Pennsylvania
Department of Aging

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Shapiro Administration Hosts Elder Law Clinic with Attorney General, AARP Highlighting Ways Older Adults Can Protect their Rights, Finances

'Know Your Rights, Protect Your Future' event featured expert-led discussions with practical information about powers of attorney, guardianship and financial exploitation

Attendees met one-on-one with lawyers and received pro bono legal advice

Philadelphia, PA – More than 50 older Pennsylvanians on Wednesday in Philadelphia attended an elder law clinic co-hosted by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA), Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General and AARP Pennsylvania at Drexel University's Thomas R. Kline School of Law, where attendees received expert advice and tips on how to protect their rights, finances and wishes as they age.

The event, titled "Powers of Attorney: Know Your Rights, Protect Your Future," featured sessions on powers of attorney (POA), guardianship, financial exploitation and decision-making capacity. Older adults heard about how POAs work and the importance of choosing someone trustworthy; when and why guardianship is used and how it operates to protect the rights of older adults; warning signs of how exploitation may be happening under a POA, and steps individuals can take to protect themselves.

"The Department of Aging is committed to ensuring older Pennsylvanians know their rights and have the information they need to make legal decisions that protect their financial interests and quality of life," said **PDA Secretary Jason Kavulich.** "Protecting older adults requires a coordinated approach that draws expertise across multiple sectors. We're grateful to be able to collaborate with tremendous partners in law enforcement, education and advocacy to help older adults understand their legal options and navigate them successfully."

PDA in its most recent annual report on protective services listed financial exploitation as the number one form of alleged elder abuse in Pennsylvania. The report shows

financial exploitation accounted for one out of every three alleged cases of elder abuse in the Commonwealth. The report further documented that financial exploitation accounts for one out of every five substantiated cases of elder abuse in Pennsylvania.

“Since its creation one year ago, our Elder Exploitation Section has worked alongside partners like AARP and the Department of Aging to strengthen protections and raise awareness of financial exploitation,” **Pennsylvania Attorney General Dave Sunday** said. “Collaboration and events like today’s are vital to educating older Pennsylvanians, preventing abuse and ensuring they have the resources to protect themselves and their financial futures.”

The elder law clinic took place exactly one year after OAG launched its new elder exploitation section to expand protections for older Pennsylvanians.

“Every Pennsylvanian deserves to have their choices respected and their financial security protected as they age,” said **Bill Johnston-Walsh, state director of AARP Pennsylvania**. “AARP is committed to helping people understand powers of attorney so they can protect their independence and plan ahead with confidence.”

In addition to older Pennsylvanians, the clinic also welcomed elder law attorneys, who were able to earn up to three free continuing legal education (CLE) credits.

After the sessions ended, more than a dozen attorneys met one-on-one with and provided pro bono legal guidance to older Pennsylvanians who attended.

“The Drexel Kline School of Law is extremely pleased to co-sponsor and host this event. Elder law is a critical area of legal practice,” said **Dean Daniel Filler**. “We are excited to play a part in ensuring these services are available to members of our community.”

Pennsylvanians who want to learn more about powers of attorney, guardianship, financial exploitation and other elder law matters are encouraged to visit the PDA website or the OAG website.

Pennsylvanians who believe they have or a loved one has been the victim of financial exploitation are encouraged to call the toll-free, **statewide elder abuse helpline at 1-800-490-8505**. The helpline operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week. They also are encouraged to call the **OAG’s toll-free helpline at 1-866-623-2137** or visit its website to fill out and submit an online elder abuse complaint.

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