All community members play an important role in ensuring older adults are valued, supported, and safe. Abuse is a difficult issue to address. As every older adult’s life history is unique, so too is each response. You can have a positive impact by being honest, sincere, and taking time to hear their story.

Ways to help:

- **Recognize the signs of abuse and neglect.** Signs may vary depending on the type of abuse and circumstance.

- **Some common signs of abuse include:** depression, fear, anxiety, withdrawal from usual activities, unexplained injuries, lack of basic necessities, change in hygiene, inability to pay bills, etc.

- **Believe** the older adult when they confide in you about their situation.

- **Safety First!** The immediate safety of the older person and yourself is a priority. If you think that an older adult may be in immediate danger call **911 or the RCMP.** Be conscious of not increasing the risk to the older person or others (e.g. confronting or alerting the alleged abuser).

- **Ask if you can help.** Remain calm and speak gently to the older adult. Ask questions such as: Do you feel safe? How can I help? What do you need? What is your biggest fear?

- **Other comforting messages could include:** It’s not your fault. I care about you. You are not alone. Help is available.

- **Listen** to the older adult; do not jump to conclusions or solutions; encourage them to seek professional support.

- **Respect** the older adult’s wishes, privacy, decisions, and important relationships.

- **Educate** yourself about ageism, abuse issues, and listen to your intuition. Familiarize yourself with and seek support from community resources.

If you are concerned about an older adult who is being abused, neglected or who is self-neglecting please contact the Seniors’ Services/Adult Protection Unit
Phone: 456-3946  •  Toll-free 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3946
Tips for helping:

- Always take disclosure of abuse seriously.
- Document details of the disclosure and what actions you have taken.
- Staff/volunteers should always advise their supervisor about abusive situations in a timely manner.
- The most effective response is achieved when all supports work collaboratively.
- Be aware that an older adult may experience extreme guilt/remorse and the stress could trigger a medical crisis or delirium.
- When compromised or fluctuating capacity is observed, further assessment from a health professional should be sought.
- After a disclosure of abuse, the risk to the older person may increase and therefore thorough safety planning is required (see sheet #3 – Safety planning and the older adult).
- Strive to provide support in the least intrusive and most effective manner.

Tips to prevent abuse:

- Encourage and support the older adult to remain active and socially connected (e.g. support group, cultural or faith based supports, other meaningful social activities) as this can be a great source of strength and confidence.
- Assist the older adult to identify trustworthy friends or family who they can rely on when they feel vulnerable. **Remember – the biggest risk factor is isolation.**
- Encourage the older adult to plan ahead and formalize and document their values and wishes by completing an Enduring Power of Attorney, Will, and Advance Directive.
- Help reduce the older adult’s dependency on the abuser, for example by arranging home care services.
- Caregivers may become overwhelmed and fatigued. Encourage caregivers to plan for breaks for themselves and respite for the older adult.

In Yukon there is no legal obligation to report abuse of older adults; however Adult Protection is mandated to respond to reports of abuse. Adult Protection is staffed by trained workers who specialize in supporting abused, neglected, and self-neglecting older adults and their families. The reporter’s identity is always kept confidential.

**Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity**
You are not alone — help and support are available
Seniors’ Services/Adult Protection Unit
phone 456-3946; toll-free 1-800-661-0408, ext. 3946

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