

FINAL PROJECT REPORT:

**“TAKING ACTION
AGAINST ABUSE OF
SENIORS”**

*CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR
COMMUNITY CARE*



*ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DE SOINS ET SERVICES
COMMUNAUTAIRES*

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Sincere thanks are also extended to members of the Advisory Committee for the Project (see Appendix A), who provided overall guidance and direction for the project over the past year.

And finally, thanks are extended to the many individuals and organizations across Canada, who shared so willingly of their advice, expertise, and resources to assist CACC in taking action against abuse of seniors.

I. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the development and outcomes of the CACC Project “Taking Action Against Abuse of Seniors”. The project operated between March 2002 and April 2003. The goal of the project was to assist CACC member agencies in working proactively to prevent abuse, and in taking appropriate action where abuse is already taking place, through the sharing of resources and education of staff and volunteers regarding abuse of seniors.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Canadian Association for Community Care is a national, non profit, bilingual association formed in 1995 by the merger of HomeSupport Canada and the Canadian Long Term Care Association. CACC’s mission is to promote the development of a range of high-quality, flexible, responsive and accessible community care services within a seamless continuum of care. CACC currently has approximately 300 member agencies across Canada, in both urban and rural regions.

CACC member agency staff and volunteers reach tens of thousands of seniors across Canada on a daily basis, through the provision of services and supports. Staff and volunteers are directly involved with seniors in their own homes, as: visiting nurses; physiotherapists and occupational therapists; home support/ personal support workers; and volunteers (such as Meals on Wheels; volunteer visitors etc).

Thus, staff and volunteers are in a pivotal position to:

- Act as potential resources in working to prevent crime or abuse;
- Detect situations where crime or abuse is currently taking place;
- Take appropriate follow up action to support victims of crime or abuse.

CACC has produced a number of resource materials related to abuse, including abuse of seniors. Funding from the Crime Prevention Partnership Program provided CACC with the opportunity to update information, and to respond to current educational needs of staff and volunteers related to abuse of seniors.

III. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The **overall goal** of the project "Taking Action Against Abuse of Seniors" was to work proactively to prevent abuse, and to take appropriate action where abuse is already taking place through:

- a) identifying and gathering examples of existing best practice resources/ tools for service providers, volunteers and informal caregivers regarding abuse of seniors;
- b) selecting and refining the most promising and appropriate tools/resources;
- c) providing member organizations and caregivers with recommended resources/tools to (i) help prevent abuse of seniors; (ii) recognize instances of abuse of seniors; and (iii) take appropriate follow up action.

Project Objectives:

- a) to provide tools/resources for staff, volunteers and seniors with relevant information on the prevention of abuse of seniors;
- b) to provide staff and volunteers with guidelines to help them detect abuse and to respond appropriately when abuse is already occurring; and
- c) to assist informal caregivers of at-risk seniors by providing them with (i) guidelines/checklists that will enable them to assess their own situation and the risks of becoming overburdened, and (ii) suggested actions they can take to obtain support.

IV. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES

The project was overseen by an Advisory Committee composed of representatives of CACC's member agencies, local and national seniors' groups, federal government representatives, etc. (see Appendix A). The committee held one face-to-face meeting; subsequent meetings were held by teleconference. The Advisory Committee provided guidance on all aspects of the project, from development of the needs assessment questionnaire to suggestions regarding the key informant survey and overall design of the CACC website for member agencies.

The project consisted of three phases;

1. Needs assessment of CACC member organizations. The goal of the survey was twofold:
 - To obtain the perspective of member agencies on those factors that hinder and those factors that support, improved practice related to abuse of seniors; and
 - To obtain the feedback of agencies on the availability and adequacy of current resources and training programs for staff and volunteers regarding abuse of seniors.
2. Survey of key informants in the field of abuse of seniors, to seek their advice on recommended resources and training programs regarding abuse of seniors;
3. Development of a website to share information on recommended resources for member agencies regarding abuse of seniors.

V. PROJECT OUTCOMES

a) Needs Assessment of CACC member agencies: Key Findings

In June of 2002, surveys were forwarded to 263 member agencies across Canada; 126 questionnaires were returned, for a very high response rate of 48%.

Key Findings: Agencies were asked to respond to the question: "What factors hinder improved practice related to abuse of seniors?" "**Staff knowledge and expertise**" was identified as the number one factor hindering improved practice (cited by 63% of respondents). Additional barriers included: "lack of communication and coordination" and "time" (cited by 52% of respondents each); and "lack of community resources" (cited by 46% of respondents).

When asked about those factors that would facilitate improved practice in relation to abuse of seniors, 81% of respondents listed **education** as the number one factor. This was followed by "communication and coordination" (cited by 58% of respondents); "access to expertise" (cited by 57% of respondents); "access to community resources" (52% of respondents); and "team approach" (50%). **Thus, education is a key area for action in addressing abuse against seniors.**

With respect to education, based on these responses, one might have anticipated that there would be very few resources or training programs currently in use. In fact, 84% of CACC agencies in the survey indicated that they did have resource materials for staff, and 51% of agencies offered orientation/training for staff in relation to abuse of seniors.

