Safety Planning for Older Persons

Abuse can happen at any age. It is never acceptable. It is a violation of one's rights as a human being and it should not be tolerated.

If you are being abused you should know:

- The abuse is not your fault.
- You do not deserve to be abused.
- Many types of abuse are against the law; all types of abuse are NOT ACCEPTABLE.
- Abuse is not tolerated in any culture or religion.
- You have the right to live without fear.
- You have the right to have control over your life.
- You can not control the abusive person's behaviour.
- Abuse often gets worse over time.
- You have the right to be safe and secure.

Often when someone is being abused they feel all alone in the world. They may think they are the only person who is being mistreated. You need to know that many people are abused and many people have found ways to deal with these situations.

Some people choose to leave the situation while others choose to remain and take steps to ensure they are as safe as they can be.

Steps to Become Safer

Whatever you choose to do there are some steps that you can take to become safer including:

- Tell someone you trust what is happening to you. This may be a family member, friend, a personal support worker who may be helping you around the house, your doctor, a trusted neighbour, a service provider, or anyone else you trust.

- Ask others for help if you need it. Be specific, if you can, about what type of help you need.

- If someone is hurting you or you do not feel safe you can turn to the police for assistance. Call 911 or call your local police service.

- Visit your local library, community centre or other information centres in your community to find out information about services that you could access. If you have access to the internet, and it is safe for you to use a computer to search for this type of information, search on key words such as "abuse", "elder abuse", "violence and safety".

Planning Checklist

It is important to protect your personal documents and think about what to do in case of an emergency. You may want to consider putting together an emergency kit. Items to put in the kits may include:

- Emergency phone numbers written out and stored in a safe place
- Emergency money (for a taxi, hotel etc). This should include quarters for phone calls or a phone card.
- Extra clothing
- A list of medications, name and phone number of pharmacy and at least three days worth of medications.
- Glasses, hearing aides and other assistive devices such as cane, walker, wheelchair.
- A safe place to go in the event of an emergency (in and outside the house).
- Escape route from the house.
- Copies of relevant documents including:
- Identification (i.e. birth certificate)
- Marriage certificate or record of common-law relationship
    - Notice of assessment from most recent income tax return
    - Cheque books and credit cards
    - Lease, rental agreement, or house deed
    - Bankbook and recent statements
    - Health card
    - Social Insurance Number
    - Passport
    - House, car, and safety deposit box keys
    - Immigration Papers

Available Supports

If you are experiencing abuse, you are not alone; help is available.

Service providers are available in your community to assist you. They will help you discuss your plan for increased safety and help you to prepare to protect yourself in case of further abuse.

By calling the Ministry of the Attorney General's Victim Support Line you can access trained information counselors who can provide information and referral services on elder abuse. The Victim Support Line is toll free, 1-888-579-2888 across Ontario, or in the Toronto area 416-314-2447.

For more information on elder abuse and a list of provincial elder abuse resources, a "*What You Need to Know About Elder Abuse: Information Sheet*" is available at www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/seniors/index.html or call toll-free 1-888-910-1999 (in Ontario).

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