

Good Afternoon Task Force Members!

My name is Regina Stankaitis. I am a senior. I am disabled. I am a veteran. I am a victim of robbery, abuse, and financial exploitation by a homemaker companion.

Victim is a word I would never have used to describe myself.

I am educated and hold several degrees. I had a career as a business professional and am a veteran.

I thought this would never happen to me but it did. I have Parkinson's Disease and after my knee replacement surgery in July 2021, I suffered post-surgical complications and other medication related issues and was a high risk for falling and therefore needed a homemaker companion at home.

The caregiving agency sent me a known felon who had recent multiple arrests.

I was robbed, my identity was stolen, my checks were forged, she rented an apartment, and used my Social Security number to open accounts and bought furniture and other items.

I was violated. I was exploited. I was the victim.....

The trauma or impact of being a victim of senior exploitation is immense. I was traumatized and now suffer from PTSD.

My problems were just about to start.... I contacted the agency who sent me the caregiver, but they refused to do anything.

What do I do now? Who do I call?

My focus today is on the system or lack thereof for resolving complaints about such agencies and whether the current system is adequate.

My story demonstrates that the lines of jurisdiction and coordination are not clear for each Connecticut State agency involved in regulating home care services.

I found out that there wasn't a process for a victim to know which agency to contact and that there were many different names for the same type of service

within each agency. Health Home Aide Services offer many of the same services as Healthcare Services, Companion Services, Home Healthcare Agencies, In-Home Caregivers and Homemaker Companions. It was and still is difficult to identify the correct process and agency to contact when you have a complaint and never know if anyone will investigate it when there is no coordination between each agency and that each agency uses different names for the same service.

Logically, you would think that all caregiver agencies would fall under the Department of Health because according to the DPH website, home healthcare agencies, in-home caregivers and Home Healthcare services are listed as their responsibility. I was wrong. Unfortunately, most of the State and Federal Agencies, require you to complete an on-line complaint form and then you begin waiting for a response. As with most agencies, you need to keep asking for the status of your complaint. The Department of Health was no different, and I had to complete a complaint form and wait.

As I waited for a response, I searched further and found that the Department of Social Services operates The Personal Care Attendant Program that assists eligible adults who need assistance to remain at home. Even though that program offered similar services, they could not help me.

I also reached out to the Better Business Bureau to alert them of the situation. I completed another on-line complaint form and was told that it will be filed away. They gave the agency an A+ rating and the agency opened a new branch.

I then contacted the CT Department of Aging and Disability who were extremely helpful and directed me to the CT Department of Consumer Protection as the appropriate agency.

The Department of Consumer Protection is responsible for ensuring that businesses follow all consumer laws and guard against deceptive business practices. They also enforce licensing requirements. Once again, I was instructed to download and complete a complaint form and email it to dcp.investigations@ct.gov. When I did not receive a reply, I contacted the CT Department of Aging and Disability again and explained the situation. I immediately heard from an investigator who interviewed me and was going to work on my case. That was about a year ago. I have left messages for the

investigator and have not heard back from him regarding any findings or received any report on my complaint.

I filed a request with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act for any information on my case and they wrote back that the case is pending. My complaint was filed with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection a year ago.

I reached out to over 10 state and federal agencies and was punted from one agency to another without resolving my complaint. After a year, this is very frustrating because there is no resolution, and it seems as if nothing has been done.

The caregiving agency opened another branch. How many more victims will there be if we don't improve the coordination of activity between our State agencies and have a process in place for our citizens to follow when they need help to file a complaint?