

TIP SHEET



Abuse of Older Adults: We Can Help!

The abuse of older adults, also referred to as elder abuse, is defined as: "Any action or inaction by any person which causes harm or threatens to cause harm to an older adult". A family member, a friend, a caregiver, a staff member at a care facility or anyone upon whom the older person relies on for their basic needs or services may cause the abuse.



ABUSE MAY TAKE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING FORMS

Physical

- Physical assault by kicking, shoving, hitting, pulling hair
- Sexual assault
- Forcible confinement
- Withholding of physical necessities
- Over or under medicating

Neglect

- Abandoning an older adult
- Failing to provide health services or food
- The intentional or non-intentional failure to provide the necessities for the older adult

Financial

- Theft or misuse of money or property
- Dishonest use of money or assets
- The misuse of a Power of Attorney
- Fraud, extortion or forgery

Psychological

- Treating the older adult like a child
- Frightening, deliberate social isolation, insulting, threatening, humiliating or ignoring the older adult
- Verbal abuse

WHO ARE THE ABUSERS?

- Often a family member who is dependent on the older adult
- Usually has control or influence over the victim
- There may be an issue of alcohol/drug abuse or a history of family violence

WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO ELDER ABUSE

- Caregiver stress
- Physical or mental impairment of dependent elder
- Continuing cycle of family violence
- Personal and financial problems

WHY IS THIS ABUSE SELDOM REPORTED?

- Fear of being institutionalized
- Embarrassment, guilt and shame if the abuser is a family member
- Fear of punishment or retaliation by the abuser as the victim is dependant on the abuser
- Lack of awareness of Community resources

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

If you know someone who is being abused or are an abuser, there is help available! Doctors, social workers, public health nurses or the police can and will help. All you have to do is ask!