



Shaping the Conversation for Safer Communities

Crime Prevention Week - November 1st to 7th, 2015

Crime Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility

Abuse of Older Adults

Violence against older adults is part of the social problem of violence against all age groups. When we refer to "violence against older persons", we understand that violence can occur at any time in a person's life. Violence - acts of power and control - exists across the lifespan, it is not an issue only faced by the young.

Types of Abuse

- 1. Physical Violence** - occurs when someone uses a part of their body or an object to control a person's actions, including:
 - threats with a weapon or object,
 - deliberate exposure to inappropriate room temperatures or severe weather,
 - medication abuse,
 - restraint abuse.
- 2. Sexual Violence** occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity.
- 3. Psychological Violence** occurs when someone uses threats and causes fear in a person to gain control.
- 4. Emotional Violence** occurs when someone says or does something to degrade a person or make them feel worthless.
- 5. Verbal abuse** occurs when someone uses language, whether spoken or written, to cause harm to a person.
- 6. Financial Abuse** occurs when someone controls a person's financial resources without the person's consent or misuses those resources.
- 7. Neglect** refers to situations in which one's basic needs are not being met by someone who is responsible to provide care or assistance.
- 8. Spiritual (or Religious) Violence** occurs when someone uses a person's spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control the person.
- 9. Cultural Violence** occurs when a person is harmed as a result of practices that are part of their culture, religion or tradition – i.e "honour" crimes, banishment, abandonment of older person at hospital by family

~Most of the violence that is committed against older persons in Canada does not get reported. ~

Indicators of Abuse

- **Physical:** Broken bones, sprains, unexplained bruising, scratches, scars. Unexplained confusion, disorientation or hyperactivity; abnormal blood/urine tests. Frequent visits to the doctor or emergency, doctor or pharmacy hopping.
- **Sexual:** Pain, bruising, bleeding, redness or swelling in vaginal/rectal area; Bloody, stained or torn underwear; Unexplained sexually transmitted infection or disease; Refusal to be washed in genital area.
- **Psychological / Emotional / Verbal:** Reports feelings of hopelessness, helplessness; waits for others to answer questions from health or other professionals; wants to avoid a certain person. Agitated, angry, anxious, withdrawn, unresponsive.
- **Financial:** Confusion about finances; needing permission from others to spend money. Caregiver, friend or family members moving in against older person's wishes or without sharing costs; no receipts for funds spent on the older person's behalf; poor care or living conditions, despite adequate funds; unexplained difficulties in paying for household bills and necessities or withdrawal of monies from accounts; signing legal documents without understanding
- **Neglect:** Immobility, weakness, bed sores; Wearing same clothes each day or inappropriate clothing; Unexplained weight loss, malnourished, dehydration; Poor physical condition, unkempt, missing doctor appointments, receiving few or no needed health services; Lack of needed medical aids; Lack of safety.
- **Spiritual / Religious / Cultural:** Denied access to spiritual or religious items or cultural celebrations; forced attendance at religious services; forced to eat foods not permitted by her or his religion or denial of foods from their culture; not permitted to speak the language that is most familiar to them.



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Helping Abused Older Adults

Tips for Helpers

When an older adult is being harmed, it takes courage to tell another person what is happening.

- Be aware and acknowledge the power imbalance in the helping relationship. See the older adult as an active participant in the helping process.
- Provide information about choices and options.
- Reinforce that the older adult has choices, and can choose to opt out, proceed at her or his own pace, or take the lead on numerous decisions or actions.
- Empower them to restore their sense of power and control. Empowering older adults means giving them information and helping them learn about their rights and their options. Empowerment also involves including the individual in safety planning, helping them prepare for encounters with the perpetrator.

Acknowledge - Suspicion of abuse may develop over time. Accumulate or document evidence.

Barriers – Fear of retaliation, withdrawal of caregiver support and breach of confidentiality

Urgency – Assess immediate needs and potential risk of physical harm.

Screen – Assess person's physical, emotional and mental capacity to help themselves.

Empower – Inform person of their rights, resources and assist with establishing a safety plan.

Refers – Offer support or consultation from other resources

Province Wide Resources

If the individual is in imminent danger, contact the Police in their community or 9-1-1.

BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN): At the local level, CRNs facilitate prevention and education activities with local stakeholders toward an end to abuse, neglect and self-neglect of adults in BC.

www.bccrns.ca/

BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support (BC CEAS): works to prevent the abuse of older adults and to provide assistance and support to older adults that are, or may be, abused and those whose rights have been violated.

<http://bcceas.ca/>

Public Guardian and Trustee of BC: Protects the legal, financial, and in some cases personal and health care interests of British Columbians who lack legal capacity to protect their own interests. 604-660-4444 or www.trustee.bc.ca

Seniors Abuse & Information Line (SAIL): a safe and confidential place for older adults and those who care about them to talk to someone about situations where they feel they are being abused or mistreated, or to receive information about abuse prevention. 604-437-1940 or 1-866-437-1940 (toll free)

SeniorsBC.ca: a website to find resources and information for older adults, families and caregivers. www.SeniorsBC.ca

VictimLink BC: Free and confidential services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in over 110 languages, providing crisis and referral information. 1-800-563-0808 or www.victimlinkbc.ca

All **Health Authorities** in BC and **Community Living BC** are Designated Agencies who have the authority and responsibility to receive and act on reports of abuse, neglect or self-neglect of 'vulnerable' adults who are unable to seek help on their own.

Community Living BC: 1-877-660-2522 or www.communitylivingbc.ca

Regional Health Authorities listing: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/partners/health-authorities/regional-health-authorities



www.bccpa.org

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