



Protecting Seniors' Rights and Dignity



Presented by:

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Ontario



Elder Abuse

Protecting the Rights and Dignity of Older Persons



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AGENDA

- **Background to ONPEA**
- **How do we Define Abuse of Older Adults?**
- **Overview of Seniors' Vulnerability – Ageism**
- **Forms of Elder Abuse**
 - **Recognition of Signs and Behaviours**
- **Why Seniors are Reluctant to Report to Staff and Police**
- **Community Supports and Resources**





ONPEA's VISION AND MISSION

**WE ENVISION AN ONTARIO WHERE SENIORS ARE
SAFE AND RESPECTED.**

Our **mission** is to create an Ontario that is free from abuse for all seniors, through awareness, education, training, collaboration, service coordination and advocacy.

ONPEA oversees the implementation of **Ontario's Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse** in addition to a number of other initiatives.





Ontario's Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY:

1. Co-ordination of Community Services

- To strengthen communities across the province by building partnerships, promoting information sharing and supporting their efforts to combat elder abuse

2. Multi-Sectoral Training for Front-Line Staff

- Specialized training initiative for front-line staff from various sectors, who work directly with seniors, to prepare and guide them in recognizing and responding to elder abuse

3. Public Education and Awareness

- A Province-wide, multi-media public education campaign to promote awareness about elder abuse and provide information on how to access services





Personal and Professional Values

- Influenced by our own Perceptions and Attitudes
 - Tolerance levels
 - Assessment
 - Influence delivery of services





Attitudes Toward Seniors

“It is not old age that is at fault but our attitude toward it.”

Cicero (106-43 BC)





“...ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices on the part of individuals that are biased against persons or groups based on their age”



AGE *Quest* Ageism exists.
Have you seen the signs?





THEN





Now





Has abuse changed?

- Family Dynamics have changed
- Styles have changed
- Respect has changed
- Abuse has not changed





Why are People Disrespectful And Unkind?

- **It may be a pattern that has gone on for years in families– it's still wrong**
- **It may be due to stress and worries – it still should be stopped.**
- **It may be because the power has shifted, the older person is seen as more vulnerable – that's no excuse.**





MISUSE OF TRUST & AUTHORITY: POWER & CONTROL



- abuse/violence is used to *intimidate, humiliate, coerce, frighten* or simply, make the victim feel *powerless*





Demographics of Abuse

Ontario Demographics

- **Total Population of Older Adults** 1.45 M
- **Elder abuse rate** 4 % - 10%
- **Number of Ontarians facing elder abuse** 58,000 – 150,000

represents between 148,000 and 370,000 older adults in Canada today.
(Lachs & Pillemer, 2004; Stats Canada, 2000)

- **For those who work with seniors on a daily basis, at least 1 out of every 10 seniors will experience some form of abuse.**



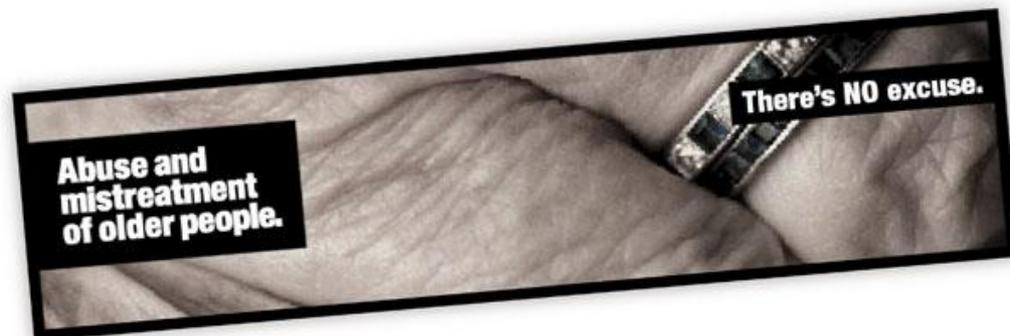


WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

World Health Organization (WHO, 2004) defines elder abuse:

“a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person”.

The abuser can be a spouse, child, family member, friend or paid caregiver.





ABUSE: *IT'S TIME TO FACE THE REALITY*





It's **REAL** and **HAPPENING** in *our* Communities

March 1st, 2011

Canadians were shocked this week to learn of an extreme case of [elder abuse](#) in Scarborough, Ontario.

A man and his wife were charged with failing to provide the necessities of life, after police and paramedics discovered the man's 68-year-old mother living in the couple's unheated garage. The woman is being treated in hospital for frostbite and other injuries. The "mentally incompetent" woman was banished to the "filthy" garage last November. According to reports, her son and legal guardian didn't want his mother living in the family home because she was incontinent and suffering from dementia.



