

DC Office on Aging Elder Abuse Prevention Committee

2014 Annual Report

November 19, 2014



**Dr. John M. Thompson, Executive Director
Government of the District of Columbia
D.C. Office on Aging**

**DC Office on Aging
Elder Abuse Prevention Committee**

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Introduction

Since prior to the 2000 fiscal year the U. S Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, has provided a formula Elder Abuse Prevention Grant annually to states and the District of Columbia. The original grant was \$25,000 and it remained at that level until 2014 when the U. S. Congress cut federal spending across the board and the District's grant was reduced to \$23,626. The DC Office on Aging manages the grant through the collaboration and support of the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee. This committee is comprised of advocates, representatives from government and community-based agencies, and senior volunteers who meet monthly, develop an annual spending plan and carry out activities focused on reduction or prevention of abuse, neglect or exploitation of the elderly in the District of Columbia. The D.C. Office on Aging has a fiduciary relationship with Iona Senior Services for fiscal management of the funds in accordance with the spending plan approved by the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee. Iona Senior Services manages the grant funds without compensation and committee members work on projects as volunteers.

Composition of the Committee

The Elder Abuse Prevention Committee is comprised of representatives who work or have worked with seniors and disabled residents of the District of Columbia or manage programs that work to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of seniors. It includes social workers, case managers, a geriatric nurse practitioner, advocates, lawyers, outreach workers and financial experts. Agency represented include: Adult Protective Services; the U. S. Attorney's Office; The Office of the Attorney General; Legal Counsel for the Elderly; the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking; the DC Office on Aging; the Elderly and Disabled Resource Center; and community-based agencies that work with seniors. All representatives are unpaid volunteers and make unique contributions toward helping the committee achieve annual goals to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults in the District of Columbia.

In 2014, the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee included:

Deborah Royster, Esq.
General Counsel
DC Office on Aging

Theodore A. Miles
Associate Commissioner of Securities
Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking

Fiona Druy, RN, NP
Geriatric Nurse Practitioner
IONA Senior Services

Maria Shumar
Victim Advocate
US Attorney's Office

Barbara Strother
Retired Social Worker

Cecelia Steiner-Smith, Esq.
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General

Dr. Sheila Y. Jones
Chief, Adult Protective Services

Lynne Person
Senior Manager, Legal Counsel for the Elderly
DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Melva Meade, MSW, LICSW
Social Work Coordinator
Seabury, Ward 5 Aging Services

Douglas Klein, Esq.
U.S. Attorney's Office

Sheila Kelly
Department of Behavioral Health

Gail Cooke
Aging and Disability Resource Center
DC Office on Aging

Brian Footer
DC Office on Aging

Sina Baktash, LICSW, LCSW-C, LCSW
Supervisory Social Worker
Adult Protective Services

New Members:

In August 2014, the committee was expanded with the addition of four new members, increasing its membership to 18 individuals who will be involved in planning activities for FY 2015 with a special focus on outreach and education. The new members include:

1. Marguerita (Rita) Cheng
Chair, Financial Planning Association of the DC Area
Chief Executive Officer
Blue Ocean Global Wealth
2. Idriys Abdullah
Consumer Protection Advocate
Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking
3. Theresa Brownson
Supervisor, Senior Medicare Patrol
Legal Counsel for the Elderly
4. Wanda Robinson
Office of Public Safety
DC Housing Authority

Annual Spending Plan

In FY 2014, the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee developed a spending plan that funded outreach and education of seniors, training of professionals, a Real Property Tax Initiative to protect seniors from losing their homes in tax sales, Adult Protective Services, City-wide case management services, support of the Senior Symposium, printing and miscellaneous expenditures, and a small administrative support fund. Over the year, funds were not needed for the Senior Symposium or printing and miscellaneous and the FY 2014 spending plan was amended to allow for the purchase of public service announcements to encourage residents to call Adult Protective Services to make reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Funds were also available for additional Administrative Support and emergency food and gift cards for vulnerable adults. In addition, there was approximately \$524 left from the previous year for a check that was issued, but not cashed. Those funds were added to the FY 2014 budget and funds were spent as follows:

