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—*For Immediate Release*

Department for the Aging Recognizes 2nd Annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence joins DFTA in effort to raise awareness of elder abuse; conference planned to educate providers

NEW YORK, NY – June 15, 2007 – Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today issued a proclamation declaring the day “International Elder Abuse Awareness Day in New York City.” Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW, in collaboration with Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez, recognized World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and its theme *Moving Forward*, as a way to raise awareness around the critical issues of elder abuse, neglect and abuse prevention in New York City. The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) launched the day last year in New York City to increase awareness around the often underreported and highly stigmatized issue of elder abuse. DFTA estimates that there are 50,000 cases of elder abuse each year in New York City, however only a fraction of these are reported to the New York City Police Department.

“Every year thousands of seniors suffer at the hands of abuse and unfortunately the abuse—in any of its many forms—is rarely reported to the police,” Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW. “Elder abuse is one of this city’s most underreported crimes and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day offers the City’s two lead agencies the ability to spread the word about the services and education opportunities available to older New Yorkers, caregivers and family members.”

DFTA’s Elderly Crime Victims Resource Center provides elder abuse and crime victim intervention services to older New Yorkers residing throughout the city’s five boroughs. Utilizing the Center’s bilingual staff, the Department directly, and through a network of community-based agencies, provides counseling, crisis intervention, home security device installation, court accompaniment, and legal and supportive services. The Department also provides free elder abuse and crime prevention trainings to seniors, aging professionals, and the general public so that individuals are able to recognize elder mistreatment and facilitate appropriate interventions. The Department has also created a model training curriculum that provides targeted instruction for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and relevant court officers to enhance their ability to recognize, address, investigate, and prosecute the crime of abuse, financial exploitation, and domestic violence among the elderly and the disabled.

DFTA has also established an Elder Abuse Prevention Network for New York City (NYCEAPN). The Network was formed out of a nucleus of agencies that indicated a strong desire to expand and strengthen their activities in the area of elder abuse. The network includes law enforcement personnel, district attorneys, city agencies, academic institutions, not-for-profit providers of victim services as well as support services to the elderly, financial service providers, ethnic and cultural associations

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serving minority and immigrant populations, and other interested community professionals. The Elder Abuse Prevention Network serves as the focal point in New York City for team consultation on difficult and multi-problem cases, advocacy and legislative initiatives, training, public awareness and prevention campaigns, as well as systems coordination and services integration.

Additionally, the Department is currently developing a training program for bank tellers, brokers, and New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) members on the signs and symptoms of elder financial abuse. It is also partnering with the US Department of the Treasury in its Go Direct campaign which encourages seniors to use direct deposit for all their entitlement checks, in order to reduce financial exploitation and abuse. DFTA works closely with public agencies in all five boroughs on elder abuse prevention programs, including the NYC Police Department's Domestic Violence Office and the Crime Prevention Office, the Borough District Attorneys, Adult Protective Services, and the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence.

OCDV's New York City Family Justice Center, a private/public partnership with daily collaboration between nonprofit organizations and government agencies, has recently established the Civil Elder Abuse Program in Brooklyn. This program enables elder victims of abuse to initially petition for Civil Family Court Order of Protection without leaving their homes or the comfort and security of the New York City Family Justice Center. Social workers conduct home visits and complete the necessary paperwork; the papers are filed electronically; and the elder victim "appears" in court via telephone.

"World Elder Abuse Day is a strong reminder that domestic violence does not discriminate," said Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez. "Our City is working to help stop the cycle of violence and give a voice to older New Yorkers who are victims of this often unrecognized crime. By creating a strong network of dedicated community and government organizations that provide vital services to our most vulnerable residents, we are working to create safer, more livable communities for all our residents."

Elder abuse encompasses several forms of mistreatment of older persons, including physical, emotional/psychological, and sexual abuse, as well as acts of exploitation, neglect and abandonment. Elder abuse is exhibited in many ways and can include name calling, hitting and bruising, sexual coercion, threatening or controlling behavior, and the failure to carry out caretaking responsibility such as withholding food and medicine. According to the most recent estimates, between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited or otherwise mistreated by someone they are dependent on for care or protection.

Because of the nature of elder abuse, its actual level of occurrence and prevalence is vastly underreported. Social isolation and mental impairment, such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease, are two factors increase vulnerability to various forms of abuse. Public education and awareness are important elements in preventing abuse and neglect, including educating older New Yorkers on how to recognize risk factors and providing them with information on resources available to them.

Statistics on Elder Abuse:

- It is estimated that only 1 in 14 victims of elder abuse report the abuse to authorities.
- DFTA's Elderly Crime Victims Resource Center and its network see approximately 1700 clients a year.
- Almost 50 percent of the clients referred to the Department's Resource Center are victims of financial abuse.
- In 2006, eleven percent (8 out of 71) of all family-related homicides during 2006 involved a victim over the age of 59.

- The New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Domestic Violence Unit reported that in 2001, out of 163,498 domestic incidents on record, 4,109, or 2.5 percent were incidents of elder abuse.

Help is also available 24-hours-a-day to victims by calling 911, 311, or the New York City Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-621-HOPE (4673). More information is also available on OCDV's website at www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence.

DFTA will co-sponsor an educational conference in recognition of this important day:

Breaking Down Barriers! Elder Abuse: Addressing Financial Exploitation Through Partnerships: June 19th, 2007 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., New School University, Institute for Retired Professionals

The conference is designed to help professionals from the legal, financial, medical and social work communities address the complex the problems and emerging issues related to elder abuse. Among the topics that will be addressed are effective interventions, challenges faced in identifying financially abused seniors, how to treat abusers and financial literacy.

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