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**COUNTY POLICE HOSTING SPECIAL SEMINARS ON ELDER ABUSE**  
**Protecting vulnerable seniors is training's goal**

Physical or emotional abuse; theft or other fraud; mental illness or neglect. Some of Westchester's senior citizens face these harsh realities after a lifetime of hard work.

In the effort to protect the county's most vulnerable seniors, the Department of Public Safety has organized a series of seminars on elder abuse for police officers in Westchester. The training seminars, which begin today at the Westchester Police Academy in Valhalla, will help officers better identify vulnerable seniors and other adults who may be victims of crime or neglect, sometimes at the hands of their caregivers.

Topics to be covered include: a review of related criminal law; investigation and interview strategies for elder abuse cases; identifying at-risk behaviors and indicators, and referrals to outside agencies.

"Our goal is to raise awareness among law enforcement of the symptoms and characteristics of elder abuse or mental illness," Police Commissioner Thomas Belfiore said. "Sometimes the signs of abuse or neglect are obvious, sometimes they are more subtle. We want police officers in Westchester to have the best information and training on this important subject."

Maryellen Martirano, director of training for the department, said police officers will learn about government and non-profit agencies that can also assist seniors who are victims of abuse or neglect. Officers will also learn how to find help from these agencies for seniors who are having trouble properly caring for themselves as a result of frailty or mental illness.

"Caring for our seniors is a collaborative effort. We want police officers to know of all the places where help can be found for seniors who need it," she said.

"Elder and Vulnerable Adults: Abuse and Other Issues" is a day-long seminar that is a joint effort of the Department of Public Safety, the Westchester District Attorney's Office, the Westchester Department of Social Services, the Westchester Department of Senior Programs and Services, and Family Services of Westchester. The first session is today; other sessions will be Apr. 2, 16 and 30. ##.