[INERT ONTO NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE OR LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** **Insert contact information for news release**

**(Sample headline) Local Officials to Raise Awareness About Elder Abuse**

**CITY OR TOWN - (Insert organizations)** will host an event **(on June xx, at time)** to raise awareness about elder abuse in Montana while recognizing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

The event will take place at **(insert location) in (insert city).**

The event is part of a statewide effort to raise awareness at the local level of the harsh impact elder abuse has on older Montanan’s and individuals with disabilities. The Montana Association of Counties, the Montana League of Cities and Towns, Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Department of Justice, and **(insert more partners)** are combining efforts this year to raise awareness about this issue through local public awareness events.

**Sample quote** “**This is an issue that impacts the entire state, and (insert county) is no different,”** said local official. **“Today is about raising awareness in order to inform the public about steps they can take to protect their fellow citizens from the various forms of elder abuse that occur routinely year round.”**

According to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) a record number 4,900 Montanans were victims of elder abuse in 2021. This is the second year in a row where a new record number of victims have been reported.

Elder abuse refers to intentional or negligent acts by a caregiver or trusted individual that causes harm to an older person. It takes many forms, including neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, and financial exploitation. APS is an investigation unit designed to protect vulnerable adults, and provide protective services through support by local, county and state programs.

DPHHS Adult Protective Services investigates cases involving adults aged 60 and older and adults with disabilities age 18-59. While neglect and self-neglect are both investigated and substantiated most often, financial exploitation is also on the rise nationally and in Montana. The average victim nationally loses $120,000 through financial exploitation.

In many cases, the person abusing, neglecting or exploiting the elderly is a person in a trust relationship to the older person such as spouse, child, or friend.

There are resources available to help. For example, to help prevent financial exploitation, it’s crucial that individuals have their legal documents, such as estate planning and Powers of Attorney, prepared well ahead of a medical emergency and to share those documents with a trusted circle of family and friends.

**(Insert DOJ stats?)**

Local officials say the following measures can go along ways in preventing elder abuse:

* Review all of your legal documents, especially your estate planning documents with a legal professional.
* Make sure that you have valid, and protective Health and Financial Durable Powers of Attorney. Creating specific, limited and well-drafted documents can help protect you against financial exploitation and make it easier to honor your wishes, when you are not able to speak for yourself.
* Draft a detailed plan and communicate it with friends and family members. This is a vital step to prevent future abuse, as well as ease strain on your family and caregivers.
* Estate planning documents should be reviewed periodically, but especially anytime there is a death of a named person, a divorce, a new decade passes, a new diagnosis is received or there is any significant decline in physical or mental well-being. For assistance with legal documents, Montanans are encouraged to contact the [Legal Services Developer Program.](https://dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/aging/legalservicesdeveloper/)

To report abuse, neglect or exploitation call Adult Protective Services intake at 1-844-277-9300 or go to [www.aps.mt.gov](http://www.aps.mt.gov).

**Who: [Insert event list of event speakers]**
**What:** World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

**When: [insert event date and time]**

**Where: [Insert location]**