

ABUSE OF OLDER ADULTS

WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

Abuse of older adults, also called “elder abuse,” is any action or inaction by someone in a position of trust that harms the health or well-being of an older person and results in a loss of dignity and respect.

Abuse can happen at home, in the community, or in a care facility.

Abuse exists in many different forms, including: physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional. Abuse may also present as neglect, abandonment, or financial exploitation. Often, more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time, with financial and emotional abuse being the most frequently reported.



WHO EXPERIENCES ABUSE?

Any older adult can become a victim of abuse regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, income, or education. It is estimated that 8-10% of older adults in Canada may experience some form of abuse.

Abuse of older adults is one of the most under-reported crimes in Canada. There are many reasons it often goes unreported. Some victims are dependent upon their abuser and do not feel they have other options, while some victims simply do not have the capacity to report it. Other barriers often include: feelings of shame, guilt, or humiliation, fear of retaliation, love of the abuser, lack of awareness of resources, or acceptance of abuse or neglect as normal.

WHO ARE THE ABUSERS?

Most commonly, abuse of older adults is committed by family members, such as a spouse or adult child. However, abusers can also include friends, neighbours, caregivers, or any individual in a position of power or trust.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF ABUSE?

Risk factors for abuse include: history of spousal abuse, isolation, troubled relatives, friends or neighbours, inability to cope with long-term caregiving, institutional conditions, ageism and lack of knowledge about the aging process, and society's acceptance of violence.

Common signs of abuse include: confusion, depression or anxiety, unexplained injuries, changes in hygiene and/or appearance, seeming fearful around certain people, and an over-abundance of fear or worry.



WHAT IF I'M BEING ABUSED OR I SUSPECT AN OLDER ADULT IS BEING ABUSED?

Adult Protection is authorized to respond to reports of abuse, neglect, or self-neglect of vulnerable adults. If you suspect an adult is being neglected or abused, you can make a referral to Adult Protection through local Home Care offices across PEI. Souris (902) 687-7096 | Montague (902) 838-0786 | Charlottetown (902) 368-4790 | Summerside (902) 888-8440 | O'Leary (902) 859-8730