1. Real Property Tax Initiative conducted by Legal Counsel for the Elderly. Budgeted: \$8,500. All funds were spent. The Real Property Tax Initiative successfully guided new legislation through the City Council to protect seniors from losing homes in tax sales.
2. Training for professionals who work with vulnerable adults. Budgeted: \$1,500. Spent: \$1,406.29. The *Reaching Out To Protect Vulnerable Seniors* Conference was held on June 27, 2014 and 75 social workers, case managers, nurses, lawyers, advocates and other professionals attended.
3. Adult Protective Services Imprest Fund to protect vulnerable adults in an emergency from loss of basic needs. Budgeted: \$4,700. All funds were spent. Funds were used for extermination of bed bugs, payment of utilities, and payment for other basic needs to protect vulnerable adults in their homes
4. City-wide Imprest Funds to protect vulnerable adults in an emergency from loss of basic needs. Budgeted: \$4,200. Community-based case management programs used \$3,660.76. Funds were spent to pay utility bills to avoid disconnection, purchase food, pay for exterminator services and other basic needs for vulnerable adults.
5. Senior Symposium: Budgeted: \$1,613. Funds were not needed and the original budget was adjusted to use the funds for other services.
6. Printing and Miscellaneous: Budgeted: \$1,613. Funds were not needed and the original budget was adjusted to use the funds for other services.
7. Administrative Support: Budgeted: \$1,500. The budget was increased and the total amount spent was \$2,083.50. Funds were used to support the work of the committee and to organize the June 27, 2014 professional training conference.

8. Education and Outreach: Funds were not originally budgeted, but funds were available and \$2,800 was used to purchase Public Service Announcements to encourage reports to Adult Protective Services in situations of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults.

9. Purchase of food and gift cards: Funds were not originally budgeted, but the unspent balance of \$1,000 was used to purchase gifts cards for food and other basic needs. The cards were split evenly between the City-wide Case Management Programs and Adult Protective Services and will be used to assist vulnerable adults in an emergency.

Project	Amount Budgeted	Amount Spent	Notes
Real Property Tax Initiative	\$8,500	\$8,500	Spent in full
Training for Professionals	\$1,500	\$1,406.29	Unspent balance of \$93.71 applied toward education and outreach.
Adult Protective Services Imprest Fund	\$4,700	\$4,700	Spent in full
City-wide Imprest Fund	\$4,200	\$3,660.76	Unspent balance of \$529.24 applied toward Administrative Support
Senior Symposium	\$1,613	\$0.00	Unspent balance applied toward Outreach and Education
Printing and Miscellaneous	\$1,613	\$0.00	Unspent balance applied toward Outreach and Education
Administrative Support	\$1,500	\$2,083.50	Funds added from other line items.
Education and Outreach	\$0.00	\$2,800	Not originally budgeted, but available funds added to purchase PSAs at the end of the year.
Purchase of food and gift cards	\$0.00	\$475.45	Not originally budgeted, but available funds added to purchase food and gift cards at the end of the year
Brought forward	\$524.55	524.55	Check issued but not cashed in 2013, so funds were available and carried forward to 2014. Funds were added to available funds to purchase food and gift cards .
Total Available	\$24,150.55	\$24,150.55	

Decisions about which projects to fund, the amount of funding, and all adjustments to the spending plan were made by the members of the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee.

2014 Accomplishments

1. **The Real Property Tax Initiative** celebrated a major accomplishment in 2014 by spearheading efforts to protect seniors who were at risk of losing their homes due to the non-payment of property taxes. This has been an issue affecting seniors for many years. Homes were sold at tax sales and senior homeowners received none of the proceeds. The Real Property Tax Initiative provided support for legal advocacy that resulted in a significant reform of property tax sale procedures in the District of Columbia. Attorneys worked over a six-month period negotiating reforms with the City Council, the Office of Tax and Revenue, and the Office of the Attorney General to pass new legislation. Elder Abuse Prevention Committee members provided testimony to support the revised procedures. This legislation stipulated that additional notice be provided to seniors before homes are sold for unpaid taxes. In addition, it ensured that when a home is sold, the senior home owner receives a fair sale price for the home. The number of tax sale properties documented as "senior" in the Office of Tax Revenue records was reduced from 36 in 2013 to just seven in 2014.

The Real Property Tax Initiative also assisted homeowners with litigation defense, counseling, advocacy and outreach to help seniors in the District of Columbia avoid losing their homes in tax sales. Legal Counsel for the Elderly represented approximately 20 clients with property tax problem during 2014.

