



CENTER FOR JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 10, 2007

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Elder Abuse Forum Launches 2007 Marin Judicial Forum Series

According to the best available estimates, between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited, or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depended for care or protection.

(Elder Mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation in an Aging America. 2003. Washington, DC: National Research Council Panel to Review Risk and Prevalence of Elder Abuse and Neglect.)

SAN RAFAEL, CA- In a critical effort to stem the growing tide of elder abuse and explore best practices for addressing the problem, the **Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE)** is convening a Probate Forum, entitled ***Protecting Elders: Legal Issues***. The Forum will be held on **Thursday, January 25, 2007, from 12:00 to 1:30pm, at the San Rafael Corporate Center.**

The Probate Forum is the first in **CJE's new 2007 Judicial Forum Series** which will examine issues from each of Marin County's primary courts –including Criminal, Traffic, Family, Civil and Juvenile– to identify best practices and explore new strategies. The next Forum will focus on Juvenile court issues and is tentatively scheduled for March 2007.

“CJE is committed to finding, sharing and helping build systemic solutions and effective new ways for the Marin community and its courts to work together. Introducing innovative new court strategies is part of our community service work,” said founding board member Jean Taylor.

A host of experts knowledgeable about the legal, financial and law enforcement aspects of elder abuse issues have committed to participate in the Probate Forum. Confirmed speakers include:

- **Alameda County Superior Court Judge Julie Conger**
- **Marin Chief Deputy District Attorney Kathryn Mitchell**
- **Elder Financial Protection Network Executive Director Jenefer Duane**
- **San Francisco Civil Rights Attorney Liza de Vries**
- **Legal Aid of Marin's Executive Director Paul Cohen (Moderator)**

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Judge Julie Conger's leadership on elder abuse is widely respected within the legal and law enforcement communities. In 2005, Judge Conger and the Elder Protection Court of Alameda County won a Ralph Kleps Award from the California Judicial Council for innovative court programs that enhance access to the courts for the community. Her innovative Elder Protection Court handles all civil and criminal elder abuse cases in Alameda County. Cases involve both physical and financial abuse of persons over age 65, as well as real estate fraud matters in which seniors are victimized.

The U.S. Department of Justice just awarded several Marin County agencies a **\$450,000 three-year training grant** for local law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney, Adult Protective Services, and Probation Department staff **to identify and prevent elder abuse within Marin County.**

The aging of the Baby Boomer generation makes the abuse of elders likely to escalate. Social service organizations throughout the country have detailed appalling statistics that range from physical maltreatment to psychological and financial abuse of the elderly – often with disastrous consequences. Caught in the middle are the courts, which are charged with ensuring the rights and independence of seniors as well as protecting those same adults from fraud, abuse and other forms of exploitation.

The Forum will consist of a brief presentation by the *Center for Judicial Excellence*, 5-minute statements by Forum panelists, and a question and answer session with the audience. Forum co-sponsors include the **Marin Human Rights Commission, Gray Panthers of Marin, the Elder Financial Protection Network and the Marin Peace & Justice Coalition.**

The Forum is open to the general public. All ages are welcome. Admission is free but donations are welcomed. The event site is fully handicapped accessible. Light fare & refreshments will be provided.

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About the Center for Judicial Excellence

The Center for Judicial Excellence is a new Marin community-based organization. CJE's 5-Point Plan of Action includes 1) Information Gathering 2) Education 3) Collaboration 4) Implementation and 5) Citizen Review.

With its Forums and other activities, CJE aims to foster a constructive, ongoing dialogue between Marin residents, local legal and community organizations, and the Superior Court of California, County of Marin. Additionally, CJE has prepared a Public Questionnaire for citizens to document their experiences with the Marin courts. The Questionnaire is available on the CJE website at www.centerforjudicialexcellence.org.

A FEW MORE STATISTICS

Estimates of the frequency of elder abuse range from 2% to 10% based on various sampling, survey methods and case definitions.

(Lachs, Mark S., and Karl Pillemer. October 2004. "Elder Abuse," *The Lancet*, Vol. 364: 1192-1263.)

It is estimated that for every one case of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect reported to authorities, about five more go unreported.

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)

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