

# Elder Abuse in King County: What It Is, and What We Can Do About It

Page Ulrey and Amanda Froh  
Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys  
King County PAO

Presentation at the Seattle City Council Lunch and Learn  
July 12, 2018

# Who We Are and What We Do

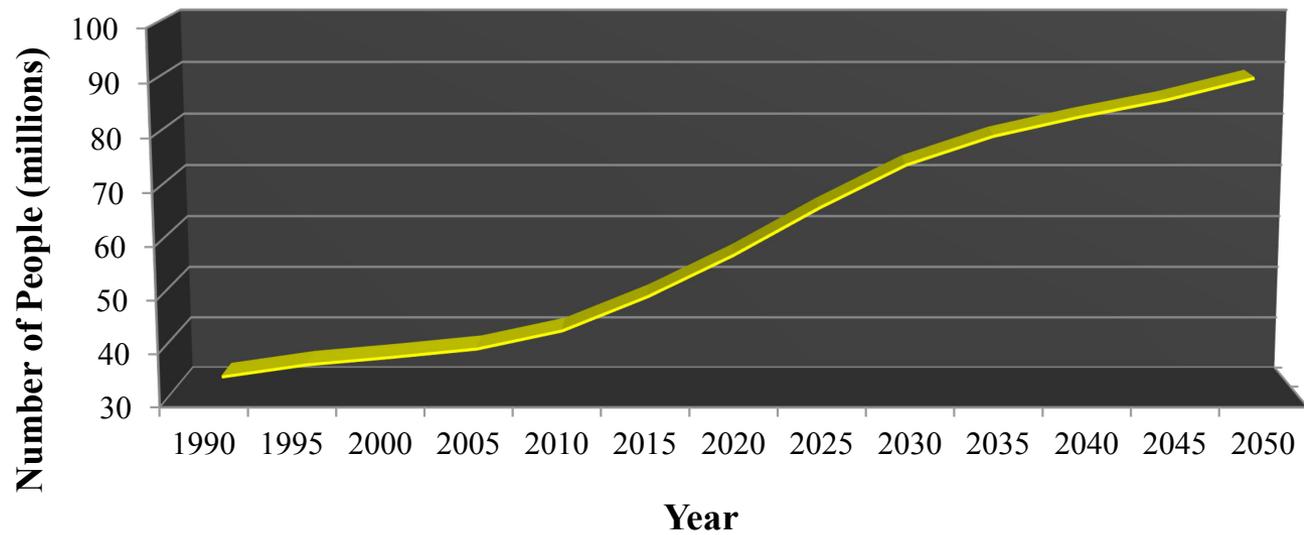
# KCPAO

## Elder Abuse Project

- Formed in 2001 by Norm Maleng to prosecute cases of vulnerable adult financial exploitation, neglect, sexual assault, and homicide
- Two full-time deputy prosecutors file and prosecute cases, respond to inquiries from law enforcement, APS, and the public
- Trains first responders, medical community, social service providers, and the public
- Works to improve systemic response to vulnerable adult abuse

# Elder Abuse is a Growing Problem...

# U.S. POPULATION AGE 65 AND OLDER IS ON THE RISE



Source:

Slide courtesy of Life Long Justice

From 1 to 2 million Americans aged 65 or over have been harmed by a caretaker in a domestic or institutional setting.

--National Research Council

Nearly 1 in 5 elders has been the victim of financial abuse.

--Investor Protection Trust

Seniors lose a total of approximately \$36 billion per year to financial exploitation

--True Link Report on Elder Financial Abuse

On average, an individual victim loses \$120,300

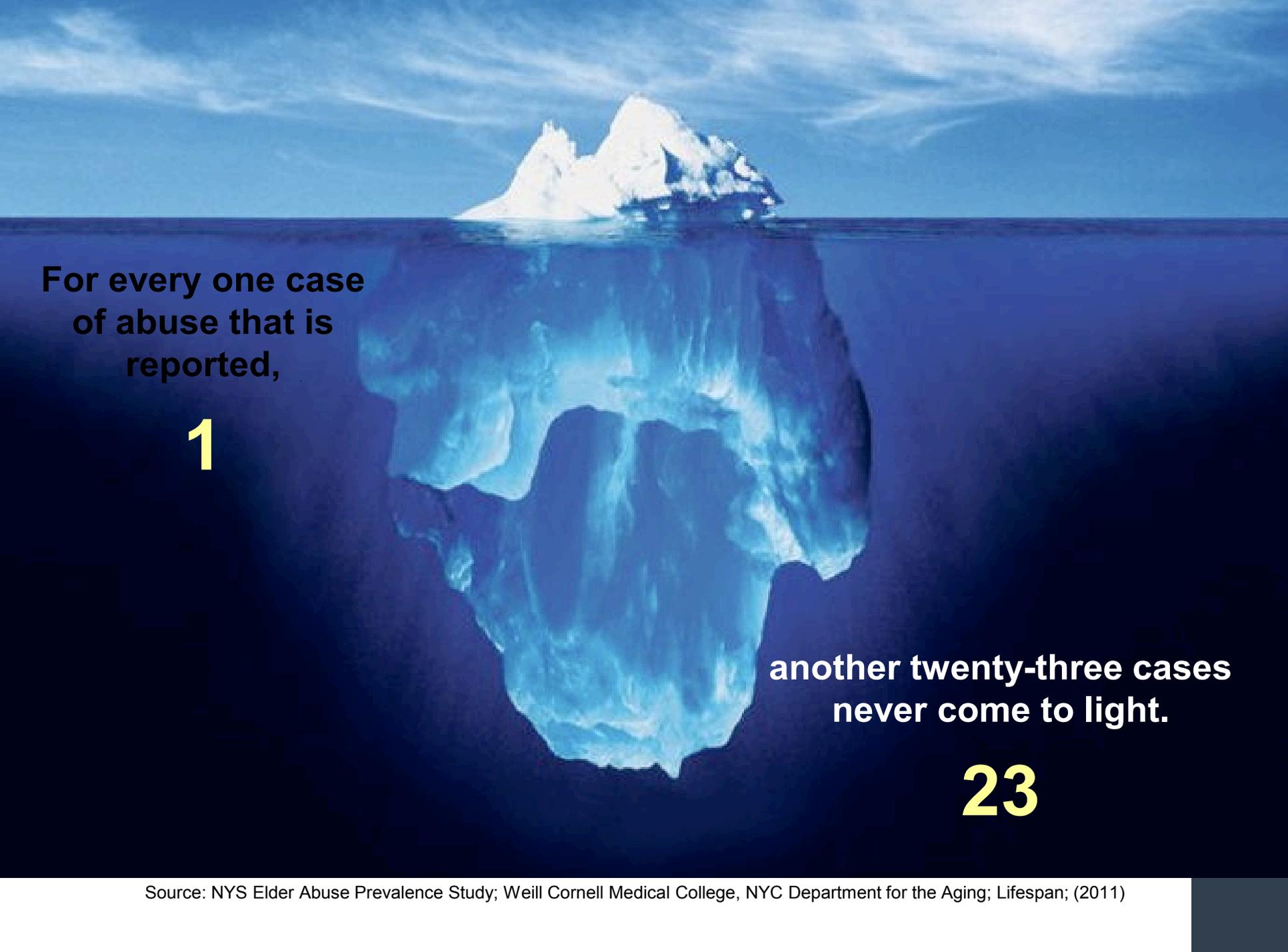
--AARP BankSafe Initiative: A Comprehensive Approach to Better Serving and Protecting Consumers

# In King County

- In 2014, Adult Protective Services (APS) reported a 48% increase in reports of allegations of vulnerable adult (VA) abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation over the previous 5 years
- In 2017, over 11,000 allegations were reported to APS in Region 2 (includes King County). Nearly 30% of them were for financial exploitation\*

\*Estimated numbers based on data from first six months of 2017

It's Often Hidden. . .



For every one case  
of abuse that is  
reported,

**1**

another twenty-three cases  
never come to light.

**23**



**For every one case  
of elder financial  
exploitation that is  
reported,**

**1**

**another forty-three cases  
never come to light.**

**43**

# Elder Abuse Cases are Complicated

# Elder Abuse Cases are Complicated

- Involve issues such as:
  - Cognitive capacity
  - Guardianships
  - Powers of Attorney
  - Undue influence
- Require obtaining and interpreting records
  - Medical
  - Financial
  - Mental health

# Elder Abuse Cases are Complicated

- Elders who have been abused or exploited have many needs, such as:
  - Housing
  - Credit repair
  - In-home medical care or aid
  - Protection orders
  - Finance management

# In King County

- Of the 39 police agencies in King County, only the Seattle Police Department has an elder abuse unit (3 detectives, a sergeant, and an advocate). Most of the rest are largely untrained and ill-equipped to effectively respond to these cases.

# In King County

- The lack of trained patrol officers, and trained and dedicated detectives results in:
  - Cases often being closed due to the incorrect conclusion they are “civil” rather than criminal
  - No referrals being made to other agencies
  - Poor coordination with Adult Protective Services
  - The abuse, neglect, or exploitation continuing unchecked

# When the Abuse Goes Unchecked, Victims Often Lose:

- Their life savings
- Their assets
- Their good credit
- Their housing
- Their lives
  - Abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of the elderly increase their risk of premature death by 300%.

--Mark Lachs, MD

# A Case Example



# Case Example

- Margaret Martin
  - Mid 80s
  - Husband, son dead
- Meets Lambards in church
- Taken advantage of by multiple members of Lambard family
- Katie Lambard becomes caregiver
- “Adopted” by Katie and husband Michael



# Case Example

- Katie obtains Margaret’s “consent” to transfer accounts to Michael’s bank
- Katie and Michael make countless withdrawals, transfers from Margaret’s accounts
- Attempt to buy 2 cars—but dealer reports
- Subsequently buy 3 new cars from different dealer
- Over span of one year, drain Margaret’s \$350,000 estate

# Case Example

- After learning of thefts, Margaret moves to care facility, dies shortly thereafter
- Evidence showed Margaret's consent obtained through undue influence:
  - Lies told her by defendants
  - Isolation
  - Extreme dependence on defendants
- Defendants charged with multiple counts of Theft

# Case Example

- Eventually drain all of Margaret's \$350,000+ in assets
- Margaret moves to care facility, dies shortly thereafter
- Katie and Michael are charged with numerous counts of felony Theft
- Plead guilty to 9 felony counts
- Sentenced to 33 months in prison
- Restitution ordered, will likely never be repaid

# What's typical about this case?

- Victim was isolated, dependent on perpetrators
- Victim trusted, loved perpetrators
- Victim lost all of her assets to perpetrators
- Victim did not report exploitation
- Exploitation resulted in victim moving into long-term care facility
- Case wasn't referred to prosecutor's office until long after it had occurred
- Victim died not long after discovering exploitation

What Can We Do To Better  
Respond to These Cases?

# Vulnerable Adult Abuse Protocol Development

- RCW 74.34.320
- New statute passed in 2017
- Encourages prosecutor's offices statewide to develop a written protocol for the response to criminal cases involving vulnerable adults

# Vulnerable Adult Abuse Protocol Development

- Brings stakeholders to the table
- Addresses coordination of agency responses
- Permits sharing of confidential information
- Encourages development of multidisciplinary teams

# King County Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team

# Elder Abuse MDTs: Planning for the Future\*

“... The hidden power and success of multi-disciplinary teams is that they insist we constantly connect, in a real and deliberate way.”

--Joy Solomon, Esq.

\* Publication of the NYC Elder Abuse Center, Risa Breckman, Jean Callahan, and Joy Solomon, located at [https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Elder\\_Abuse\\_MDTs\\_Planning\\_for\\_the\\_Future\\_Final.pdf](https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Elder_Abuse_MDTs_Planning_for_the_Future_Final.pdf)

# Our Vision for an Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team

- In-Kind Team  
Members

- Prosecutors/Staff
- KCSO Detective
- APS Investigator
- ADS Case  
Manager/Advocate  
(partial)

- Funded Team  
Members

- MDT Coordinator
- Forensic Accountant
- Capacity Evaluator
- Geriatrician

# Our Vision for an Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Proposed to be partially funded through the King County Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy beginning 2019
- Will serve as a valuable resource to law enforcement, vulnerable adult service providers, and citizens throughout King County
- Will serve vulnerable adults as well as the elderly

# Our Vision for an Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Built-in Elements for Success:
  - Strong Support of the City, County, and the Community
  - Housed in the PAO
  - Professional MDT Coordinator
  - Dedicated Partner Agencies
  - History of Connection and Collaboration

# Our Vision for an Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Anticipated Outcomes:
  - More coordinated and effective response to cases
  - More cases reported, and thus more victims identified and provided services
  - More offenders held accountable

# Our Vision for an Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Anticipated Outcomes:
  - Increased capacity to provide training and assistance to King County law enforcement and other involved agencies
  - Increased accountability of all involved agencies
  - The MDT will be a place to which professionals and the community can turn for help

Questions?

# Feel Free to Contact Us:

- **Amanda Froh**

King County PAO

(206) 477-1872

[Amanda.froh@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Amanda.froh@kingcounty.gov)

- **Page Ulrey**

King County PAO

(206) 477-1943

[Page.ulrey@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Page.ulrey@kingcounty.gov)