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DISTRICT ATTORNEY GASCÓN LAUNCHES CITYWIDE ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN
SFDA and Institute on Aging Team Up to Increase Reporting of Abuse of Growing Senior Population

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – District Attorney George Gascón announced today the launch of a citywide, multilingual elder abuse prevention campaign in partnership with the Institute on Aging and the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center.

"Making sure that the public knows how to access support and services for seniors in need, is an important step in the fight against elder abuse," said District Attorney George Gascón. "We have marshaled resources from local and federal sources to produce this campaign because keeping our seniors out of harm's way is the responsibility of the entire community. With San Francisco's growing population of seniors living on their own, we have to take these important steps to protect them from predators."

San Francisco has one of the highest concentrations of seniors living independently, and is home to an increasingly aging population. In fact, San Francisco's elderly population –people aged 60 and over – is expected to grow up to 100 percent by the year 2020. These older adults include a high concentration of non-English speaking seniors, a higher than average percentage of individuals with disabilities, and persons living with AIDS.

The provocative new campaign ads feature the tag line, "Our Golden Years Shouldn't Be Black and Blue," and include statistics about the growing rate of elder abuse. The public service ads offer step-by-step instructions for reporting elder abuse.

The public service campaign will be concentrated in transit shelters and on MUNI buses over the next eight weeks. Specifically, it will be comprised of 150 interior bus cards, 60 bus tails and 50 bus shelter ads. Additionally, campaign posters will be provided to public and non-profit partners for wider distribution. The ads are being run in English, Spanish and Chinese.

The total cost of the two-month, citywide campaign is less than \$20,000. Funding for the campaign is being provided by the Institute on Aging and a \$300,000, two-year grant from the United States Department of Justice that was secured by the San Francisco District Attorney's Office in 2009 to enhance its elder abuse education, prevention and prosecution efforts.

The public service campaign being launched is part of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office's ongoing work to prevent and prosecute crimes against seniors. The San Francisco District Attorney's Office handles elder abuse cases involving both financial crimes and physical abuse against seniors. In 2010, the District Attorney's Office handled 81 cases of financial and physical elder abuse, conducted 17 outreach seminars with seniors and seven training sessions related to elder physical and financial abuse.

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To best serve seniors impacted by these two distinct forms of crime, District Attorney Gascón recently streamlined the handling of elder abuse cases by the District Attorney's Office as part of an office-wide reorganization. Physical abuse cases involving seniors will be handled by the Family Violence Unit and financial abuse cases, which include a range of crimes from mortgage and real estate fraud to annuity scams, will be handled by the Economic Crimes Unit of the White Collar Division. The shift will increase the District Attorney's Office's capacity to handle crimes against seniors.

Additionally, since 2008 the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, The Institute on Aging, the San Francisco Police Department and the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services, a division of the Human Services Agency, which operates Adult Protective Services (APS) for the county have been partners in the San Francisco Elder Forensic Center. With a combination of private and City funding secured by the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and the Institute on Aging, the Elder Forensic Center brings these agencies together to prevent delays and gaps in service coordination, evidence collection and criminal investigation that could otherwise negatively effect the outcome for victims of abuse.

The Elder Forensic Center allows San Francisco to leverage the resources of these key agencies to address the unique challenges and characteristics of criminal and non-criminal cases of elder abuse and neglect to ensure that seniors in need receive rapid access to services and prompt resolution to their cases. Since its inception, the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center has reviewed approximately 300 complex cases of elder and dependent adult abuse, doubling the number of referrals to the District Attorney's Office's.

Elder abuse is a unique crime in that it often involves a senior being victimized repeatedly by a family member or caregiver. It is estimated that over 61 percent of elder abuse cases, the abusers are family members of the victim, 37 percent of abusers are adult children, 13 percent are spouses and other relatives account for 11 percent of abuse. 90 percent of reported cases involve repeat offenses. Yet these statistics give only a glimpse of the magnitude of the problem. San Francisco's Adult Protective Services estimates that a majority of elder abuse cases go unreported.

In California, the Attorney General estimates that 200,000 seniors are victims of abuse each year. Nationally, elder abuse may involve as many as 5 million seniors, with 84 percent of all cases going unreported.

The newly launched campaign encourages all people to report any suspected abuse against a senior. This can be done anonymously by calling 415-355-6700.

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