



For Immediate Release
May 3, 2011

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May Recognized as Adult Protective Services Month

May is recognized as Adult Protective Services Month in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Social Services, in collaboration with various state agencies and community partners, seeks to bring the issue of adult abuse to the attention of all Virginians.

Last year in Virginia, 17,141 incidents of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of elderly persons and adults with disabilities were reported to Adult Protective Services (APS) and in Portsmouth, 169 allegations were reported. APS is the system that was established by the *Code of Virginia* and operated by the local departments of social services to investigate allegations of adult abuse and provide services to stop or alleviate the mistreatment. APS can arrange assistance for victims through various services such as referral information, home support, and residential services. Research reveals that victims of adult abuse are from all income levels, races, and ethnic backgrounds.

Types of adult mistreatment may include physical abuse, sexual assault, neglect of essential health or personal needs, or the exploitation of an adult's financial resources or property. APS substantiated 59 percent of the cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation in Virginia for fiscal year 2010.

Though the abuse of vulnerable adults is not new, it has long been cloaked in silence and has not had the public visibility that abuse of children has had. Some research indicates that abuse of vulnerable adults is as prevalent as the abuse of children; however, adult abuse is vastly underreported.

Adults who are vulnerable to mistreatment are frequently isolated and less likely to have their plight discovered by an interested outsider. Many who are victimized go unreported and unaided. Fifty-six percent of substantiated reports concerned incidents of adult self-neglect. Sixty-three percent of APS reports alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation that occurred in the adult's own home or apartment.

Citizens are encouraged to report suspected adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation to the Portsmouth Department of Social Services at 405-1800 x 8215 or to the 24-hour, toll-free hotline at **1-888-83-ADULT (1-888-832-3858)**.

Portsmouth events to recognize Adult Protective Services Month include:

- A Food Drive - Please contact Tonya Gardner at 405-1800 ext. 8114 or Susan Johnson at 405-1800 ext. 8305 to donate non-perishable items to our food closet.
- Reading of the City of Portsmouth's Proclamation which recognizes May as Adult Protective Services Month.
- Information on the Elder Watch Program in Portsmouth at the Portsmouth Department of Social Services on May 17, 2011 at 2:30 pm.

For more information, call Tonya Gardner at 405-1800 ext. 8114.

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