



SACRAMENTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

JIM COOPER
Sheriff

June 16, 2025

The Honorable Bunmi Awoniyi
Presiding Judge, Sacramento Superior Court
720 9th Street
Sacramento Ca. 95814

Subject: Response to No Equal Justice for Victims of Elder Abuse

Dear Honorable Bunmi Awoniyi,

I have reviewed the report titled *No Equal Justice for Victims of Elder Abuse*, issued by the Sacramento County Grand Jury.

This report includes a section on Findings and Recommendations, and I have been asked to respond to those portions relevant to the Sheriff's Office.

I respectfully submit the following response:

FINDINGS

Finding 3: The Grand Jury finds some local law enforcement agencies do not consistently collect data to track elder financial abuse cases received from APS, making it impossible to determine if these cases are fully investigated or referred to the DA for prosecution.

Agreed: The Sheriff's Office maintains an extensive report management system, as well as a case management system, which enables internal tracking of all submitted reports and the status of all cases referred for investigation. Neither of these systems specifically tracks, categorizes, or follows the status of cases referred to us from APS.

Finding 6: The Grand Jury finds law enforcement agencies in Sacramento County are not placing as much priority on elder financial abuse as other types of elder abuse, allowing abusers to avoid consequences.

Agree: Over the past fifteen years, our staffing levels have significantly declined, and we are currently operating with over one hundred sworn personnel vacancies. Due to these

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limited resources, the Sheriff's Office has had to prioritize crimes of violence over the investigation of financial abuse involving elders.

Finding 8: The Grand Jury finds several law enforcement agencies in Sacramento County lack dedicated detectives with specialized training in the investigation of elder financial abuse and as a result, many abusers are not being held accountable.

Partially agree: We agree that the Sheriff's Office currently lacks a dedicated detective specializing in elder financial abuse. We do employ detectives who specialize in elder abuse crimes and, separately, financial crimes. We do not agree that this division of responsibility is the root cause of abusers not being held accountable.

Ideally, the Sheriff's Office would have detectives specifically assigned to investigate elder financial abuse cases; however, many factors prevent this from being feasible at this time.

One of the main factors for some of these cases not being investigated adequately is staffing. The Sheriff's Office has not yet recovered to its pre-2008 recession staffing levels. In 2007, there were 12 detectives assigned to investigate elder abuse crimes; currently, there are only 8. These current detectives are also tasked with investigating sexual assault cases.

The Sheriff's Office has submitted growth requests to the County in each of the last two budget cycles to bolster this investigative unit, but those requests have been denied.

Finding 9: The Grand Jury finds local uniformed law enforcement officers do not receive continuing education and training in how to recognize the signs of elder financial abuse, thereby allowing abusers to continue their victimization without consequences.

Partially Agree: Continuing education in the area of financial elder abuse is not currently required by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), nor is it a topic regularly addressed through ongoing training within the Sheriff's Office. However, we do not believe this lack of training updates enables abusers to continue their victimization without consequences, as deputies are still trained in the academy and during the field training program to recognize and deal with elder financial crimes. Additional periodic training in elder financial crimes is a laudable goal, but the Sheriff's Office does not believe the lack of such training is the proximate cause of criminal victimization without consequence.

Finding 12: The Grand Jury finds Sacramento County has no active Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST), therefore there is inadequate coordination between agencies to combat the growing problem of elder financial abuse and protect elderly victims.

Agree: The Sheriff's Office is not opposed to the formation of, or inclusion in, a Financial Abuse Specialist Team. However, at this time, we do not have the resources or

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personnel to establish such a team, so it would be necessary for another agency to take the lead. Our level of participation would depend on the financial and personnel requirements involved.

Finding 13: The Grand Jury finds that there is insufficient community outreach by agencies within Sacramento County to educate elder citizens and their families and caregivers about financial abuse, so the signs of abuse may not be recognized.

Partially Agree: The Sheriff's Office does not currently conduct outreach specifically focused on elder financial abuse, nor are not aware of any such outreach efforts by other agencies within the county. While the Sheriff's Office does recognize the value of community outreach in addressing criminal trends, and is willing to participate in such efforts, we do not possess the data metrics or public communications expertise to determine what constitutes "sufficient" community outreach in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3: The Grand Jury recommends that all local law enforcement agencies maintain a record of elder financial abuse cases referred by APS, including whether the law enforcement agency conducted additional investigation and whether it sent the case to the DA for potential prosecution, to begin by December 31, 2025.

Response: Data and record-keeping tools are costly and require continued maintenance. The Sheriff's Office would be open to maintaining a database to track APS referrals if given adequate funding for such a project. Absent these resources, the Sheriff's Office will not be able to meet this recommendation.

Rather than having each agency within Sacramento County maintain separate databases to track the requested information, it would be more efficient and appropriate for the referring agency (APS) to maintain detailed records of the cases referred to law enforcement and update the status of each case accordingly.

Recommendation 6: The Grand Jury recommends that all law enforcement agencies in Sacramento County raise the priority of elder financial abuse investigations to that of physical abuse, to begin September 30, 2025.

Response: It is the position of the Sheriff's Office that the crimes of murder, violence, and sexual abuse will continue to be prioritized. With additional funding and staffing, we are willing to dedicate more resources to investigating elder financial abuse. Absent these resources, the Sheriff's Office will not be able to meet this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: The Grand Jury recommends that each law enforcement agency in Sacramento County have at least one trained detective dedicated to investigating elder financial abuse crimes, by December 31, 2025.

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Response: Assigning a detective exclusively to investigate financial elder abuse cases would require reassigning personnel from areas currently deemed higher priority. While we will continue to request additional staffing for elder abuse investigations from the County, this recommendation cannot be implemented until those growth requests are approved.

The Sheriff's Office currently employs highly skilled detectives who specialize in financial crimes, and these cases will continue to be investigated by them.

Recommendation 9: The Grand Jury recommends that the uniformed officers of each local law enforcement agency receive regular ongoing education and training to recognize signs of elder financial abuse, to begin by December 31, 2025.

Response: In response to this recommendation, the Sheriff's Office has developed an elder financial crimes training program that will be delivered biennially to all patrol deputies and detectives beginning before December 31, 2025.

Recommendation 13: The Grand Jury recommends that law enforcement agencies, APS, the DA's Office, and the FAST team develop and implement a coordinated plan for more widespread community outreach by all parties, by December 31, 2025.

Response: The Sheriff's Office would be open to participating in a FAST (Financial Abuse Specialist Team) initiative. However, several concerns would need to be addressed before committing to a long-term partnership. These include the expected level of involvement, the time commitment required, the number of participating agencies, and the potential financial impact. Answers to these questions are necessary before we can commit to any partnership.

Sincerely,



JIM COOPER, SHERIFF