

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OLDER PEOPLE AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES
AT RISK OF ABUSE DURING PANDEMIC**

Washington DC – With nearly everyone isolated at home during the coronavirus pandemic, many older adults and younger adults with disabilities may be even more vulnerable to being victims of abuse, neglect and/or financial exploitation by family members or others with access to them (or their funds). During this time, mandated reporters of abuse such as in-home care workers, medical providers and bank personnel are not available to observe and report suspected maltreatment to Adult Protective Services (APS), the first line responders to maltreatment of older persons and younger adults with disabilities. Also, many families are experiencing extreme emotional and financial stress which too may increase the risk of neglect or financial abuse.

This situation makes it particularly important for family members, neighbors and friends to be especially vigilant and to report any suspected physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect or self-neglect of essential care needs, and misuse of an older person's or younger adult with disabilities' funds or property to APS.

Although you may not be able visit in person, you can keep in close contact through telephone calls or other means like Skype or Zoom, if available to you and your loved ones. If you have any reason to suspect abuse, try to talk to the older person or adult with disabilities alone, if possible, and ask them direct questions such as:

**Are they are afraid of anyone?*

**Is anyone asking them to do things they're not comfortable with?*

**Is anyone taking things without their permission?*

**Is anyone humiliating them?'*

Adult Protective Services (APS) operates under state law in every state to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of adults with disabilities and older persons. The programs continue to operate during this crisis. You can find APS in your area here: www.napsa-now.org/get-help/help-in-your-area/. The National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) is APS' national membership organization.

We don't want to protect our loved ones from the coronavirus only to make it easier for them to be mistreated in other serious ways. Make it your priority to check on them frequently and to report any suspicions you have that they may be being abused.

Be sure to stay physically isolated but socially connected!

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ⁱQuestions adapted from Ageless Alliance's 2019 Holiday Message (www.agelessalliance.org)