



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Eirich  
*County Executive*

Victoria Buckland  
*Acting Director*

May 16, 2019

The Honorable Lourdes R. Padilla  
Department of Human Resources Saratoga State Center  
311 West Saratoga Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3500

Dear Secretary Padilla:

Nearly one in every five Marylanders calls Montgomery County home. Situated in the heart of Maryland, it is one of the most unique counties in the country, covering more than 500 square miles, with densely populated communities such as Bethesda and Silver Spring and more rural pockets such as Poolesville and Damascus. This diversity is also seen in Montgomery County's ever-increasing population-the County has a population in excess of one million people. Nearly 15% of Montgomery County residents are 65 years of age or older and 2.1% are age 85 or older. Older adults are expected to be approximately 20% of our population by 2030. This has created many opportunities and challenges for our Community.

At the December 3, 2015 "County Executive's Summit on Aging in Montgomery County," the County was designated an Age-Friendly Community by WHO/AARP. One of the domains Montgomery County has chosen to focus on in its mission to be an age-friendly community is educating all residents about the existence of elder abuse in order to prevent and/or remedy its occurrence.

As noted above the County's older adult population is expected to grow and with this growth we also expect to see an increase in crimes against older adults. In addition, we expect an above average increase in our 85+ population. This signifies a potentially higher risk for elder abuse because one in every three people over the age of 85 has moderate to severe memory impairment thereby increasing their risk for exploitation. Along with the growth in the 85+ population, other emerging trends that could cause higher numbers of elder abuse cases in Montgomery County are the one-third of Montgomery County residents who are foreign born; a decline in the lack of traditional safety nets such as pensions; a decline in traditional social supports; and, increased family mobility. All these demographic trends coincide with national efforts to increase awareness of elder abuse. The *New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study*

Office of the Director

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from 2011 found that only 1 in 44 financial exploitation cases are ever reported to Adult Protective Services (APS) or other investigative agencies.

The Federal Government and the National Center on Elder Abuse agree that elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation are under-reported crimes and that the increased awareness may contribute to higher Adult Protective Services case volume.

As of April 2019, Montgomery County Adult Protective Services has investigated over 1,000 elder/vulnerable adult abuse cases, serving more than 2,000 clients. We project an 18% increase in fiscal year 2019 alone and saw an 11.4% increase in APS investigations last fiscal year. By comparison, the Adult Protective Services (APS) Investigation unit assessed 592 vulnerable adults in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. This is nearly a doubling of investigations in the last seven years. There has been an even more dramatic increase in the number of APS investigations involving financial exploitation - from 16% of our cases in 2012 to 35% of cases in FY19. These financial exploitation investigations are significantly more time and resource-consuming allegations to assess.

The increase in financial exploitation cases can be linked to the passage of the Mandated Fiduciary Institutional Reporting Law of 2012. However, the law passed in 2012 as an unfunded mandate. In the Public Guardianship program, from FY12 to FY19, there has been a 60% increase in guardianship cases. The number of court cases involving financial exploitation has more than doubled since FY13 - with an average of nearly 25 successful guardianship of property cases filed annually.

As noted above, the growth in our Adult Protective Services cases in the past seven years has been exponential and now the impact on our staff and operations has been quite severe. We have set new records for APS investigations in a month twice this fiscal year and are on a pace to break the record again this year. Based on the demographics and other social trends we only expect these numbers to grow over the next five years. We have managed all the growth with essentially the same number of APS and Guardianship staff and no increase in funding from the State.

The current and expected case growth is unsustainable without support. We believe without additional funding for APS and Guardianship cases the County will be forced to make tough decisions-deciding between preventative programs, maintaining case quality, and focusing on only the most severe cases. We would prefer to work closely with you to add funding for new APS Social Worker positions in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2021 budget for Montgomery County.

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We are highly supportive of your initiative to modernize technology in our service delivery, and we value our partnership. We sincerely hope that this effort will result in the recognition of and the right sizing of staffing and funding for Adult Services and Adult Protective Services in Montgomery County and across the State of Maryland.

Please contact me if I can provide additional information or assist in any way.

Sincerely,

Victoria Buckland  
Acting Director

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c: Dorinda Adams, Office of Adult Services, DHS  
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