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Vulnerability to Elder Abuse

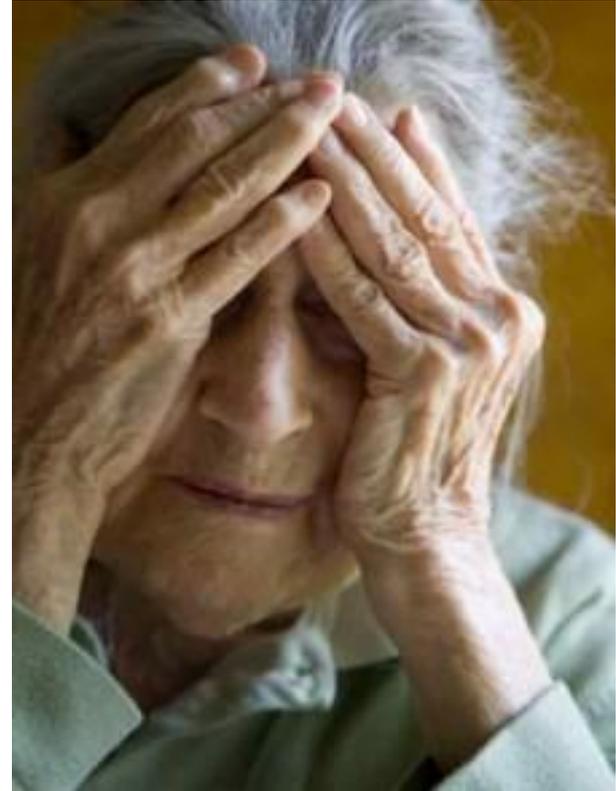
- Grew up in a trusting society
- Saved all their lives – large amounts of money, house paid off...
- Disease/illness can seriously compromise older adults ability to make decisions (memory confusion, dependency, cognitive impairment)
- Increased vulnerability, e.g. physical frailty (co-dependence)





TYPES OF ABUSE

- Physical
- Psychological
- Neglect
- Sexual
- Financial





PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any act of violence or rough handling that may or may not result in physical injury causing physical discomfort and pain



- **Assault- Slapping, pinching, shoving, punching**
- **Hitting or any intentional rough handling**
- **Unlawful Confinement**
- **Dehydration or lack of food, over sedation**





DO YOU CALL THIS RESPECT?

Every day, older Vermonters are being threatened, neglected and hurt. These are all forms of elder abuse. Make today different. If you know someone who is being neglected, exploited or abused, report it to Adult Protective Services at **1-800-564-1612**.

YOU'LL FIND HELP & RESPECT.

For information about services or referrals, call the Senior Helpline at **1-800-642-5119**.

A message from the Vermont Center for Elder Abuse Control, ©2005. This is a community service provided by Vermont Aged Care. For more information, visit www.vt.gov. Funding provided by the National Elders Abuse Prevention Program.



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PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Any action or comment that may cause emotional anguish, fear or diminish the self-esteem or dignity of the older person

Behaviours of the Senior

- Depression
- Withdrawal
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear of family members, friends or caregivers
- Reluctance to speak openly
- Avoidance of contact with caregiver





PSYCHOLOGICAL INDICATORS



Behaviours of Family Member

- Verbally aggressive
- Insulting or threatening
- Shows unusual amount of concern over senior (too little or too much)
- Speaks for older adult
- Does not permit older adult's involvement in making decisions
- Reluctant to leave older adult alone with professional
- Verbal and non-verbal insults
- Humiliation
- Treating elderly people like children
- Bullying or calling names
- Difficult to identify unless witnessed





NEGLECT

Active Neglect

Intentional failure of a caregiver to fulfill his/her caregiving responsibilities.

- Denied adequate nutrition, medical attention, or are left unsafe or in isolated places
- Malnourishment or dehydration
- Unkempt appearance - Inappropriate / dirty clothing
- Signs of infrequent bathing



Passive Neglect

Unintentional failure of a caregiver to fulfill his/her caregiving responsibilities.





SENIOR SEXUAL ABUSE



Sexual abuse consists of any sexual activity for which the other person does not consent or is incapable of giving consent.

- **Using coercion such as threats, force, deceptions or contact with elders who are unable to grant consent.**
- **Harassment, the use of pornography, fondling, and oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse**





ELDER SEXUAL ASSAULT

- **Elder sexual assault has not been well researched and is often not recognized or acknowledged**
- **The impact of the assault can be different for an older person**
- **Clinicians uncomfortable and inexperienced in addressing issues**





SEXUAL ABUSE

Older persons may be perceived as easy to overpower and manipulate.

