



Carole Moore

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An app for elder abuse cases

It's a nifty tool as a reference for penal codes, warning signs and tips, but what might it inspire?

I've written extensively in the past about the growing problems with elder abuse and elder fraud. With medical advances prolonging life and the large baby boomer generation now aging into their 60s and beyond, issues requiring law enforcement intervention are only going to grow more numerous and complex.

Different statutes and investigatory requirements often apply to cases involving older Americans. For this reason, some prosecutors' offices have established divisions that specialize in elder law from a criminal standpoint. Elder law is a thriving specialty among attorneys, and businesses that concentrate on catering to the elderly continue to flourish. From luxury retirement communities to elder case managers to a rash of products designed to allow seniors to age in place, growing older has become more of a mainstream obsession than ever before. And where the numbers grow, so grows criminal opportunity.

Many law enforcement agencies have already recognized that they're unprepared to handle the types of cases that arise with an elderly victim. As situations grow more and more complicated—many times relatives or even professionals are the ones preying on the older person—these agencies have turned to increased specialization to keep up with the growing demands on their officers. As a result, established units have reported great success in resolving these cases.

The spread of elder fraud and abuse cases has also prompted educational institutions and nonprofits to make their own contributions toward criminal investigation and prosecution of these cases. The University of California at Irvine, together with the Institute on Aging, has come up with a unique and modern aid for California law enforcement officers.

The Center of Excellence on Elder Abuse & Neglect at UCI, in partnership with the Institute (a nonprofit), recently launched a mobile app

designed for first responders, including law enforcement officers. The app "368+Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Guide for CA Law Enforcement" is free during its introductory period courtesy of a coalition of several nonprofits.

It's nifty. Designed for iPhones, iPads and Droid devices, the app can be found at www.centeronelderabuse.org/368elderabuseca.asp.

Blackberry users and owners of other devices can also view it on mobile web browsers.

According to the designers, the app provides:

- An easy-to-reference summary of Penal Code 368 and other common crimes that can be used in conjunction with a PC 368 arrest.
- Warning signs of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.
- What to look for in the home environment, caretaker behavior, elder or dependent adult behavior and medical markers.

Remember, this app is California-centric. Officers from other states won't benefit from the California law angle; however, shouldn't this idea give others pause? If it works for California, why not have apps for other states?

The amount of training available for first responding officers and, in many cases, investigators, concerning elder abuse and neglect is negligible in most areas. Wouldn't it be good to have an electronic cheat sheet, so to speak, for officers to reference when called to one of these scenes? How many lives could be saved and cases resolved if this information is more readily available to the people that need it right there, on the scene?

Like the idea?

If you're contemplating a similar app or an app that helps law enforcement in general, you might pick up some pointers at www.centeronelderabuse.org. When you're ready to put it into practice let me know—I'll help you spread the word. ■

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