

DFTA Launches 'Providing Options to Elderly Clients Together' Clinical Service

NEW YORK (Jan. 30, 2019) - The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) announce the launch of [Providing Options to Elderly Clients Together \(PROTECT\)](#). The collaboration connects older adults who are victims of elder abuse with mental health clinicians from Weill Cornell Institute of Geriatric Psychiatry.

One-third of elder abuse victims also suffer from depression, anxiety or trauma, making it challenging for them to take steps to address the abuse. Clinicians provide short-term, evidence-based mental health treatment at a safe meeting place, which can be in the clients' community or in their home.

"The new PROTECT partnership will help our seniors receive the support they need, and make sure no elder in our city feels alone and isolated, especially in difficult times," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "Many seniors struggle with mental health challenges, including the trauma caused by abuse. We want these seniors who have contributed so much to our city to be safe and ALWAYS have a pathway to healing. Expanding and improving connections to mental health services is the core of ThriveNYC's mission."

"Recognizing and meeting the mental health needs of our seniors is essential to protecting their overall health and wellbeing," said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio**. "Through ThriveNYC, New York City has made the mental health of all New Yorkers a priority, and one of our key goals is to forge partnerships to increase connections to care. I'm pleased to see this collaboration between PROTECT and Weill Cornell Institute of Geriatric Psychiatry to expand services that will support older adults suffering from depression, anxiety and trauma, and help prevent elder abuse."

"Older adults who are victims of elder abuse and suffer from depression or anxiety are among the most vulnerable. PROTECT is a comprehensive approach to providing them with accessible mental health treatment," said **DFTA acting Commissioner Caryn Resnick**. "Through our two existing ThriveNYC initiatives, Friendly Visiting and Geriatric Mental Health, DFTA has made it a priority to develop an array of services that address the mental health needs of older adults. PROTECT complements these services, helping us improve the lives of elder abuse victims."

"The Office to End Domestic Gender Based Violence has a unique understanding of the mental health support that is required for survivors who have experienced trauma," said **ENDGBV Commissioner Cecile Noel**. "This includes seniors who are victims of elder abuse. ENDGBV is proud to partner NYC Department for the Aging and Weill Cornell Medical Center Division of Psychiatry on this groundbreaking, evidence-based

intervention. The expansion of PROTECT program to all five boroughs will ensure seniors have access to the mental health services they need."

"While our city is safer than ever, there are still New Yorkers who are particularly vulnerable to crime and abuse. Creating services that will reach vulnerable people and tailoring those interventions to be most effective will benefit our city immeasurably. Every New Yorker must feel safe at home and in their communities," said **Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice**.

"The lasting damage caused by elder abuse can echo far beyond the abuse itself," said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin, Chair of the Committee on Aging**. "Often times, victims will experience a variety of mental health issues including depression, anxiety or trauma. By partnering with trained clinicians who can provide mental health services to victims of elder abuse, the PROTECT program will ensure that more older adults do not have to suffer in silence. I applaud the Department for the Aging and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence for their work on this transformative new program, and look forward to seeing seniors receive the assistance they need and deserve."

"As the senior population in New York City continues to rise, it is crucial that the City increases public awareness surrounding elder abuse, while improving the range of services offered to seniors. I applaud ENDGBV and DFTA for launching the PROTECT program to focus on this very issue," said **Council Member Rafael Salamanca**.

"In order to meet the complex needs of survivors of violence we must recognize that their safety is inextricably linked with their overall health and well-being. Aging New Yorkers, particular women, transgender, and gender non-conforming individuals, experience violence at high rates and are increasingly vulnerable as they age. We applaud Commissioner Noel and Acting Commissioner Resnick for today's launch of Providing Options to Elderly Clients Together (PROTECT), which will ensure that seniors who experience violence are provided with mental health care as an integral part of comprehensive health care services," said **Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director, NYC Commissioner on Gender Equity**

"Weill Cornell is excited to bring the PROTECT mental health intervention to victims city-wide and to partner with community-based elder abuse agencies. We are grateful that NYC has made mental health need a real priority," said **Professor of Psychology at Weill Cornell Institute of Geriatric Psychiatry Jo Anne Sirey**.

PROTECT is an initiative launched through the New York City Domestic Violence Task Force. The task force was formed in 2016 to take an in-depth look at the delivery of services for survivors and their families and to identify innovative intervention and prevention strategies to address the issue of domestic violence in New York City. The task force is co-led by the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence and the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, with task force Executive Director Bea Hanson.

With support from ThriveNYC, DFTA also provides mental health services to homebound older New Yorkers through the Friendly Visiting program and provides

Geriatric Mental Health counseling services at DFTA senior centers throughout the five boroughs.

To learn more about PROTECT, call 311 and ask for “elder abuse help” to be connected with a trained and trusted specialist. New Yorkers of all ages who are seeking mental health help, or who want to learn more about treatment options, can contact NYC Well by calling 1-888-NYC-WELL, texting "WELL" to 65173 or visiting nyc.gov/nycwell. Free, confidential support is available at any hour of the day in over 200 languages.

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The New York City Department for the Aging works to eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and quality of life of New York City's diverse 1.6 million older adults. DFTA also works to support caregivers through service, advocacy, and education. DFTA is the largest area agency on aging in the U.S.

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