

Elder Abuse

Safekeeping for vulnerable adults

Recognize
Learn
Support



**Abuse and neglect can
happen to anyone...
*You are not alone***



Let's talk about abuse

It can happen to anyone. When abuse happens, it can be hard to recognize and hard to accept. Many situations of abuse occur in families, or by other people we know and trust. Acts of abuse may start in small ways...then escalate over time into more direct or violent actions.

When someone uses their power, ability or influence to limit or control another person's rights and freedoms, it's abuse. An older or vulnerable adult may be unable to freely make choices because they are afraid of being humiliated, hurt, left alone, or of the relationship ending.

BC Association of Community Response Networks wants you to know that compassion and support can help bring needed change to relationships where abuse is happening. Community response networks work together to help Tri-City seniors and other vulnerable adults turn troubled situations into relationships of respect, safety, healthy boundaries and care.



Abusers...

are often people in a position of power, trust or authority. They may feel entitled to your assets or to make decisions for you.

Those who abuse can include:

Spouse, adult children, grandchildren, or other relatives.

Friends or neighbours.

Paid or unpaid caregivers.

Landlords or financial advisors.

Many factors and stresses

Combined economic pressures, caregiving pressures, housing pressures, anxiety and mental health pressures may create conditions for abuse.

Factors often found in abuse situations include:

Dependency on another for shelter, caregiving or financial help.

Shared living situations.

Isolation from family, social, and wellness networks.

Disabilities - either physical or cognitive.

Depression and other mental health issues.

Language isolation or barriers

Addiction or substance misuse.

History of abuse or violence.

Types of abuse

Abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults can take many forms: financial, physical, spiritual/emotional, psychological or sexual.



Neglect: The failure to provide the necessities of life or withholding care for someone who needs assistance with food, shelter, health care, personal care, protection and emotional care.

"My son invited me to live in the basement of his house because I can't manage getting my own groceries anymore. He is very successful and travels a lot. When he goes away for several days he doesn't always leave me enough food. I don't like feeling hungry but I know how busy he is."

Financial Abuse: if somebody exploits, tricks, threatens, or persuades older adults out of their money, property or possessions.

"I've given my son-in-law power of attorney so that he could help with my affairs. He disagrees with the way I manage my money, and I've noticed him making changes to my investments without my permission. This really concerns me but I am afraid to upset him."

Physical Abuse: if somebody hits an older adult or handles them roughly, even if there is no visible injury.

"I am not as independent as I used to be. I need help with personal tasks. My daughter helps me, but I am ashamed to admit that sometimes she shakes me and even hits me."

Sexual Abuse: if somebody forces an older adult to engage in unwanted sexual activity. This may include verbal or suggestive behaviour, not respecting personal privacy, and unwanted sexual intercourse.

"My neighbour is a widower who brings my groceries because we both live so far out of town. Since my husband died he has started hugging and touching me even though I ask him not to. He calls it his 'delivery fee.' "

Emotional Abuse: Emotional Abuse includes psychological/verbal/spiritual abuse. It is when somebody threatens, insults, intimidates or humiliates an older adult, does not allow them to see their family and friends, or does not allow them to attend spiritual/religious events.

"I'm older and slower now, and sometimes I see this frustrates my daughter, the only family member I see regularly. Last time she threatened to stop her weekly visits. It hurts me when she calls me terrible names."

Together we can create communities of compassion, care and respect.

"I never thought it would happen to me..."

Abuse can happen in any relationship. Life changes can create situations of dependency, unclear boundaries, isolation, and struggles with personal and interpersonal power. Abuse situations can arise, and become complex.

Victims of abuse need support to set boundaries for respectful relationships. People who abuse need support to change. Professional support is available to help you set safe relationship guidelines, and say no to abusive behaviour.



Recognize abuse and neglect

Abusive behaviour can creep into any relationship. Neglect happens when nobody is watching. Warning signs include:

You feel afraid of your caregiver, family member or support person.

You're fully capable of making choices but are not permitted to, or your decisions are ignored.

Someone takes your money or possessions without your full consent. Or they use your resources without fair exchange or replacement.

You feel isolated, not by choice, from your personal networks of friends, family, and social activity.

You're not able to meet your needs for security, nourishment, personal activity, wellness or respect without fear of backlash.

First steps to making change

Get support - from professionals or someone you trust.

Accept help - you don't have to face this alone. Trust your own judgement, and don't judge yourself.

