



# ELDER ABUSE TASK FORCE



Thank you for your interest in Michigan's Elder Abuse Task Force – an alliance representing more than 50 different organizations in the public, private and non-profit sectors – all working together to reduce barriers facing our aging population.

We appreciate your patience and we are happy to share our second issue of the Elder Abuse Task Force newsletter.

## CASES

Since our last issue, Attorney General Nessel announced the charging, plea and sentencing of Stephanie Joyce-Bennett Beauford—a former bank teller convicted of stealing money from the bank account of an elderly man.

Also, [former investment adviser Robert Byrkit Morley Jr. was ordered to pay back the \\$700,000 he stole](#) from an elderly couple during a sentencing in January after pleading no contest to one count of conducting a criminal enterprise.

Many of the elder abuse cases are handled in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) and the state's Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). We are grateful to both DIFS and LARA for their diligent work and commitment to holding those who commit elder abuse crimes accountable.

## VICTIM ADVOCATE

For the first time in the Michigan Department of Attorney General, a victim advocate position has been established to assist victims of elder financial exploitation. Taylor Hess will serve as the victim advocate for the Elder Financial Crimes Unit within the Financial Crimes Division – which also houses the Elder Abuse Task Force. Hess holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Ferris State University and will be responsible for coordinating victim services for elder financial crimes prosecuted by the Department.

Hess's position was established through a partnership with DHHS and the Division of Victim Services, which is funded under the Crime Victim Rights Services Act.



## LEGISLATION

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the Michigan Legislature and its schedule. Since our last issue, the Task Force played a critical role in the adoption of a statewide, standard investigation form for vulnerable adult abuse to make law enforcement investigations more efficient. Meanwhile, additional training modules have also been rolled out to further assist law enforcement in identifying instances of elder abuse.

Several elder abuse related bills are gaining traction in the House and Senate. With only six months left on the legislative calendar, our team is working in overdrive with our partners to advance this meaningful legislation. Here's an update:

- Senate Bill 110 was signed into law by Governor Whitmer in December 2019. This new law will allow the court to intervene when a family member or relative is denying an incapacitated adult access to a loved one.
- As a follow-up to Senate Bill 110, Senate Bill 798 will give the court the ability to intervene when a guardian is denying a loved one access to an incapacitated adult. As written, the bill will put the burden on the guardian to prove why a family member *should not* be given access.
- Our office has also taken an active role in legislation that will guard against elder abuse in nursing home facilities. Senate Bill 77 would require a nursing home to permit a resident or the resident's family to use cameras placed in a nursing home facility to monitor treatment and prevent physical abuse. This bill was recently sent to the Senate floor.
- Senate Bill 464 would require financial institutions to report vulnerable adult financial exploitation to law enforcement or adult protective services. It was referred to the Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking.

Members of the Task Force will soon meet with our legislative partners to finalize the introduction strategy to achieve the remaining goals from this term's initiatives. Though delayed by COVID-19, the Task Force has closely reviewed this legislation and held countless conversations with legislators to lay the groundwork for a positive and collaborative experience once the bills are formally introduced.

# COURT WATCHERS

The curriculum is nearly complete and the pilot program will begin when probate court operations return to normal. Orientation will be accessible online and in-person by [sending an email](#) or calling 517-335-4004.

We appreciate your patience as we work through each segment of the program to ensure a smooth rollout.



## TOWN HALLS - ROUND 2

Due to the current state of emergency in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the arrangements that were being made for the second round of Elder Abuse Town Halls with AG Nessel have been postponed.

As soon as the state of emergency is lifted, the Attorney General's office will work with legislators to ensure we can connect with residents around the state on elder abuse-related issues.

The [calendar on our elder abuse webpage](#) will be updated accordingly.

## CENSUS

Lastly, we want to mention just how crucial filling out your census form is. Regardless of your age, federal funding for everything from school lunch programs to programs for seniors will be impacted by the census count.

Census 2020 is more convenient than ever and totally confidential. The [nine-question form can be filled out online by clicking here](#).

You can also respond by phone or by mail.

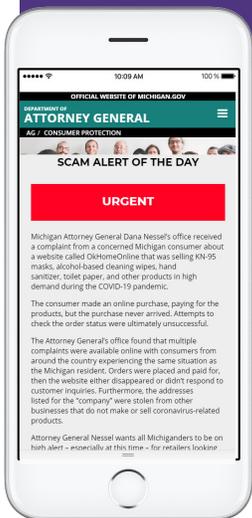
More information is available via the [U.S. Census Bureau's Resource Guide](#).

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

Our seniors are primary targets for scammers seeking to obtain personal – especially financial – information.

**REMEMBER:** if you receive any phone calls from anyone demanding your personal information – your pin number, address, or social security number for example – hang up because you're being subjected to a scam.

Due to the current public health crisis, we also urge you to be on high alert for door-to-door scammers who may try to pose as government officials offering information on stimulus checks, unemployment benefits or other programs and services in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to [visit our consumer protection page](#) to access useful resources aimed to educate you on scams and how to protect yourself.



## COVID-19

From all of us, we hope you're staying safe during this time of uncertainty and loss.

We all must work together to slow the spread of COVID-19 and while it can be challenging at times, we know that we will get through this.

To access a host of resources, do not hesitate to visit [mi.gov/coronavirus](https://mi.gov/coronavirus).

## STAY CONNECTED

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and the Elder Abuse Task Force thank you for your continued support in combatting Elder Abuse.

Please [visit the elder abuse page](#) for information, [subscribe here for updates](#) from the task force and [sign up here](#) to express your interest in the "Court Watchers" program.

For Questions:  
800-24-ABUSE (22873)  
[mi.gov/elderabuse](https://mi.gov/elderabuse)



To Report:  
855-444-3911  
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