

## **PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

### **County seeking 1-mill levy**

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Fairfield County voters are being asked to support a 1-mill levy on the March 4 ballot that will ensure the county's adult and child protective services continue.

The 10-year levy is expected to cost county residents \$2.56 for each \$100,000 in home value, starting in 2009.

Currently, the county's adult protective services are funded through a block grant from the federal government. That budget provision is being phased out through 2010.

Patricia Ciripompa, the county's director of adult protective services, said the local impact amounts to a loss of \$400,000.

If the levy fails, Ciripompa said, the agency that investigates reports of elder abuse and provides case management services to senior citizens will disappear by 2009.

She said the agency received more than 600 referrals for services last year, more than three times the number received in 2000. It has three investigators and an annual budget of about \$300,000.

At any given time, she said, the agency provides case management services to 70 to 120 individuals.

Also affected by the potential loss of funding are the county's child protective services, Ciripompa said.

Right now, the county receives more than 4,000 referrals for services a year, double the number it received in 2000, she said. At the same time, funding has remained the same, meaning the agency can investigate only four out of every 10 reports it receives, Ciripompa said.

According to information provided by Fairfield County officials, the county spends \$11.60 per capita on child and adult protective services. In comparison, Franklin County spends \$90.50 per capita and Licking County spends \$21.94.

"It's so critical," Ciripompa said. "We serve old people and children. Those are the two most valuable assets in our community and we have to pay attention to them."

She said the number of referrals for service have increased over the years because of the growing population of senior citizens in Fairfield County.

Additionally, she said, the number of incidents involving financial exploitation of seniors has mushroomed.

"Twenty percent of our case load last year was investigating financial exploitation," she said. "It was 4 percent in 2000. If adult protective services was essentially eliminated, we wouldn't have time to investigate financial exploitation. That is really detrimental."