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NATION'S FIRST ELDER ABUSE FORENSIC CENTER

OPENS IN ORANGE COUNTY

Center Establishes National Benchmark for Multi-Faceted Approach to Prevention Investigation, and Prosecution of Elder Abuse

SANTA ANA, Calif., (May 12, 2003) – Each year, approximately 2 million American seniors are abused, neglected, or exploited. In Orange County, Adult Protective Services receives 500 reports of abuse each month and experts estimate that for every report of abuse, five go unreported, indicating that each year more than 30,000 of our County's most vulnerable adults endure the trauma, and in some cases injury and death, associated with elder abuse. To combat and prevent elder abuse, leaders in the medical, social services, legal and law enforcement fields have joined together in an unprecedented effort to form the nation's first **Elder Abuse Forensic Center** in Orange County, Calif.

Launched in May 2003, the Elder Abuse Forensic Center is a first-ever partnership between ten organizations in Orange County including; **UCI College of Medicine, Geriatrics, Adult Protective Services, Office of the District Attorney, Sheriff's Department, Public Administrator/Public Guardian, Community Service Programs, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Older Adult Services, Human Options and Chapman University School of Law**. The Elder Abuse Forensic Center houses leading experts from these agencies to facilitate innovative collaboration in conducting case reviews; in-home medical, mental status, and evidentiary investigation; taped victim interviews; education; consultation; and research.

"Now is the time to combat the abuse, neglect and exploitation of our County's elder population," said Michael Carona, Sheriff, County of Orange. "It is a crime without boundaries, crossing all racial, social, class, gender and geographic lines. It is also a crime that is projected to rise in numbers of victims when you consider that the percentage of our U.S. population age 60 years or older will drastically increase as 77 million baby boomers approach retirement and old age."

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To underscore the severity of this issue, the Senate Special Committee on Aging reports that victims of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation are not only subject to injury from mistreatment and neglect, they are also 3.1 times more likely to die at an earlier age. For this reason, during the past two decades, Congress has been presented with facts and testimony calling for a coordinated Federal effort to combat elder abuse.

“Creation of the Elder Abuse Forensic Center is an important first step,” said Dr. Laura Mosqueda, director of Elder Abuse Forensic Center. Dr. Mosqueda, a board-certified family physician and geriatrician, is the Director of Geriatrics at the University of California, Irvine College of Medicine where she is also an Associate Professor of Clinical Family Medicine. She is one of the nation’s leading experts in elder abuse serving as co-chair of a Department of Justice forensic forum on elder abuse, and on a National Academies Panel that published *Elder Mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation in an Aging America*. “We have a unique opportunity to establish a critical benchmark for the prevention and prosecution of elder abuse. By bringing these experts together to better understand, identify and treat elder abuse, we can make a difference in the lives of our growing senior population.”

The purpose of the Elder Abuse Forensic Center is to “Prevent and combat the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of at-risk older and disabled adults in our local community. Educate professionals who deal with the crime of elder abuse as well as older adults and their families regarding effective prevention and prosecution. Advance the awareness of elder abuse through research on abuse and neglect of at-risk older and disabled adults. Create a new standard for interventions that are effective in combating and preventing mistreatment of older adults.”

“We are changing the way these cases are reviewed, investigated, and ultimately prosecuted. By bringing justice to this issue, we can establish more effective laws to adequately and comprehensively address the issue of elder abuse,” said Tony Rackauckas, District Attorney, County of Orange.

The Elder Abuse Forensic Center was made possible through a generous grant from the Archstone Foundation and an in-kind contribution from the County of Orange Social Services Agency.

“As the first County to have an incorporated medical response team for elder abuse, Orange County is in a distinctive position to take a significant leap forward in the fight against elder abuse,” said Kerry Burnight, co-director of the Elder Abuse Forensic Center. Dr. Burnight is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at the University of California, Irvine College of Medicine and a national expert on geriatrics and elder abuse. “The impact of an inter-agency collaboration is going to

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be tremendous. Our team will work together to save lives. We must ensure that our aging population is provided every opportunity to live out their lives with the dignity they deserve.”

The Elder Abuse Forensic Center is located at 1505 E. Warner Avenue in Santa Ana, Calif. For more information call Laura Giles at (714) 825-3087 or visit the web at www.elderabuseforensiccenter.com.