Less likely to report abuse due to:

- Generational beliefs about sex & morality that create feelings of shame and guilt
- Cohort of women who were taught to “lay there and do it for Great Britain”: woman’s duties as a wife





Perpetrators of Sexual Assault

- Search for **vulnerable persons** to victimize.
- **The physical and cognitive impairments that can be a part of aging make elders more vulnerable.** Depend on others for assistance with daily activities either within their own home or in a Retirement Home/LTC Home. This dependency can put the older person at risk of abuse by family or professional caregivers.
- The provision of personal care may allow opportunities for those intent on sexually abusing them, particularly at night when staffing levels may be low and a careworker may be alone with the resident.





SENIOR SEXUAL ABUSE

EXAMPLES:

- **Joking in a sexual manner about a senior or vulnerable adult**
- **Ogling at or treating another as a sex object**
- **Failing to pay attention to a senior or vulnerable adult's changing sexual and psychological needs**
- **Failing to pay attention to the person's feelings or needs**
- **Unwanted touching**
- **Withholding sex or affection**





SENIOR SEXUAL ABUSE

Examples:

- **Confusing a need for affection with a need for sex**
- **Labeling another person as “frigid” “old” or too unattractive or disabled to be sexually active**
- **Always wanting sex**
- **Threats and demanding sex**
- **Forced sex**
- **Any kind of sexual activity that is unwanted**





SEXUAL ABUSE INDICATORS

Physical Signs Include:

- Bruising on inner thighs
- Genital or anal bleeding
- Excoriation on penis
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Difficulty walking or standing
- New onset of Incontinence
- Pain and/or itching in the genital area





SENIOR SEXUAL ABUSE

Emotional Signs include:

- Scared or timid behavior
- Depressed, withdrawn behavior
- Sudden changes in personality
- Odd, misplaced comments about sex or sexual behavior
- Fear of certain people or of physical characteristics
- Uncontrollable crying
- General uneasiness in the presence of others
- Hiding face with hands or arms
- Aggressive responses to touch (male victims)





IMPACT ON OLDER ADULT

- **Cognitive impairments may make it difficult for the older victim to explain or remember the incident. May be a long-term memory of a trauma triggered by a misperceived interaction.**
- **Elder sexual abuse can cause not just physical injury, but lasting emotional trauma as well..age is not a factor**
- **Can forever change one's personality and outlook on life-risk factor for anxiety disorder, depression**





SENIOR SEXUAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS:

- **Avoiding hugging or kissing loved ones**
- **Over dressing in self protection**
- **Flinching when touched**
- **Avoiding eye contact**
- **Tending to hide from friends and family**
- **Reluctant to answer door or phone**
- **Changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns**
- **Misuse of alcohol, prescription or other drugs**

Any change from the norm can be an indicator so make sure that, as you care for those around you, you observe their normal patterns and habits. Observation of the norm is as important as any other care you provide.





Sexual abuse of elderly people: would we rather not know the details?

A developing relationship between two elderly residents, a man and a woman, in a care home.

- differing views voiced by staff about whether the elderly woman **had the capacity to make appropriate decisions** about having an intimate relationship, and whether this might therefore be an abusive situation.
- Also need to recognize our need to connect, foster relationships despite a dementing illness. Risks need to be assessed.
-





Intimacy & Sexuality in LTC

- Practice Guidelines developed in Lanark, Leeds & Grenville for persons living in LTC with or without a cognitive impairment
- Local Elder Abuse Prevention (LEAP) Network for Lanark, Leeds & Grenville working on collaborative community response to elder abuse (steeled@providencecare.ca)





World Elder Abuse Awareness Day June 15, 2011

- ***International Forum on Sexual Safety of Older Women- A Human Rights Approach, Wednesday 15th of June 2011 in Toronto***
(NICE) National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly





FINANCIAL ABUSE



Any act done without consent that results in the financial or personal gain of one person at the expense of another.

- A person in a position of legal trust may withhold money
- Improper use of power of attorney
- Theft of money or possessions

- Unpaid bills
- Change in living conditions
- No money/food/clothes
- Absence of aids and services
- Refusal to spend money without agreement of caregiver

- Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives
- Abrupt changes in Wills/ Accounts/ POA's
- Disappearance of possessions
- Forged signatures
- Sudden debit accrual





Financial Abuse

- Less likely to live together; victim often unmarried, isolated
- Indicators
 - unusual volume of banking activity
 - non-payment of bills resulting in threats
 - documents signed but not understood
 - bank transactions older adult can't explain
 - caregiver has no means of support





VIOLATION OF RIGHTS

Denying a person's rights & freedoms such as:

- Withholding information person is entitled to
- Denying person privacy in own home environment
- Denying visitors or phone calls
- Restricting liberty/not allowing person to socialize
- Censoring mail





WHY WOULD OLDER ADULTS REFUSE HELP?