What was significant however, was the degree of uncertainty about the adequacy of resources and training programs. Sixty percent of agencies were unsure as to whether resources met staff needs; 9% indicated that resources were not adequate, and only 31% felt that resources did address staff needs. In the case of training for staff, 44% felt that training did address staff needs; 14% felt that current programs did not, and 42% were unsure.

With respect to volunteers, 64% of respondents offered resource materials, but of this group, 82% were unsure as to whether resources addressed volunteer needs. The majority of respondents (76%) did not offer specific training for volunteers. Of the 24% of agencies that offered training, 38% felt that the training adequately addressed volunteer needs, 6% indicated that training did not address needs, and the majority of agencies (56%) were unsure.

These results raised a number of questions, based on the degree of uncertainty about the extent to which resources and training addressed staff and volunteer needs. From the responses, it appeared that many agencies had not asked staff or volunteers for feedback on the adequacy of resources or training.

A second issue may relate to new findings in the field. If resource materials and training programs were developed a number of years ago, agencies might have concerns that new findings from the research have not been incorporated, and that there is a need for updated training/resources.

And finally, training and resources need to be very targeted to the level of worker involved, and the stage of the abuse cycle for the client. In addition, they must be available in a format that is readily accessible to staff. A number of respondents cautioned that care also should be taken not to "reinvent the wheel", as follows:

There are MANY training programs out there; do not want to see duplication. Need to have them pulled together into a central resource, and have the levels of training ranging from the very basic to quite advanced. Training needs to be targeted to the level at which staff/volunteers may see abuse (for example, Personal Support workers need to know about areas of the body that are more likely to bruise during a physical attack (i.e. trunk injuries) and be educated on ways to ask questions sensitively). Counsellors need to be trained on safety planning and their obligations (under legislation)...; intervention techniques for working with clients in various stages of acknowledging the abuse, etc.

Needs to be in format that can be easily accessed by field staff;

New staff and refresher course for more senior staff;

Our case managers get detailed education, however Home Support Workers who work in homes with seniors get very little training during their courses ... or once employed;

I think this is an ongoing process;

We need to learn to recognize abuse; education and knowledge of who to go to, who to contact.

Future Direction for Training/Resources: Ninety percent of respondents indicated that there is a need for updated training/additional resources for staff, regarding abuse of seniors.

Areas requiring additional training/resources	# of respondents N=110
Protocols on how to respond to abuse	85%
Information on ethical issues *	77%
Detection of abuse	73%
Assessment/evaluation/documentation/reporting	72%
Orientation/education about attitudes, myths, ageism	68%
Use of legal resources	68%
Definitions/descriptions of abuse	56%

* sample ethical issues listed in the questionnaire included: approach to working with the senior, issues of competency, confidentiality, role with the abuser, etc.

In the case of volunteers, 62% of respondents felt that there was a need for updated training/resources. The following areas were cited as priorities:

Areas requiring additional resources/training:	# of respondents N=77
Role of volunteers	91%
Detection of abuse	91%
Description & definitions of abuse	83%
Orientation, education about attitudes, myths, ageism	81%

Access to expertise:

A key factor cited by 57% of respondents in facilitating action against abuse, was "access to expertise". As staff members work with seniors facing abuse, they need access to mentors who have extensive experience in this area, and who can help to guide their actions and approaches in individual cases. This can be a problem in rural areas, areas where staff resources have been reduced, and

regions where the volume of cases is low, and staff as a result, do not develop expertise in working with seniors facing abuse.

Partnerships/communication and coordination/team approach:

"Communication and coordination" (cited by 58% of respondents), and "team approach" (cited by 50% of respondents) are additional key factors in facilitating action against abuse. The questionnaire results found that 67% of responding agencies partnered with other organizations/groups to address abuse against seniors, and 33% did not.

There was a high degree of interest by agencies in enhancing partnerships; 85% of respondents would like further information on developing partnerships to take action against abuse of seniors at the community level.

Funding/Resources:

The survey by CACC also provided feedback on the concerns of member agencies regarding funding and community resources. Fifty-two percent of respondents cited "time" and forty-six percent of respondents cited "lack of community resources" as factors which hinder improved practice related to abuse of seniors; fifty-two percent of respondents felt that "access to community resources" would facilitate improved practice.

Members reflected on the difficulties and frustrations in trying to address needs in the face of competing priorities and insufficient resources:

We have many resources and an excellent clinical team; just have not had the human resource time to implement as much education as we wish with many other priorities of the Ministry of Health;

We have "tons" of resources/materials (nationally and provincially produced), but not adequate funds to pay staff to assist in assisting abuse clients;

Community resources have to be in place to support abused older adults. ... We know that one of the most effective ways of breaking the abuse cycle in the home is breaking down the isolation experienced by our clients. Current policies make this impossible and can contribute to violence in the home. Education and awareness building is very important for staff and volunteers as well as the general public. However, there MUST BE FUNDING for community services dedicated to working with abused older adults if this is done in a big way. As we make people more aware of abuse, more cases will be identified. Without the financial and human resources to work with these clients over a medium to

longer term, we will be doing a disservice to our clients and those whom we train.

