

Final press release

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**Suspects Charged with Elder Abuse in Two Separate Incidents**  
***Cases Part of Multi-Agency Effort to Combat Crime Against Seniors***

SAN FRANCISCO — The San Francisco District Attorney's Office has charged John McTaggart, age 45, with fraud and theft from an elder for allegedly stealing \$140,000 from an 86-year-old San Francisco woman as part of an annuity scam.

"With the coming holidays and the looming economic crisis, people are in desperate times. These are the moments when we see an increase in exploitation and abuse of vulnerable populations, like seniors. Nearly 20 percent of San Francisco's residents are seniors," said District Attorney Kamala D. Harris.

"Yet too often they are the invisible victims of crime in our City. We cannot allow criminals to prey on our elders. Now more than ever, our seniors need help and protection so they don't fall victim to financial crimes and elder abuse. If you have seniors in your family or as a neighbor, check in with them. They need our help understanding fraud and ID theft risks, and we should protect our elders," DA Harris added.

According to court documents, in February 2008 defendant McTaggart, a former broker, convinced his elderly victim to sign over \$140,000 in monies received through a legitimate reverse mortgage he had helped the victim secure. Once the victim received the money from the reverse mortgage, the defendant allegedly convinced her to dedicate a portion of the funds to an annuity account. Instead of depositing the victim's money into an actual annuity account, he had the money sent to his personal account. The defendant then allegedly attempted to mask this fraud, by sending monthly checks to the victim, essentially paying her "dividends" from the money he had stolen directly from her. Defendant McTaggart then fled to Tennessee, where he is now awaiting extradition on a DA warrant that was issued on November 24, 2008.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alan Kennedy. Inspector Greg Ovanessian is the leading the SFPD investigation. The San Francisco District Attorney's Office and the San Francisco Police Department are two of the partner agencies in the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center along with the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS).

The case is among the first to be investigated and prosecuted as part of the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center. The San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center is a public/private partnership designed to enhance the effectiveness of the assessment, investigation, and prosecution of elder and dependent adult abuse

cases in San Francisco. The collaboration was launched early this year and has processed over 100 potential cases to date.

The San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center includes the following stake-holder agencies: Adult Protective Services and Public Guardian (both divisions of DAAS), District Attorney (prosecutors and victim services), Police Department (police inspectors, fraud and domestic violence specialists), the Ombudsman, and the private partner, Institute on Aging - Geriatric Assessment Center and Elder Abuse Prevention Program, along with a board certified geriatrician.

The Center, housed in the Department of Aging and Adult Services, co-locates experts from each of these agencies crucial to managing elder abuse cases, and provides the venue and mechanism for rapid and efficient collaboration. The team provides multi-agency case reviews and action plans, and conducts in-home medical and mental status evaluations, evidentiary investigation and multi-disciplinary consultation.

Another case recently handled by members of the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center involves Shirley Guzman and Rebecca Enrile, two former in-home caregivers, who were arrested for elder financial abuse on Wednesday, November 26, 2008 and made their initial court appearances on December 1, 2008. Defendant Enrile has been arraigned. Defendant Guzman is scheduled for arraignment on January 9, 2009. Defendant Enrile will also appear on this date. This case is significant as it is the first case to go to court that has been processed by partner agencies of the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center.

The former caregivers are accused of defrauding a 93-year-old widow in their charge of over \$115,000 by inappropriately cashing checks that were meant for groceries or household expenses, and by opening credit cards in her name.

“One of the primary goals we had when the Elder Abuse Forensic Center was created, was to make our seniors safer by increasing the number of prosecutions of people committing crimes, especially fraud, that victimize vulnerable elders,” said Anne Hinton, Executive Director of the Department of Aging and Adult Services. “These two cases exemplify the results this level of collaboration can bring.”

Reports of elder abuse have risen in recent years. Last year, the Department on Aging and Adult Services - Adult Protective Services division received almost 4,500 new reports of elder abuse, up from just under 4,100 in 2006; and over the last three years, the District Attorney’s Office has prosecuted 52% more elder abuse cases. The social, medical and law enforcement services needed to deal with this growing number of victims are spread across various City Agencies and Community Providers. The San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center brings these important resources together to prevent delays and gaps in service coordination, evidence collection and criminal investigation that could otherwise negatively affect the outcome for victims of abuse.

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