- **Fear more abuse**
- **Shame or humiliated**
- **Blame themselves for abuse**
- **Fear loss of affection**
- **Believe that family honour is at stake**
- **Fear involvement of others will lead to institution.**
- **Don't want to air 'dirty laundry'**
- **Worry about what will happen to him or herself and/or the abuser**





Why Is Elder Abuse Seldom Reported: Family/ Friends / General Public

- **Who To Tell?**
- **Senior asks them not to tell**
- **Fear of repercussion-Older Person or Self**
- **Believe nothing can be done**
- **Don't Want To Get Involved**





ALL ADULTS HAVE THE RIGHT...

- To make their own decisions;
- To be regarded with patience & compassion;
- To make their own financial decisions, even if someone is assisting them with bill paying;
- To receive health care, medications, personal assistance & privacy;
- To socialize with whom and how they choose
- To refuse assistance and intervention





Role of the Non-Regulated Workers, Volunteers: Elder Abuse Assessments

Front-line workers are in a Position of Trust :

- Providing direct services such as personal care, home making, delivering meals on wheels, or volunteer driving
- Over time a relationship and sense of trust are developed
- Opportunity to *Recognize* if abuse is taking place
- Senior may disclose abuse to the worker or volunteer; they may also be a witness to an incident of abuse. (i.e. volunteer driver hears disclosure of abuse)





- **Results are required within 10 days of allegation**
- **Actions – need to determine what actions take place as a result of investigation**
- **Actions to prevent re-occurrence**





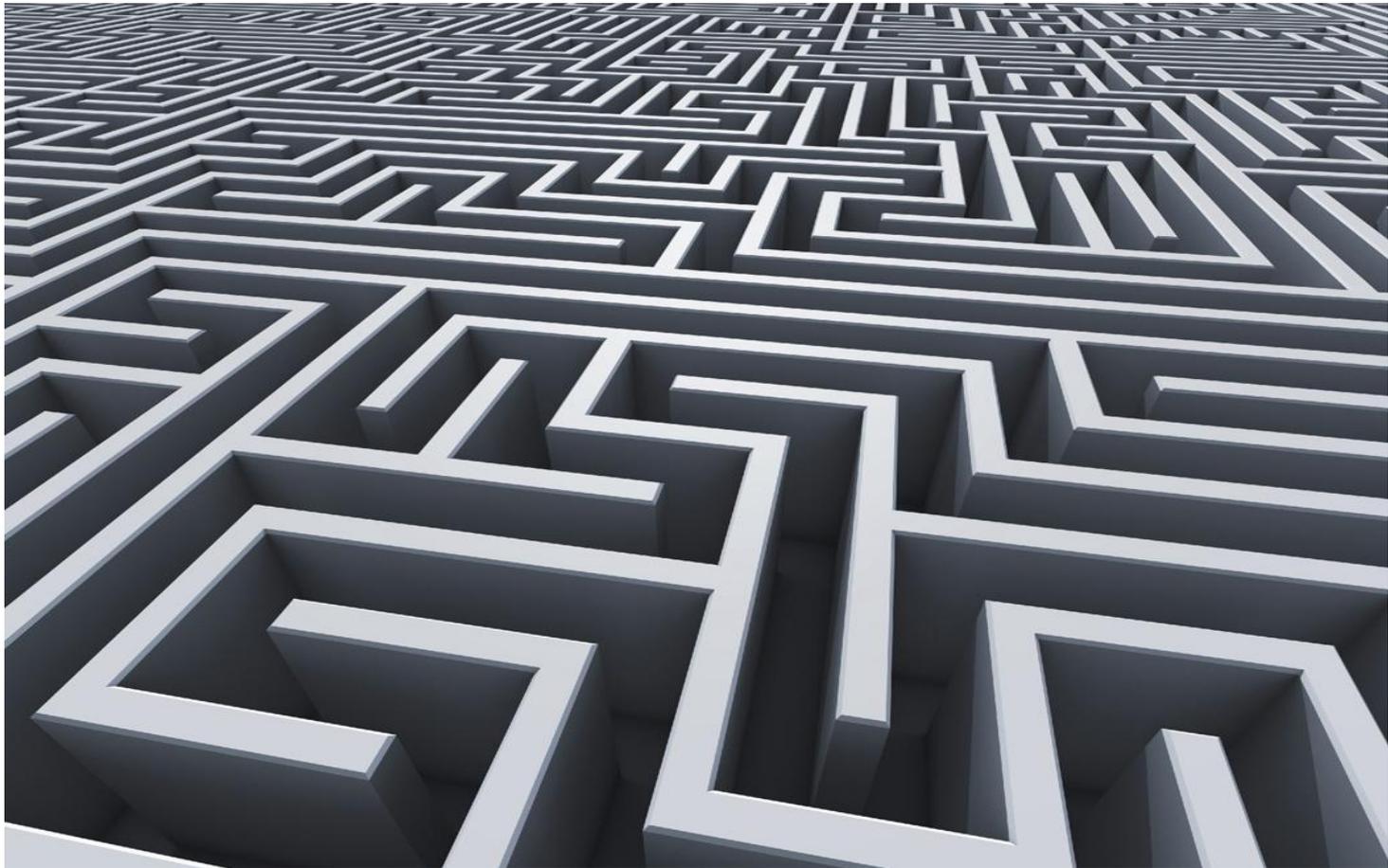
Recognize indicators of abuse
Interact with the senior at risk
Respond

