

Scenarios: abuse and neglect of older persons

The scenarios below outline examples of different types of abuse.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Fred was recently widowed and sold his house to move in with his adult daughter Anna, her husband, and their two children. Fred gave Anna and her husband the money from the sale of his home in exchange for being cared for and living with their family for the balance of his life. One day Anna told her father, "This is a very busy house, and you always seem to get in the way — maybe it's best if you just stay in your room." Anna insists that her father stay in his room most of the day. Anna tells her father she is too busy and cannot drive him to the community club where he enjoys meeting his friends to play cribbage. Anna often ignores her father for days, and complains about not having the same freedom since Fred moved into their home. Anna told Fred, "Maybe we should just put you in a nursing home." Fred feels depressed and wishes he never sold his house. He is worried that his only options now are to find a place on his own or move into a nursing home.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

A woman in an apartment building is concerned about an older man who lives next door with his adult son. She hears yelling and swearing followed by what sounds like someone being pushed against the wall. She is concerned the older man is being abused and has recently noticed bruises on his face.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Edith is an 82-year-old woman with dementia living in an extended care facility. One day when a care attendant was preparing Edith for her bath, she started to cry and pull away from the attendant, clutching her nightgown tightly. Upon further investigation, bruises were noticed all over Edith's body. Edith later disclosed that a man who was visiting another resident had sexually assaulted her.

FINANCIAL ABUSE

A neighbour befriends a widow who is feeling lonely and depressed. The neighbour offers to help her buy groceries since she can no longer drive. He obtains the older woman's bank card and password to get money to buy the groceries. The neighbour "helps" her buy the groceries, but also "helps himself" to some extra money from her account.

NEGLECT

Phyllis is 83 years old and lives with her 47-year-old son John, who is an unemployed chronic alcoholic. Because of Phyllis's physical deterioration, she needs assistance with toileting. John is not consistent in assisting Phyllis with toileting, and she is sometimes left lying in a urine-soaked bed for hours. She has developed a urinary tract infection as well as pressure sores on her back due to her son not repositioning her in the bed.

SELF-NEGLECT

Harvey is 78 years old and lives in a very rustic cabin about 30 kilometres out of town. He is a heavy drinker who usually spends a big portion of his monthly pension cheque on alcohol instead of buying groceries. Recently Harvey has developed Type 2 Diabetes and does not always remember to take his insulin on time. He does not have any running water, so he often doesn't take a bath or shower. Last week his power was cut off because he did not pay his utility bill. Harvey's adult son has noticed his father seems more confused lately and has poor hygiene. His son is worried about his father's health and safety, but Harvey insists that he will live his life the way he wants.

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

After her husband passed away this year, Mary came to live with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren who live in Whitehorse. Mary does not have a support system in Whitehorse and misses her friends back home in eastern Canada. Her son and daughter-in-law have been opening her mail and recently disconnected her phone. They will not take her to church, which has been a part of her weekly routine for more than 40 years. Mary feels depressed and her health is beginning to deteriorate.



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