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Senior Financial Abuse Coalition kicks-off statewide initiative to protect elderly from top form of reported abuse.

To highlight the growing problem of financial abuse to the elderly, the Senior Financial Abuse Coalition will launch a week-long public awareness initiative on the steps of the State Capitol on Monday from 1 to 3 p.m.

State and local experts will also conduct public financial abuse trainings during the week in Salem, Medford, Pendleton and Portland.

The Salem kick-off event will include the unveiling of a new comprehensive resource guide, *Preventing and Responding to Senior Financial Abuse in Oregon*. Produced by the Senior Financial Abuse Coalition and printed by AARP, the guide outlines the types of financial abuse, ways to spot scams and offers resources for victims and families. Ten thousand copies will be distributed to senior centers, Area Agencies on Aging, and other community organizations.

Scheduled speakers at the event include Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers, Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services Director Cory Streisinger, Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) Director Gary K. Weeks and the Governor's Commission on Senior Services Chairwoman Dolores Hubert.

"Financial exploitation is the number one form of reported elder abuse in Oregon," says Myers. "Seniors are easy targets because of their accumulated savings, stocks and property. We need to ensure that vulnerable Oregonians are protected from these crimes and receive justice if they become victims."

Senior financial abuse includes theft or misuse of a person's property or assets, scams, identity theft, insurance fraud and predatory lending. Abuse

can be perpetrated by family members, strangers and caretakers and can be difficult to detect if the senior is isolated or dependent on others for help.

“If seniors fall victim to financial abuse, they can lose everything,” says Weeks, the DHS director. “Our goal is help our senior citizens age with dignity and remain as independent as possible. For that to happen they need to maintain and protect the assets they’ve spent a lifetime building.”

The public awareness initiative is targeted toward adult children of seniors, “boomers” and the elderly. During the week, Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Information Coordinator Jan Margosian, legal aid experts and community leaders will conduct trainings for the general public in the following cities:

Salem Feb. 14, Salem Senior Center, 1055 Erixon N.E., 12 to 2 p.m., (503) 588-6303.

Medford Feb. 15, Smullin Center, 2825 E. Barnett, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. (541) 608-4148.

Pendleton Feb. 17, St. Anthony Hospital, 1601 S.E. Court, 10 a.m. to Noon, Contact: John Brenne, (541) 276-4474.

Portland Feb. 18, Urban League Adult and Senior Services, Northeast Multicultural Senior Center, 5325 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd., 1 to 3 p.m., (503) 988-5470.

The week culminates in speakers and an educational booth at the *Boomer and Senior Expo* at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem, on Feb 19-20.

The Senior Financial Abuse Coalition is composed of experts from the Governor’s Commission on Senior Services, DHS, AARP, the Department of Consumer and Business Services, the Oregon Department of Justice and Senior Forums. Washington Mutual provided a \$7,700 grant for education and outreach.

To report abuse or suspected financial abuse call your local DHS Senior Services Office, your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) office, or your local law enforcement agency. You can also contact the state office at 1-800-232-3020; TTY/voice (503) 945-5811 or fax (503) 378-8966. Calls can be anonymous and all are confidential.

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