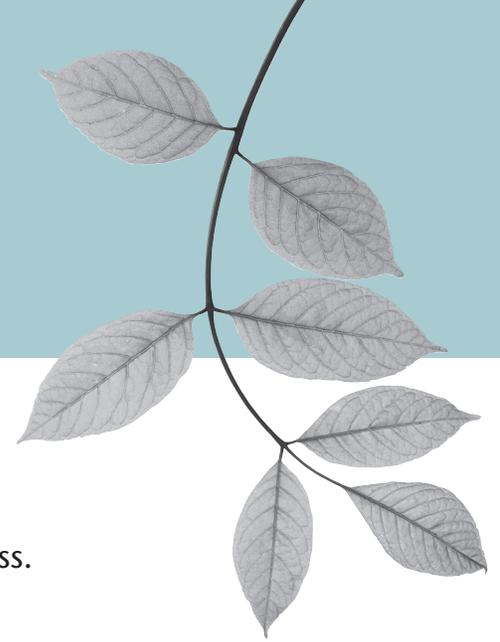


Safety planning to assist abused older persons



Older persons have the right to live safely, to be treated with dignity and respect and to make their own decisions. Safety planning does not guarantee safety, but it will help the older person feel more in control of the situation and will alleviate stress.

Things to consider:

- Safety planning is a fluid process. It must be paced and adapted as circumstances change.
- Carry out planning in conjunction with the older person and his or her friends, families and colleagues. Obtain permission to expand the older person's support network.
- Compromised or fluctuating capacity requires more detailed planning.
- Removing the older person from his or her home should be done only in cases of high risk and after careful consideration.
- Be aware that risk may escalate once the abuser realizes that he or she is losing control.
- The older person may wish to maintain a relationship with the abuser and may be nervous when interacting with him or her. Help walk the older person through scenarios and practice words and actions they could use to help to neutralize the situation.

Taking time to hear the older person's life story is vital, as it will help you appreciate his or her values and concerns.

Safety measures to consider:

Living situation

- Explore whether leaving the home is a viable option. If so, discuss how and when the older person could leave safely.
- Explore available options (e.g., could a trusted family or friend move in temporarily? Perhaps the older person could visit someone else until the situation stabilizes?).
- Consider leaving important items (e.g., keys, copies of important documents, sentimental items) with someone whom the older person trusts.

Health

- Consider health items that the older person will need, such as medications or mobility aides.
- Consider notifying health care professionals of the situation and ensure that medical appointments are kept.

Financial matters

- Review who has access to bank accounts and credit cards (including ATM cards and internet banking). Consider opening a separate bank account and/or changing PIN numbers to decrease financial vulnerability.
- Review how cash and valuables are kept secure (e.g., locked up).
- Review how the older person will maintain income and ensure that he or she is receiving all eligible financial pensions and benefits.
- Review details of how finances will be managed (e.g., would direct deposits and automatic bill payments streamline finances, increase security and decrease worry?).

Safety and security

- Plan for regular check-ins (phone calls and visits).
- Would changing the locks increase safety? Consider giving a key to trusted friend, neighbour or home care support.
- Think about the safety of pets (e.g., moving them to safety and caring for their needs).
- Consider establishing a code to signal neighbors or friends.
- Consider installing a safety alarm system or Line of Life.
- Find out if the older person has a cell phone and up-to-date phone list.
- Consider improving outdoor lighting.

Legal issues

- Consider speaking to Adult Protection, Victim Services or the RCMP about protective orders.
- Locate important legal documents (e.g., Enduring Power of Attorney and Advance Directive) and ensure they are kept safe.

Remember:

- Listen to the older person and provide reassurance that he or she is not at fault.
- Engage the older person in all stages of safety planning.
- Document details of the disclosure and actions you have taken.
- Take time, listen and remain patient.
- Remember that this is a stressful time for the older person.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect the wishes of the older person.
- You may need to repeat information to the older person and provide it in a variety of ways (e.g., written, verbal prompts).



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