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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

**GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES \$8.4 MILLION TO COMBAT ELDER ABUSE AND
FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION STATEWIDE**

***First-in-the-Nation Initiative to Support and Expand Comprehensive, Statewide Network of
Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams to Protect Vulnerable Adults***

***Funding Will Support 23 Existing Teams and Create Additional Teams to Serve Every County
by 2020***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced \$8.4 million in state and federal funding to improve and expand services for vulnerable adults at risk of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation. Developed by the state Office of Victim Services and state Office for the Aging, the Elder Abuse Interventions and Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams Initiative is the first of its kind in the nation. The initiative will fund and support 23 existing multidisciplinary teams currently targeting elder abuse and establish additional teams with the goal of serving every county in the state by the fall of 2020.

"New York remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting one of our most vulnerable populations and to holding those responsible accountable for their actions," **Governor Cuomo said.** "By expanding upon existing efforts to ensure we are able to serve every county in the state, we can prevent harm to vulnerable adults, reduce risk of exploitation, and save lives."

"Older New Yorkers are at risk of being victims of abuse and financial exploitation, so New York is leading the nation with a comprehensive network to protect our most vulnerable," **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul.** "This funding will expand our efforts to assist vulnerable adults with support from teams across the state to ensure they don't become victims of abuse. Through teams of professionals and investment in resources and services, New York is committed to reducing harm and helping to save lives."

Over the next three years, the Office of Victim Services will provide \$2 million in federal funding annually and the Office for the Aging will provide another \$500,000 in state funding annually to establish the E-MDT Initiative. These teams consist of professionals from aging services, adult protective, health care, financial services, criminal justice, victim assistance, mental health and other disciplines to coordinate investigations and develop interventions to stop or prevent elder abuse. The teams—first piloted in the state in 2012—assist adults who are 60 or older and at risk for harm or exploitation due to physical limitations, cognitive impairment or dementia, and social isolation.

The Office for the Aging is partnering with Lifespan, which is based in Monroe County, and Weill Cornell Medicine's NYC Elder Abuse Center to manage, monitor, and distribute the funding this year

through Sept. 30, 2020. The funding will sustain and expand existing enhanced multidisciplinary teams and create additional teams to ensure that every county in the state is represented, as well as provide technical assistance and training; collect data; and provide teams with forensic accounting, geriatric psychiatry services and community legal services, depending on the needs of cases they are handling.

This infusion of federal funding allows the state to leverage additional funds to support 23 existing multidisciplinary teams, four of which serve as administrative and oversight hubs, supporting teams in multiple counties. A full list of the 10 not-for-profit and governmental organizations receiving funding for those 23 teams is available [here](#).

The Office of Victim Services developed the E-MDT initiative with the Office for the Aging after receiving an increase in funding through the federal Victims of Crime Act. In addition to the \$6 million to maintain and expand services, the Office of Victim Services will provide \$916,500 to the Office for the Aging to administer and monitor the funding provided during the three-year grant period, which runs through Sept. 30, 2020. The funding cycle mirrors the federal fiscal year. The E-MDT Initiative also is tasked with:

- Creating up to 20 additional teams by Sept. 30, 2019, the end of the second year of funding and up to 20 additional teams by Sept. 30, 2020. As part of that process, counties will be assessed to determine their readiness to establish teams and serve as hubs where appropriate.
- Developing and establishing the New York Statewide Elder Justice Hub to support the work of the enhanced multidisciplinary teams.
- Funding pilot initiatives that provide direct services and support victims of elder abuse and financial exploitation.

Office of Victim Services Director Elizabeth Cronin said, "We do everything we can to identify crime victims who don't come to us for help, those who don't report their victimization to law enforcement and determine the best way to reach and assist them. Vulnerable adults have suffered in silence too long. This comprehensive, statewide network will provide those individuals with assistance and support to help them recover and raise awareness to bring this crime out of the shadows, where perpetrators of abuse and exploitation have been allowed to thrive."

Office for the Aging Acting Director Greg Olsen said, "The success in dealing with any complex, cross systems issue is to have the experts at the table at the same time, tapping their skills, experience and resources to have the best outcomes possible. I am thrilled to work with Director Cronin, her staff and those specialists statewide who have dedicated their careers to eliminating elder abuse in all its forms. This project is the glue that will keep these teams operational."