Recognise your needs and feel comfortable saying "No."

Leave any situation where you feel in danger.

Talk to your financial institution about protecting your assets.

Consult legal services about your rights and options.

Discuss the who, what, where and when of any caregiving arrangements. Get legal advice.

YOU are a powerful being in the world!



Everyone has the right to be respected, safe and free from abuse.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

It may not be safe to leave the situation on your own; seek help from someone you trust such as a family member or relative, friend or neighbour, lawyer or accountant, staff at community centre, clergy/faith leader or doctor.

When you think, 'It's not right!'

I'm worried about Tom. He isn't himself these days. After he broke his wrist, he seemed to be getting back to his routine. But ever since his nephew moved in, he isn't coming to our social group very often, and he's depressed and unsure of himself. I think I'll visit him for tea and ask how things are.

If there is immediate danger, call 911.

You know the feeling. Something isn't right in a situation you've seen. But often, we step away from getting involved, because we're afraid of doing the wrong thing, or of what could happen next. But we can interrupt the isolation and the silence. We can act on our instincts to support loved ones by starting with compassion and knowledgeable help first.

Community Response Networks, across BC, offer community awareness workshops on recognizing abuse, and how to take the first steps to help.

Warning signs of abusive behavior

Injuries - bruises, sprains, broken bones, scratches, especially when the explanation does not fit the injury.

Changes in outlook: depression, withdrawal or fear.

Changes in living arrangements - previously uninvolved relatives or new friends move in.

Home services are cancelled because the bills are not paid, or things "disappear" from the house.

Signs of neglect - no food in the house, being left alone for long periods of time, not having required glasses or hearing aids, not having proper clothing.

The person shows fear of their abuser.



If an older adult confides in you or mentions their worries about any potential abusive behaviour, please take these comments seriously and be supportive and call a professional for help. (See page 8)

BC Association of Community Response Networks

offer coaching on how to interrupt the silence and isolation, and connect with the people we're concerned about with compassion first. With the door to communication open we can start to address the many issues that contribute to abuse. CRN coaches community programs, cultural groups, faith communities and citizens how to begin to help, and connect with the network for change.

We offer workshops called:

It's Not Right! Neighbours, Friends and Families

Open the door for communication with patience and compassion. It may take time.

Interrupt the isolation and assist their connection to community and social supports. Boost their sense of themselves as whole people.

Consult a support agency or a CRN member on ways to begin.

Always support the victim's needs for confidentiality and choice.

Don't confront or accuse the abuser as they may take it out on the victim.

Check what you think you saw or heard.

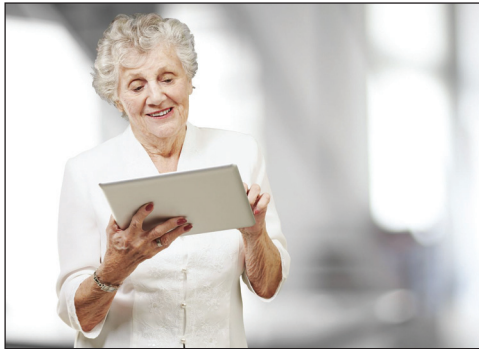
Protect yourself from financial abuse

Set boundaries to respect and protect your finances and resources. Financial abuse most often occurs inside families and in connection with other types of abuse. What begins as a temporary or small situation can slide, over time, into ongoing financial abuse. There are protections and support services available to build safe and respectful financial relationships.

Set the stage:

If a family member or friend comes to live with you, they should contribute financially to the rent and food.

Create a caregiving agreement with the support person so you are fairly treated. Consult with a professional on what boundaries work for you.



Fraud scams

Fraud scams happen by phone, by email, by letter mail, on websites, and at your front door. Older and vulnerable adults are often targeted, because isolation and the desire for connection takes over sober second thought. Fraud scams are organized and can be local, by people who pretend to 'know' you, or can be international in scope.

As the saying goes, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

When in doubt, say No!

It's not rude – it's shrewd.

Who has access to your finances?

Monitor your bank and investment accounts closely.

If you spot any theft or misuse of your cash, credit cards, bank cards or valuables, talk with your financial institution about protections.

Someone forging your signature on a cheque or credit card is a serious offense. You can contact the police. If it happens once, it can happen again.

Set your boundaries.

Don't let family members pressure you into doing something you don't want.

