

## WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

Elder Abuse is defined by the *World Health Organization* as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.” Often more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time.

### Types of Abuse

- ▶ Neglect
- ▶ Financial
- ▶ Sexual
- ▶ Psychological
- ▶ Physical

## WHERE CAN ELDER ABUSE OCCUR?

- ▶ Older adult's own home
- ▶ Home of the caregiver
- ▶ Long-Term Care Homes
- ▶ Retirement Homes
- ▶ Assisted Living Facilities
- ▶ Hospital

## SENIOR VICTIMS

- ▶ Any senior can become a victim of elder abuse regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, income or education.
- ▶ Abuse is not limited to older adults of any particular culture, ethnic group, social background or religion.

## LEGISLATION IN LONG-TERM CARE/RETIREMENT HOMES

Anyone who sees or suspects abuse in a Long-Term Care or Retirement Home must report it (see numbers below). This obligation to report does not apply to residents.

### Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

1-866-434-0144

### Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA)

1-855-275-7472

## How many Ontarians are facing Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is a serious and growing problem, although the magnitude and extent of the elder abuse cases occurring in Canada is not well known, due to limited data collected and unreported cases.

There are currently 2 million seniors aged 65 and over residing in Ontario 14.6 % of the population. Based on studies that indicate approximately 6% to 10% percent of seniors are abused, there are between 120,000 and 400,000 seniors living in Ontario who have experienced or are experiencing elder abuse.

## IMPACT ON SENIORS HEALTH

- ▶ Elder abuse can have a significant impact on the physical and emotional well-being of seniors.
- ▶ The emotional consequences of abuse often result in seniors living in fear, anxiety and depression. Physical abuse can cause cuts, bruises, broken bones, leading to pain and in some cases death.

## WHO ABUSES?

- ▶ Committed by people that the senior knows; it frequently involves a spouse or other family member, friends, professional service providers, neighbours or any person who is in a position of power and trust.

## REPORTING

Seniors are reluctant to report because they:

- ▶ Fear retaliation – afraid of what the abuser will do to them if they report the abuse
- ▶ Depend on the abuser for food, shelter, clothing, and health care
- ▶ Fear they will be placed in an institution, such as a Long-Term Home

### Crime Stoppers

Call if you suspect an older adult is being abused and/or a criminal act is happening.

1-800-222-TIPS (8477)

# WARNING SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE

## Financial Abuse

The most common form of elder abuse, financial abuse, is defined as any improper conduct, done with or without the informed consent of the senior that results in a monetary or personal gain to the abuser and/or monetary or personal loss for the older adult.

- ▶ Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts or ATM withdrawals
- ▶ Suspicious or forged signatures on cheques or other documents
- ▶ Notice of eviction or discontinuation of utilities
- ▶ Appears unkempt, seems to have a lower standard of living compared to others residing in the same household

## Psychological Abuse

Emotional and Psychological abuse is any action, verbal or non-verbal, that lessens a person's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth.

- ▶ Low self-esteem, appears withdrawn
- ▶ Lack of eye contact
- ▶ Appears fearful or nervous around caregiver or other persons
- ▶ Reluctance to talk openly

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any act of violence or rough handling that may or may not result in physical injury but causes physical discomfort or pain.

- ▶ Unexplained injuries such as broken bones, bruises, bumps, cuts, grip marks
- ▶ Discrepancies between injury and explanation from the senior
- ▶ Unusual patterns of injuries
- ▶ Never taken to same doctor or hospital

## Neglect

Neglect is not meeting the basic needs of the older person;

1. **Active** (intentional) neglect: the deliberate withholding of care or the basic necessities of life.
  2. **Passive** (unintentional) neglect: the failure to provide proper care to an older adult due to lack of knowledge, experience.
- ▶ Withholding care or denying access to necessary services (home care, nursing) or medical attention
  - ▶ Leaving a person in an unsafe place
  - ▶ Improper use of medication – over/under medicating
  - ▶ Poor nutritional status

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any sexual behaviour directed toward an older adult without that person's full knowledge and consent; it includes coercing an older person through force, trickery, threats or other means into unwanted sexual activity.

- ▶ Caregiver makes inappropriate sexual comments
- ▶ Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
- ▶ Fearful or withdrawn

To find help call from anywhere in Ontario

**Seniors Safety line**

1.866.299.1011

**For more information and resources contact  
Elder Abuse Ontario.**

**Website:** [www.elderabuseontario.com](http://www.elderabuseontario.com)

