money or property.

**Neglect** – A caregiver’s failure or refusal to provide for a vulnerable elder’s safety, physical, or emotional needs.

**Abandonment** – Desertion of a frail or vulnerable elder by anyone with a duty of care.

**Self Neglect** – An inability to understand the consequences of one’s own actions or inaction, which leads to, or may lead to, harm or endangerment.

**Remember: You do not need to prove that abuse is occurring; it is up to the professionals to investigate the suspicions.**

Source: [www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov)