



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

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New Resource Guide Addresses Complex Issues Surrounding Elder Abuse and Neglect

NEW YORK – Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Edwina G. Mendelson and Joy Solomon, Director and Managing Attorney for The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale, today announced the release of the Elder Justice Resource Guide, a user-friendly tool designed to assist judges, court personnel and others in addressing the range of issues connected to elder abuse and neglect. The Resource Guide was developed jointly by the Office for Justice Initiatives' Division of Policy and Planning, led by Judge Mendelson, and the Weinberg Center for Elder Justice, which works to foster justice and dignity for older adults. The Weinberg Center also provided funding to produce the guide.

Elder abuse, which can take the form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or financial exploitation, happens frequently and impacts older adults of all races, backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses. Financial abuse is particularly rampant with over \$36 billion annually taken from older adults nationwide.

The Resource Guide contains a bench book for judges and court personnel and other critical information, in particular, a comprehensive Elder Abuse Resource Directory that includes a list of national, state and local resources and services available in each of New York's 13 judicial districts. Other topics discussed in the Resource Guide include how to identify elder abuse and neglect, memory and other changes related to the aging process, relevant criminal and civil laws, and related benefits and entitlements for the special needs of older adults.

The Guide also offers tips on how to increase courtroom accessibility for older adults and others with special needs, including a description of New York's first "Elder-Friendly Courtroom." Located in the New York County Supreme Court-Civil Term in Manhattan, this courtroom has Braille and large print materials, magnification software, deglazed floors, a refrigerator for medications, and other features to enable older adults to more fully participate in court proceedings. Hon. Deborah Kaplan, the Administrative Judge of New York County's Supreme Court-Civil Term and Chair of the New York State Judicial Committee on Elder Justice, worked with an environmental gerontologist to create this innovative courtroom model.

In announcing the release of the Resource Guide, Judge Mendelson said, "The Office for Justice Initiatives' commitment to ensuring justice for every New Yorker includes a close examination of the complex needs of our older court users. The information and resources contained in our Elder Justice Resource Guide will go a long way toward helping judges and court users identify and respond to elder abuse moving forward. I am so grateful to Joy Solomon and all of our partners at the Weinberg Center for their countless hours of work and unwavering dedication to this project."

Ms. Solomon elaborated, “As the population of adults 65 and over continues to grow, with longer than ever life expectancies and increasing needs for support, the responsibility to address barriers to justice for older adult litigants is coming into sharp focus. As legal professionals, we do not get to choose who comes before us, but we do have the opportunity and obligation to provide a fair chance and equal access to justice to those who do. With the percentage of older adults comprising the State’s population increasing every year and the volume of cases involving older adults on the rise, the new Elder Justice Resource Guide is one of several Court System resources and programs aimed at ensuring fair access to justice for older adults.”

To view/download the Resource Guide and find more information about other Court System elder justice initiatives, go to: www.elderjustice.nycourts.gov. Any questions may be directed to elderjustice@nycourts.gov.

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