Lifespan President and CEO Ann Marie Cook said, "Lifespan is very grateful to be partnering with the Office for the Aging and the Office of Victim Services to intervene to help older crime victims and bring to the forefront the serious issue of elder abuse and mistreatment. The Enhanced Multi-Disciplinary Team model is a proven, highly successful effort to coordinate professionals and collectively intervene to protect older victims. We all know that elder abuse thrives in silence and secrecy. The silence is over in NYS! Our shared goal is to help older adults in New York State live fulfilling lives free of abuse, mistreatment and exploitation."

Risa Breckman, Executive Director of Weill Cornell Medicine's NYC Elder Abuse Center, said, "New York State is blazing a trail for other states to follow, setting a goal of funding an enhanced multidisciplinary team in every county in the state by 2020. These teams will help reduce the suffering of elder abuse victims, increase their safety and well-being, and in so doing, not only improve lives, but save them."

Sheila J. Poole, Acting Commissioner of the state Office of Children and Family Services said, "Serving vulnerable adults is at the core of OCFS's Bureau of Adult Services mission, and adult protective services are a critical component of each enhanced multidisciplinary team. These programs will go far in supporting those who often are unable to protect themselves from harm and have no one else willing and able to truly assist them. OCFS stands with our partners at NYSOFA, and OVS in working to end the abuse and exploitation of older adults, and we applaud their efforts to enhance protections for vulnerable fellow New Yorkers. OCFS has consistently promoted the use of MDTs to protect vulnerable adults and enthusiastically supports this expansion."

Congressman José E. Serrano said, "Seniors shouldn't have to worry about abuse or financial exploitation, but unfortunately, issues involving financial abuse, exploitation, and neglect of individuals over 60 is becoming more prevalent. This funding will help improve and expand already existing resources for individuals over 60 at risk of financial abuse to guarantee their financial stability and well-being late in life."

Congresswoman Nita Lowey said, "This funding will go a long way in protecting elderly and vulnerable New Yorkers from financial exploitation and abuse. As Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Committee, I will continue fighting for resources critical to ensuring the safety and well-being of our seniors."

Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aging, Senator Sue Serino said, "Elder abuse is a despicable crime that targets some of our state's most vulnerable and combatting it has been one of my highest priorities since being named Aging Chair. This funding sends a powerful message to our seniors that New York State stands ready to empower them, and to hold perpetrators accountable. This statewide network of multidisciplinary teams that take a multi-pronged approach to combatting abuse has proven to be incredibly effective, and I thank the Executive for recognizing this and investing in this critically important program which can serve as a model for other states looking to combat the all too pervasive elder abuse epidemic."

Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Aging, Assembly Member Donna Lupardo said, "New York seniors deserve to age independently and with dignity. Unfortunately, this freedom is often threatened by criminals who target them for exploitation. By establishing and funding multidisciplinary teams in every county across New York, we will provide seniors with a powerful ally to help protect and support them. I would like to especially thank Governor Cuomo and all of my partners in state government for these important resources needed to reduce elder abuse."

Crime victims who were 60 or older filed a total of 4,031 claims for assistance that were approved by the Office of Victim Services between January 2015 and December 2017. This figure represents about 17 percent of the 23,349 claims awarded by the agency over that two-year period.

Determining the full scope and prevalence of elder abuse is difficult, as many of these cases go unreported because the abuser is a family member or caregiver. A comprehensive, state-funded study published in 2011 found that for every one case of abuse reported to adult protective services or other authorities, there were 23.5 other cases that were not reported. In addition, a 2016 OCFS

study found that financial exploitation costs vulnerable adults who have been victimized and the state at least \$1.5 billion annually.

The Office of Victim Services provides a safety net for crime victims and/or their family members, compensating eligible individuals for medical and counseling expenses, funeral and burial expenses, lost wages and support, in addition to other assistance. For more information, eligibility guidelines and victim assistance programs it funds by county, visit www.ovs.ny.gov or call 1-800-247-8035.

The Office for the Aging's home and community-based programs provide older persons access to a well-planned, coordinated package of in-home and other supportive services designed to support and supplement informal care. The [agency](#) aims to improve access to, and availability of, appropriate and cost-effective non-medical support services for older individuals to maximize their ability to age in their community and avoid higher levels of care and publicly financed care. NYSOFA achieves this through our network of 59 local Offices for the Aging.

[Lifespan](#) helps older adults and caregivers take on the challenges and opportunities of longer life. The organization is a trusted source of unbiased information, guidance and more than 30 services and advocacy for older adults and caregivers and also provides training and education for allied professionals and the community.

Weill Cornell Medicine's NYC Elder Abuse [Center](#) was launched in 2009 to improve the way professionals, organizations and systems respond to elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

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