2. **Outreach and Education for Adults at Risk in the District** included two types of outreach to reach vulnerable adults. 1. The EAPC sponsored Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to encourage people to report suspicions of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults to Adult Protective Services. 2. EAPC committee members took information about how to avoid financial exploitation and seek help when needed directly to seniors with workshops at Wellness Centers and other locations throughout the District of Columbia.
 - In September, 2014, Elder Abuse Prevention Committee members developed a script and produced a 60-second public service announcement to urge people to report suspicions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults to Adult Protective Services so concerns can be investigated and services to protect victims can be put into place to protect them. A PSA on Elder Abuse will run on Spirit 1340 AM, Senior Zone from October – December. Members of the committee also taped a 30-minutes panel discussion on the same topic on DCTV to air later this year.
 - The DC Office on Aging Elder Abuse Prevention Committee chair established a relationship with the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and learned of the new *Money Smart for Seniors* outreach and education program that was developed to help seniors avoid financial exploitation and learn how to obtain help when needed. CFPB staff provided a "train the trainer" course for Elder Abuse Prevention Committee members so they could use the material for outreach and education for seniors and vulnerable adults in the District. Outreach and education trainings were taken to District Wellness Centers. Trainings were

held at DCOA senior wellness centers across the city and this presentation was delivered to more than 500 seniors in FY 2014.

- In addition to *Money Smart for Seniors* training conducted under the auspices of the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee, a number of committee members provided outreach and education to prevent financial exploitation of vulnerable adults as part of the services provided in their own agencies. Adult Protective Services, the Office of the U. S. Attorney, and Legal Counsel for the Elderly conducted education and outreach on a regular basis in 2014.

3. **Training for Professionals Who Work with Vulnerable Adults** was provided at the *Reaching Out to Protect Vulnerable Adults* conference co-sponsored by and held at The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law on June 27, 2014. Seventy five (75) social workers, case managers, lawyers, advocates and other professionals who work with vulnerable adults attended and written evaluations indicated that the training was well received and worthwhile. The conference was approved by the National Association of Social Workers for six (6) continuing education units for social workers.

Training objectives were met and included helping professionals:

- better understand the Real Property Tax process and how seniors can become vulnerable to losing their homes for unpaid taxes.
- learn about the newly passed legislation that provides protection for seniors who are at risk of losing their homes because of unpaid taxes.
- develop a basic understanding of Probate and how workers can help their clients understand the process.
- develop knowledge and skills to enhance outreach and education that will empower clients to protect themselves from financial abuse and exploitation.

The conference was developed by the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee and included the following sessions:

- *Real Property Taxes: Risk, and New Legislation*, conducted by JoAnne Savage, JD, Legal Counsel for the Elderly
- *A Look at Probate for Social Workers*, conducted by Faith Mullen, JD, Columbus School of Law
- *Money Smart for Older Adults*, provided by Jenefer Duane, James Minor, and Naomi Karp, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

4. **Prevention of Neglect** was provided through the provision of an Imprest Fund for Adult Protective Services and for City- Wide Case Managers in the Aging Network who work with vulnerable adults.

- Adult Protective Services used these funds to: provide for elimination of bedbugs, purchase a refrigerator, pay for medical assessment and lab work, purchase a mattress, pay for carpet cleaning and pay a water bill. When social workers identified the need for funds to address a critical need to protect a vulnerable adult and established that funds were not available from any other source, the Imprest Funds were used to reduce risk and ensure that services were

provided to meet the basic needs of the client. Use of Imprest Funds were approved by the Adult Protective Services Chief and documentation of expenditures was maintained.

- The City-Wide case managers used funds to: pay utility bills that were in arrears for clients who were threatened with disconnection, purchase emergency food cards, pay partial rent to prevent eviction, and pay for extermination services. Social workers and case managers in the Senior Network would apply for funds when there was no other way to meet the clients' basic needs. Frequently Imprest Funds were combined with other resources and were used as a last resort to allow for the basic needs of senior residents. Use of Imprest Funds was controlled at a central location and documentation of expenditures was maintained.

Imprest funds were only used when clients had no other resources, the client situations were critical and intervention was needed to provide relief from neglect or prevent a crisis.

Summary

The Elder Abuse Prevention Committee draws experts from government and community-based agencies to focus on efforts to reduce abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults in the District of Columbia. A small federal grant provides limited funds to assist with outreach and education, provide for advocacy, and meet some of the basic needs of adults at risk. Committee members come together monthly to help ensure that efforts are coordinated, services are publicized, and the community is made aware of how to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation from occurring and how to obtain help when services are needed. In 2014, the committee celebrated a significant success with the passage of the revisions in the Real Property Tax procedures that will protect seniors from losing their homes due to non-payment of property taxes. The committee also expanded its outreach and education efforts to help everyone in the District of Columbia become aware of the need to protect vulnerable residents.

Completed by:
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