

Disclosure

If she chooses to talk with you, its because she trusts you.

- Confidentiality is critical. Be sure you have privacy, particularly if her partner or family member is close by.
- Listen to her without judging.
- Believe her.
- Let her know she is not alone and that abuse can happen to anyone at any age.
- Let her know that there are supports in the community and she can get help.
- Offer her hope and support.
- Offer her the phone numbers of local resources such as a Transition House, Women's Resource Centre or Victims Link.
- Offer to make the call for her.
- Remember the decision is hers. Respect her decision.

What Not To Do

- Don't tell her what to do, when to leave or not leave.
- Don't rescue her by trying to make decisions for her.
- Don't make calls without her permission.

Finding Safety and Support

Keep brochures and other information on violence, abuse and personal safety tips in your office and waiting areas.

The most important referral that you can make is to a Transition House (women's shelter) or to Women's Centres where staff are trained to help women of all ages.

The staff of these agencies can help your client identify choices and look at risks and benefits of those choices. They will not pressure a woman to do something she is not ready or able to do. They can help her develop a safety plan. Confidentiality is a key component of their work.

Shelter and Support

In BC and Yukon, check your local phone book for Transition Houses, Women's Centres, Women's Services or your local Health Authority.

In British Columbia:

Victims Link	1-800-563-0808
BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors	1-866-437-1940

If immediate safety is an issue, always call the local police.

The BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses gratefully acknowledges support for this project from:

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services

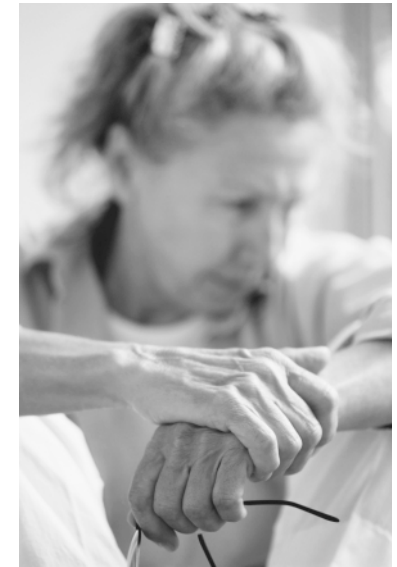
National Crime Prevention Centre Partnership Program

Abuse

Any Woman

Any Age

Any Time



You Can Make A Difference



BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses

Telephone: 604-669-6943

Email: admin@bcysth.ca

Abuse is a crime. It is not just a family matter.

If you provide health, legal or other personal services for women, there is a very good chance that, over the years, you have developed a trusting relationship with your clients as they age. An older woman might confide in you about difficulties she is facing at home which may involve incidents of abuse. You may be in a unique position to identify abuse and provide information on where she can get help.

Abuse Can Take Many Forms

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Violation of Civil Human Rights
- Financial
- Combinations of the above

Various forms of abuse and neglect are offences under the Criminal Code of Canada.

An abuser may be a spouse, adult children, grandchildren or a trusted caregiver. The abuse may be a continuation of partner violence that has been ongoing for many years or begin in a new intimate relationship. Abuse in later years may be aggravated by the declining health of the victim or her abuser.

Abusive adult children or other family members may be dependent on the victim for emotional and/or financial support. They may be unemployed, chemically dependent, mentally ill, under financial pressure, or have a sense of entitlement.

Possible Signs of Abuse

- Repeated “accidental injuries”
- Injuries that do not match the account of what happened
- Statements of being afraid
- Vague, chronic health complaints
- Signs of depression or confusion
- Limited social contact outside the home
- Reference to her partner’s or children’s anger or temper
- Sudden sale or change in title of property belonging to an older woman
- Significant changes in the types and amount of withdrawals from the bank
- Nervousness and fear when her partner or family member is present
- Partner or family member accompanying your client shows some anger or irritability toward her

What Can I Do?

Getting involved doesn’t mean having to solve the situation. You can help your client find her own answers and connect with community support services.

If you notice signs of abuse as you are helping an older woman client, wait until you have a moment alone in absolute privacy before broaching the subject.

Some suggestions to begin a discussion might include questions such as:

- How are things going at home?
- I’m really concerned about you. You are looking tired. Is everything alright? Do you need some help?

Let her know she can confide in you at any time.

She may deny that there is any problem but will probably appreciate your expression of concern for her well-being.

Older women are less likely to report abuse, seek help or use the services of a women’s emergency shelter. Shame and humiliation may prevent her from revealing abuse from a family member.

Fear of further abuse, loss of services, being abandoned or deported may prevent her from disclosing the abuse.