

Did you know that one in twelve seniors in British Columbia experience abuse? The mistreatment can be by a spouse or partner, family member, caregiver, friend, or trusted individual in the person's life.

Victoria Women's Transition House aims to raise awareness about older adult abuse and neglect. This handout includes information about the different types of abuse, the signs of abuse, ways to self-protect and safeguard others from financial abuse and resources available in the community.

INCIDENCE OF ELDER ABUSE:



* Self-neglect is a person's inability to provide for their own essential needs e.g., poor physical hygiene, lack of social contact, health changes due to lack of nutrition or hydration, not going to medical appointments.

BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

Shame

No one to tell

Unable to ask for help



Dependent on abuser for care or support

Fear of the unknown (including the justice system)

Loss of relationship

A person's decision to ask for help may be impacted by the fear of what could happen if the abuse is reported, e.g., being blamed, retaliation from the abuser, consequences to the abuser or others. Sociopolitical reasons such as discrimination, ageism, lack of knowledge of the Canadian laws and system can also affect a person's decision.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Look, Listen and Ask. Here are some signs that abuse has occurred or is likely to happen (look for patterns):

Physical Abuse | Unexplained injuries | Signs of restraint | Intimidation through weapon play

Behavioural Abuse | Conduct of people involved and relationship between person and suspected abuser, e.g. senior is fearful, withdrawn, depressed, isolated | Suspected abuser is reluctant to leave person alone with professionals

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Using a senior person's assets for personal benefit without permission and/or knowledge is the most common type of elder abuse.

Misuse of power of attorney

Forcing a person to change legal documents, e.g., will, house title, power of attorney, ownership of assets




Taking money from a joint account without permission

Persuading a person to take money from their account for another person's benefit


Fraud, scams, identity theft

When capable, here are some ways to **protect yourself** from financial abuse:

 Appoint a trusted enduring power of attorney, someone who can act on your behalf to manage your finances

 Be sure your wishes are known in advance


 Appoint a legal representative for health care (Representation Agreement*)


 Be wary of joint accounts


* A Representation Agreement can be used in case a person's capabilities or support needs change.

DETERIORATING HEALTH OR DISABILITY

Seniors with worsening health or a disability are more likely to be victims of crime. Some reasons include:

 They may be less able to ask for help or give information about crimes against them

 Intellectual disability or health changes such as the onset of dementia may affect their ability to recognize danger, protect themselves or escape

 If dependent on others, they may fear retribution if they report abuse or neglect

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Support is always available. If you or someone you know is in need of support, you can reach out to the following organizations:

| [Victoria Women's Transition House Society](#) | 24-hour Crisis and Information Line | 250.385.6611

| [BC Crisis Centre](#) | Senior's Distress Line | 604.872.1234

| [Island Health](#) | [Victoria Community Access Centre \(South Island\)](#) | 250.388.2273

| [Seniors First BC](#) | Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) | 1.866.437.1940

| [Victim Link BC](#) | 24-hour, multilingual helpline | 1.800.563.0808

| [Public Guardian and Trustee](#) | 250.387.6121

| [Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry](#) | 604.408.7414

In an emergency, call 911. For more information about the Elder Abuse Program, call us at 250.592.2927 or email info@vwth.bc.ca. VWTH also offers an Older Women's Outreach program and group and individual support for women of all ages. Visit www.transitionhouse.net for more information.

REFERENCES

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3. The National Center on Elder Abuse. (2004). *The 2004 Survey of State Adult Protective Services: Abuse of Adults 60 Years of Age and Older*. Available: www.vtdigger.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/20110807_surveyStateAPS.pdf
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