Reflect and get better at it!





Navigating the System





COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE



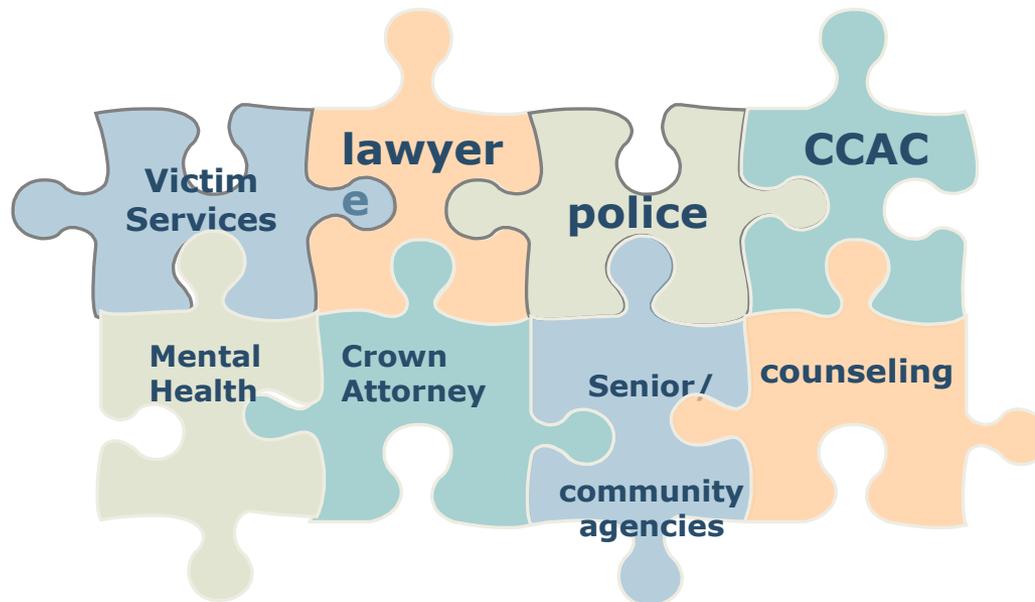
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collaboration

- How community agencies must work together





Provincial Resources Coordination and Consultation

Advocacy Centre for the Elderly

1-416-598-2656

**Ministry of Government Services-
Consumer Services Bureau**

1-800-889-9768

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care – LTC Action Line

1-866-434-0144

Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee

1-800-366-0335

Ontario Seniors' Secretariat Info Line

1-888-910-1999





Provincial Resources Coordination and Consultation

Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse	416-916-6728
East Regional Consultant	613-789-3577 ext 14
PhoneBusters	1- 888-495-8501
Retirement Home Complaints Response and Information Service	1-800-361-7254
Senior Crime Stoppers	1-800-222-8477
Seniors Safety Line	1-866-299-1011





SENIORS CRIME STOPPERS



**To anonymously report
crimes against seniors.**

1-800-222-TIPS (8477)



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SENIORS
Are you being:
MISTREATED?
BULLIED?
NEGLECTED?



Call the new **SENIORS SAFETY LINE**
from anywhere in Ontario, and get help now,

1-866-299-1011

24 hours a day 7 days a week 150 languages

Stop Abuse. Restore Respect



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THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO



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**Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
(ONPEA)**

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<http://www.onpea.org/>

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