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For Immediate Release

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# District Attorney Summer Stephan Forms New ‘Elder Protection Council’ to Protect County’s Aging Population

## *Part of Coordinated Response to Increase in Crimes Against Seniors*

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) today announced the formation and first meeting of an Elder Protection Council, a private/public collaboration designed to raise awareness, enhance prevention and improve protection for San Diego County’s elder population.

**“Our society will be judged on how we treat our most vulnerable, including our children and our seniors,” said District Attorney Summer Stephan. “With this countywide initiative, we’re proactively responding to an increase in elder abuse crime as this population continues to grow.”**

According to a recent SANDAG report, violent crimes against San Diego residents 60 years of age and older increased by 20 percent last year. The report shows there were 838 crimes against seniors including 13 homicides, 25 rapes, 210 robberies, and 590 aggravated assaults in 2017.

Additional research showed that while the increase may be due to the growing number of 60-year-old residents in our region -- up 20% percent -- it was not the sole reason. Seniors are targeted because they are less likely to report a crime against them.

The Council is comprised of representatives from San Diego County Health and Human Services, the District Attorney’s Elder Abuse and Economic Crimes Divisions, the San Diego City Attorney and California Attorney General’s Offices, local law enforcement, concerned corporate partners as well as a large cross section of community based groups dedicated to elder care and protection. The Council will meet every four months to discuss emerging issues and marshal its collective resources to address the ongoing countywide elder concerns.

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Responding to the increase in elder abuse crimes and prosecutions, as well as the impending explosion of the elder population, the District Attorney brought together countywide stakeholders in November of last year for a first-ever “think-tank” of experts, including professionals from all disciplines that serve as touchpoints for elder and dependent adults. Those experts identified gaps and needs in our community, and set goals for the future which resulted in the creation of an Elder Abuse Blueprint. The Blueprint commits San Diego County to a written set of goals and a coordinated community response to elder and dependent adult abuse, including model practices and response by law enforcement, prosecution and others.

In San Diego County, almost 23 percent of the population is projected to be over age 65 by the year 2050, which is a 10 percent increase from 2015. With the older population increasing, elder abuse is also on the rise.

Adult Protective Services has continued to receive an increased number of referrals from fiscal years 2014 to 2017. They received 14,741 referrals in fiscal year 2016-2017 and handled 9,872 cases. Financial abuse was the most common form of abuse seen in their confirmed cases, followed by mental suffering and physical abuse.

The new Elder Abuse Blueprint is a coordinated response from agencies that serve and protect elders. The document includes best-practice guidelines for dispatchers, first responders, follow-up investigators, prosecutors, and every agency in between. It also takes into consideration the various health-challenges, such as Alzheimer’s or other related disorders and/or cultural issues facing our San Diego aging population.

Anyone can report elder or dependent abuse or neglect, this may include physical, sexual, and financial abuse, mental suffering, neglect or abandonment by another, and self-neglect. You can report elder or dependent abuse to Adult Protective Services at (800) 510-2020, or your local police department.

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