



## What is Elder Abuse?

- a “single or repeated acts, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.” *World Health Organization*
- It can occur in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority.

## Where Elder Abuse Happens

- Can occur in various settings including:
  - 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

- It is mandatory to report abuse occurring in Long Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes in Ontario.
- Elder abuse is often a crime under the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

## Forms of Abuse

- Elder abuse can take several forms including:
  - financial (misuse of power of attorney, theft)
  - emotional (yelling, name calling)
  - physical (hitting, slapping)
  - sexual (without consent)
  - neglect (failure to provide food, shelter, care)
- Often more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time.

## Elder Abuse Can Affect Senior’s 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 with fear, anxiety and depression. Physical abuse such as hitting may 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 and neighbours or any individual in a position of power, trust or authority.

## Reporting

- About 80% of abuse or neglect of older adults is hidden or goes undetected.
- Seniors are reluctant to report because they:
  - Feel ashamed, embarrassed or guilty
  - Are in denial that abuse is happening
  - Are afraid of the consequences of reporting a loved one or caregiver.

***STOP Elder Abuse. Start the Conversation.***





## *Why Do We Need To Be Concerned?*

### **Nearly 10% or 150,000 of the 2 Million Seniors Living in Ontario Experience Elder Abuse**

Fewer than 1 in 5 situations of abuse actually come to the attention of any public agency, and fewer still come to the attention of a public agency operating in the criminal justice system. (Source: *Canada's Aging Population: Seizing the Opportunity, Special Senate Committee on Aging, 2009*)

There were 3,216 critical incidents that related directly to abuse and neglect in Ontario long-term care homes in 2011, accounting for 19.3% of all critical incidents reported to the Ministry.

## *Fast Facts:*

- **Ageism** is a contributing factor in causing elder abuse. Stereotypical views of seniors as frail, or possessing less inherent worth are used to rationalize abusive behaviours.
- **Financial abuse** is the most prevalent type of abuse affecting 60,000 Canadian elders.
- **Increased vulnerability** for seniors with a decline in cognition (i.e. dementia) due to their capacity limitation or inability to ask for help.
- **Over 50 local Elder Abuse Networks/Committees** in Ontario plan and coordinate services related to elder abuse prevention and provide education and awareness about elder abuse in the community.
- **Collaboration** among Elder Abuse Networks, organizations and Elder Abuse Ontario is a key factor in providing intervention and response to elder abuse.
- **Tools and materials** have been developed by Elder Abuse Ontario ([www.elderabuseontario.com](http://www.elderabuseontario.com)) as well as local networks, agencies and organizations to assist families, service providers and seniors in recognizing signs of abuse and connecting with community resources for assistance.
- **Training** is provided by Elder Abuse Ontario to health care providers working in various sectors including Long Term Care Homes, home care agencies, Retirement Homes and hospitals.
- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, June 15<sup>th</sup>** launched in 2006, is officially recognized as an official UN International Day acknowledging the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue.
- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** activities across Ontario, ranging from educational workshops and health fairs to community walks, are supported and organized by Elder Abuse Ontario in collaboration with local elder abuse networks. These events create awareness of elder abuse and engage people in discussions on how to promote dignity and respect of older adults.
- **Education** is the key to prevention!
- **"Starting the Conversation"** by promoting community involvement and engaging the public to take a stand on elder abuse will lead to creating social change - Elder Abuse is not tolerated.

**Elder Abuse Prevention Is Everyone's Responsibility!**

***STOP Elder Abuse. Start the Conversation.***

