



Left to Suffer: Minnesota Can Do Better

The Star Tribune series “Left to Suffer” published November 12-16 provided a troubling look into elder abuse in Minnesota’s formal, licensed settings as well as inconsistencies in systems designed to investigate reported instances of maltreatment. Maltreatment of vulnerable adults—whether abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation—is unacceptable and Minnesotans must do more to address this issue. Sadly, elder abuse and maltreatment occurs in every community in Minnesota, and not just in formal, licensed settings like nursing homes. In fact, national studies show nearly 60% of reported maltreatment of older adults is perpetrated by a family member.

By recognizing that elder abuse and maltreatment are community-wide problems that occur wherever older adults reside, we can craft policies that increase prevention of elder abuse and neglect and hold perpetrators and systems accountable. This work cannot be done in piecemeal fashion and it will take all of us working together. Older Minnesotans, families and caregivers, advocates, regulators, law enforcement, lawmakers and providers all have a stake in crafting solutions and prevention strategies to ensure zero tolerance for elder abuse.

The Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging applauds and supports Governor Dayton’s call for a Task Force on Vulnerable Adult Maltreatment. This is an important step in acknowledging this long-standing, serious statewide issue and will be an important component in developing comprehensive reforms to support older Minnesotans. We hope that the work of this Task Force will be integrated with the work of other current initiatives that are underway to improve the state’s responsiveness to maltreatment complaints and to prevent vulnerable adult maltreatment.

While this will be difficult work, time is of the essence. We urge lawmakers to prioritize the protection of vulnerable adults as a top priority in the coming legislative session. This may be one of the few issues that transcends partisan divides. Minnesota seniors deserve to live life with dignity, meaning and purpose and free of maltreatment. Let’s work together to ensure that this vision is reality for our aging population.

Beth Wiggins
Council Chair

Rajean P. Moone
Executive Director