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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **DHSS thanks Wells Fargo Bank Alaska for advocacy**

*Bank trains employees to recognize potential financial exploitation*

ANCHORAGE — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services recently presented its first Adult Protective Services Community Commitment Award to Wells Fargo Bank Alaska for training its employees to recognize and report potential financial exploitation.

Financial exploitation is one of the top issues that confront Alaska's advocacy agencies for vulnerable adults.

"We appreciate Wells Fargo Alaska's work to speak up to protect those who cannot protect themselves," said Department Commissioner Bill Streur. "This is exactly the kind of public-private partnership that makes our communities quality places to live."

Vulnerable adults are 18 and older and can't fully look out for their own interests for some reason, such as a physical or intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury or other health condition.

The Division of Senior and Disabilities Services' Adult Protective Services office has seen cases of harm increase significantly — 172 percent in the past five fiscal years — and researchers estimate one in five cases is reported. To highlight this problem, Gov. Sean Parnell designated September "Vulnerable Adult Awareness Month."

"We are honored to receive this award, and we thank Adult Protective Services for all they do to protect vulnerable Alaskans," said Richard Strutz, Wells Fargo Alaska regional president. "Protecting all our customers from fraud and identity theft is paramount to all of us at Wells Fargo, and we're happy to take extra care to safeguard our elders from financial abuse."

The award was presented at a resource fair on Sept. 21 that also featured a panel discussion with representatives from the Alaska agencies that work to prevent and respond to harm.

Alaskans should call 911 if they believe a vulnerable adult may be at immediate risk, or Adult Protective Services, 1-800-478-9996, if the person is possibly being harmed or exploited, or may be unable to care for himself or herself. For details, visit [www.hss.state.ak.us/dsds/aps.htm](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dsds/aps.htm).

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