



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pennsylvania Courts Recognize International Day of Older Persons

(Harrisburg, PA) — In recognition of International Day of Older Persons on Oct. 1, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is reaffirming its commitment to protecting the rights, safety and dignity of older Pennsylvanians through the work of the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts (OEJC) and the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts (Advisory Council).

“Older Pennsylvanians are often among our most vulnerable citizens, and it is our responsibility to ensure they have access to justice and protections against abuse, neglect and financial exploitation,” said Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Debra Todd. “Through the work of the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts and our Advisory Council, we are taking meaningful steps to safeguard older adults and strengthen support systems statewide.”

The OEJC, established by the Supreme Court in 2015, provides leadership, education and resources to improve court responses to elder abuse and guardianship matters. It works with judges, court staff and community partners to identify and address the unique challenges facing older Pennsylvanians.

Supporting this mission, the Advisory Council brings together a diverse group of experts – including judges, legislators, attorneys, state agencies, and advocates – who collaborate on policies and initiatives to protect older adults. The Advisory Council advises courts on ways to enhance court procedures, promote guardianship reform and strengthen prevention and response efforts around elder abuse and financial exploitation.

Pennsylvania’s elder justice efforts have served as a model for other states, with initiatives such as:

- Launching and enhancing the Guardianship Tracking System to ensure courts have a tool to allow electronic filing of annual reports by guardians, the ability to monitor guardians effectively and the ability to capture and analyze data to improve guardianship procedures in the state.
- Expanding guardianship monitoring efforts to ensure accountability and protection for vulnerable individuals.
- Developing educational resources for judges, attorneys and court personnel to better identify and respond to elder abuse.

- Enhancing public awareness campaigns to help families recognize and prevent abuse and financial exploitation.
- Promoting alternatives to guardianship and ensuring guardianship is only used as a last resort.

“On International Day of Older Persons, we celebrate the contributions of older adults and renew our promise to protect them,” said Amy Whitworth, director of the OEJC. “Our work is about ensuring dignity, fairness and safety for all older Pennsylvanians who come before our courts.”

For more information about the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts and the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts, visit www.pacourts.us/elderjustice.

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