Document any loans you give out and confirm a repayment date.

Get all the facts first from a professional before agreeing to any financial actions or legal documents, even if it's with or for a family member.

Financial service organizations are concerned about financial abuse. Talk to your bank manager about protections for your day-to-day banking and long-term plans.

Recognize some common fraud scams

Prize scam - You're asked to pay a fee before the prize can be released.

Emergency scam - A grandchild or family friend calls needing money to deal with an emergency, but doesn't give a name until after the victim guesses who it is.

Canada Revenue Agency scam - The criminal poses as a demanding tax official claiming that the victim owes money and will be sent to jail if cash isn't sent immediately.

Computer Tech Support scam - Victims are told their computer software isn't working properly, but a technician can fix it if passwords are handed over. It can lead to the theft of credit card and banking information and your whole identity.

Romance scams - A too-good-to-be-true stranger responds to your online profile and lives in your city. But you never meet due to his or her demanding schedule. After a few months, the correspondent runs into trouble travelling abroad and urgently needs cash wired to a foreign destination.

Contractor scams - The contractor says he was doing some work in the neighbourhood and noticed that your roof looks damaged. He offers a special senior's deal, but you must book now and give a deposit to secure the rate.

Abuse of adults and the law

The Adult Guardianship Act (Sec 3) is BC's legislation that addresses abuse, neglect and self-neglect of vulnerable adults. The Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) can take on management of a person's finances when an adult is deemed incapable of making an informed decision. Your local Health Authorities and Community Living BC are mandated by the legislation to look into reports of abuse, neglect or self-neglect.

If an adult is capable of making choices and their choices do not put them at risk of harm or harm to others, the Designated Agencies cannot intervene. Community Response Networks (CRNs) collaborate and build relationships with community organizations that support adults who want to change situations of abuse and neglect.



Two legal documents that can protect - and be abused

What is a Power of Attorney (PoA)?

In BC, a Power of Attorney is a legal document that gives another person authority to make financial and legal decisions for you. This usually includes access to your finances, paying bills, banking, or managing real estate on your behalf. It does not include decisions about your health care.

Representation Agreements:

Representation Agreements include personal and health care decision-making as well as management of financial affairs.



BC Association of Community Response Networks

Community Response Networks are making a difference in more than 190 communities across BC right now. Through collaboration and compassion, BC CRNs are helping community people and community agencies take steps for effective change.

Local Community Response Networks (CRNs) are a dedicated community team striving towards the prevention of abuse and neglect, and are a member of the provincial BC Association of Community Response Networks. **www.bccrns.ca**

Local Community Response Networks bring together RCMP and Victim Services, fire, mental health agencies, multicultural organizations, Fraser Health liaisons and seniors groups to collaborate, innovate, and support better prevention and intervention on adult abuse and neglect.

Other helpful organizations:

Senior's First BC - www.seniorsfirstbc.ca
(SAIL) Seniors Abuse & Information Line

Tel: 604-437-1940 | 1-866-437-1940 (toll free)
Available 8am to 8pm daily, excluding holidays
TTY: 604-428-3359 | 1-855-306-1443 (toll free)
Available 9am to 4pm Monday-Friday
Language interpretation available 9am to 4pm weekdays

A safe 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 elder abuse prevention. Call for guidance on where to get the support you need and your legal options and protections.

*Changing cultures of abuse and neglect
by cultivating communities of care,
respect, collaboration and inclusion.*



Who you can call:

Designated Agencies - Contacts:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| • Emergencies | 911 |
| • Vancouver Coastal Health | 1-877-732-2899 |
| • Fraser Health Authority | 1-877-732-2808 |
| • Island Health Authority | 1-844-732-2899 |
| • Northern Health Authority | 1-844-465-7414 |
| • Interior Health Authority | 1-844-870-4754 |

Community Living BC (CLBC)

- Community Living BC 1-877-660-2522

CLBC is the designated agency for all individuals with a developmental disability who are eligible for CLBC services. For locations and contacts, visit www.communitylivingbc.ca.

Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia (PGT)

604-660-4444 www.trustee.bc.ca

The PGT investigates allegations of financial abuse. They can also manage financial decisions for adults assessed as mentally incapable. As well, they assist and provide resources to substitute decision-makers.

First Nations Health Authority - www.FNHA.ca

Tel: 604-693-6500

KUU-US Crisis Response Line - 1-800-588-8717

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