



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Signs Legislation to Protect Illinois' Most Vulnerable Adults

Illinois Adopts Some of Nation's Strongest Protections Against Abuse, Neglect and Financial Exploitation of Adults with Disabilities

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn, who has led the charge to reform the state's system for protecting the elderly and adults with disabilities from abuse and neglect, today signed into law the Adult Protective Services Act. House Bill 948 includes some of the nation's strongest safeguards to protect older adults and those with disabilities, and will ensure that every case of suspected abuse, neglect and financial exploitation is thoroughly investigated and promptly referred to law enforcement.

"Our most vulnerable people deserve the strongest protections," Governor Quinn said. "Based on the nation's best practices, this legislation will create the state's first-ever Adult Protective Services Unit to protect our most vulnerable residents from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation. This new law will ensure that every allegation is thoroughly investigated and make Illinois a national leader when it comes to protecting those who need it most."

The governor applauded the bill's two chief sponsors – Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chicago) and Sen. Bill Haine (D-Alton) - for their work shepherding these reforms through the legislature. He also praised the investigative journalism by the Belleville News Democrat which brought to light several cases that highlighted the need for reforming the current system.

When the reports surfaced last summer, Governor Quinn issued an Executive Order to strengthen protections for adults who have been abused or neglected. He then appointed Special Investigator Michael McCotter to propose reforms and later made McCotter the permanent OIG to overhaul the office and implement those reforms. The governor's office worked closely with advocates and lawmakers to establish an Adult Protective Services Unit in the state of Illinois for the first time ever.

"This legislation will help local law enforcement, community organizations and disability advocates across the state of Illinois to protect our most frail and vulnerable persons with disabilities," Rep. Harris said. "This has been based on a tremendously successful model the state has used to protect senior citizens from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and it makes sense to expand these protections to include adults with disabilities."

"We have a moral obligation and an ethical duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves," Sen. Haine said. "This gives an often marginalized, at-risk population new protections from abuse and exploitation."

HB 948 follows nationally-recognized best practices by creating an Adult Protective Services unit within the Department on Aging (Aging) which will be responsible for investigating all suspected cases of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of the elderly and adults with disabilities. The bill requires special training for all individuals involved in the care and treatment of the elderly and adults with disabilities in order to help them recognize signs of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.

The legislation also creates a Statewide Fatality Review Team that will have the authority to investigate suspicious deaths relating to alleged, suspected or substantiated abuse or neglect. In addition, it prohibits the use of state funds for any paid caregiver when there is a verified and substantiated claim of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.

Lastly, the law will strengthen protection for older adults by requiring care providers to screen new hires through the Department of Public Health's Health Care Worker Registry.

"The Department on Aging believes that protecting the welfare and safety of older adults – as well as adults with disabilities – is one of the most critical duties of government," Aging Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., said. "We applaud Governor Quinn's leadership on this issue and we embrace the added responsibilities for protecting our most vulnerable friends and neighbors."

The legislation takes effect immediately, with several new provisions taking effect January 1, 2014.

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