



NEWS RELEASE

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WISE & Healthy Aging, Long Beach Police Department Launch Collaborative Holistic Elder Abuse Response Team

HEART program is first in L.A. County to address gaps in services to victims of elder abuse

SANTA MONICA (Aug. 31, 2016) – According to the [National Center on Elder Abuse](#), an estimated 5 million older Americans are the victims of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation every year. Worse, experts believe that for every case that is reported, as many as 23 go unreported.

[WISE & Healthy Aging](#) and the Long Beach Police Department are partnering to launch the first program in Los Angeles County to address gaps in the services that are currently available to elder abuse victims. The Holistic Elder Abuse Response Team (HEART) will serve older adults who live in L.A. County – focusing on those who live in Long Beach -- and who have experienced one or more types of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional, financial, abandonment or neglect by a caregiver.

The HEART program will provide comprehensive services for survivors of elder abuse and for elders who may be at risk for re-victimization. Because this is a client-centered program, services will be provided wherever needed – in an elder’s home, care facility or other convenient meeting place, in a domestic violence shelter, at the Long Beach Police Department or even in a hospital if necessary.

“The focus of this program is to provide support for elders who are already vulnerable,” said Grace Cheng Braun, president and CEO of WISE & Healthy Aging. “We strive to make it as easy as possible for elders to access the services they need to recover after living through abusive situations.”

These services include crisis de-escalation, safety planning, and connecting the elder with the appropriate services and agencies that can assist with basic needs such as health, nutrition, housing and transportation. For example, if the victimized elder is in a long-term care facility, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, also administered by WISE & Healthy Aging, will provide victim advocacy services as part of the HEART program.

In addition, HEART advocates provide practical support by:

- Offering help with completing paperwork such as restraining orders and victim impact statements
- Helping victims seek compensation benefits directly or when appropriate, referring them to the Los Angeles district attorney’s Bureau of Victim Services
- Accompanying elder victims to criminal justice offices and court
- Arranging transportation to court when needed

(more)

Once an elder's safety and basic needs have been met, the HEART advocate will work with him or her to develop short and long-term care plans that are customized to that person's needs and comfort levels. Beyond the initial intervention, assessment and planning, the program offers individual therapeutic counseling sessions.

"We recognize the importance of working with our community partners to maximize effectiveness in the community," stated Long Beach Police Chief Robert Luna. "This newly developed partnership with WISE & Healthy Aging, will enable us to increase the level of services to the senior community and will enhance our ability to provide support to the vulnerable and innocent victims of elder abuse."

Funding for the HEART program is provided by the California Office of Emergency Services and through the Victims of Crime Act. For more information, please call (310) 394-9871 or visit us online at www.wiseandhealthyaging.org.

For more information, call (562)570-5919

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ABOUT WISE & Healthy Aging

WISE & Healthy Aging is the result of the 2007 merger of WISE Senior Services and the Center for Healthy Aging. With a combined 70 years' experience serving older adults, the nonprofit organization brings together a synergy of services, information, programs and support for seniors, those who care for them and the professionals who work with them.

In addition to In-Home Care Management Services, WISE & Healthy Aging provides: a **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** to protect the rights of seniors and dependent adults in more than 1,800 licensed skilled and assisted living facilities throughout LA County; an **Adult Day Service Center** for isolated and frail elderly, including supportive services for caregivers; a **Mental Health Services Program** with individual and group therapy, physician-supervised medication and senior-to-senior peer counseling; a **Nutrition Services Program** that serves hot meals through five congregate meal sites and delivers meals to seniors in their homes; a **Financial Services Program** that provides education, counseling and tax preparation; and a **Transportation & Mobility Program** offering information, education, driver safety classes and transportation services.