Resource material will not eliminate the abuse & neglect of seniors without the resources/personnel/advocates/outreach workers to support seniors in the elimination of this problem;

Lack of legal and social infrastructure available to support abused seniors if they decide to openly deal with the abuse;

The survey feedback provided further evidence of the importance of core community support services in meeting client needs, including cases of seniors who are abused. In an era of cutbacks, advocacy is required, with clear evidence on the important role of community home care/support services.

Other key issues: Respondents noted other key areas for action; these included:

- *Lack of a shared conceptual framework among government/agencies in understanding the dynamics of abuse;*
- *What real alternatives are there to putting the abused senior in a care facility, therefore no action?*
- *Use of legal resources – very ineffective;*
- *I believe the biggest factors relate to lack of reporting by seniors, "taboo" subject, and lack of willingness to report. Also, perhaps a certain percentage of seniors who are taken advantage of have dementias; not able to identify the issues and reach out;*
- *Cultural issues/differences and how they relate to senior abuse;*
- *I have checked info re ethical issues three times because it is the most important; there is quite a bit of information on the how's, when's, where's to intervene. This is troublesome, as poor intervention can be worse than no intervention.*

Summary of Findings of the Member Survey

The survey of CACC member organizations provided a snapshot from the perspective of the community care sector across Canada with respect to abuse of seniors. The findings are of significance not only for CACC, but also for planners and policy makers at federal, provincial, and local levels.

First and foremost, the survey found that there continues to be a great need for **education/resources** for all levels of care providers, and at beginner and

advanced levels to facilitate action against abuse of seniors. Respondents indicated very strongly that there are many excellent resources out there, and that the focus should not be on "reinventing the wheel" by developing new materials.

The challenge identified by member agencies, was to locate and review recommended resources that have been evaluated, and to categorize these in a way that would allow member agencies and service providers to easily access the most appropriate resources/training program(s) for their particular situation or need. **A number of respondents indicated that access to information on the web would be preferred.**

Because many member organizations were uncertain about the adequacy of their current resources/training programs, it was decided that further research was required with and beyond CACC's members, to access recommended materials/programs. Samples of evaluation forms/tools would also be of assistance in enabling agencies to obtain feedback from staff and volunteers on the adequacy and relevance of current resources and training programs on abuse of seniors.

Funding was also cited by many respondents as a critical issue. Adequate funding of core community services is essential to reduce the isolation of seniors who might be being abused, and to provide support in working with seniors over the medium to long term, to address the abuse. Funding is also needed for resource materials and training programs, and to cover staff time to attend such sessions.

b) Survey of Key Informants on Recommended Resources

The Advisory Committee reviewed the comments and needs identified in the survey by member agencies. On the basis of this feedback, the Committee recommended that the project outcome be revised.

Instead of developing new or updated resources on abuse of seniors, the Committee recommended that CACC locate existing recommended resources, and develop a special section on the CACC website devoted to "abuse of seniors", which could be readily accessed by the staff of CACC's member agencies.

The next challenge which became apparent, was to determine "recommended resources" to be listed on the website. In the publication "Prevention of the Abuse of Seniors – Canadian Training Guides" through the Family Violence Prevention Unit of Health Canada (2000), it is noted:

Only six (6%) of producers (of training guides) undertook comprehensive evaluations of their training package ... In addition,

no long-term evaluations examining how the training impacted workers in their work after receiving the training were conducted"
(page 3)

It was decided that a second survey would be conducted to see if there was consensus in the field regarding recommended training programs. Key informants were identified for each province, with a particular expertise in the field of abuse of seniors. Provincial key informant names were gathered from a range of sources including: the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse; Members of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Committee on Safety and Security; Provincial Consultants on Abuse of Seniors; or staff of Provincial Governments' Seniors' Secretariats, etc.

Key informants were contacted and asked to supply a list of recommended respondents to be surveyed in their province re abuse of seniors; suggested respondents included: academics; researchers; practitioners; and service providers involved in abuse programs for seniors.

In January 2003, a comprehensive survey was circulated to 90 respondents across Canada. The survey asked respondents to list recommended resources, training programs, videos, etc. related to areas of interest identified in the CACC member survey.

The response rate to the survey was approximately 15%. Because of the low response rate, it was not possible to determine any consensus regarding "recommended" resources. The highest rate of response was received from trainers in the field of abuse of seniors, who tended to list particular resources and training programs developed in their province or region. This is to be expected, since legislation and service delivery systems vary from province to province.

While the response rate was disappointing, respondents did provide some guidance on those manuals and programs that they found most helpful as trainers and practitioners. The lack of response might suggest that there is no consensus in the field at this time, regarding recommended manuals and programs, and that review and evaluation of training materials/ programs is a continuing need. Due to time constraints, staff was unable to follow up on the survey to encourage a response; this may also have been a factor.

c) Development of the Abuse of Seniors Section of the CACC Website

Following the key respondent survey, the project coordinator ordered and reviewed (where possible) recommended resources, which were primarily Canadian. Next, a special section on abuse of seniors was fully integrated into

CACC's website in the "members-only" area. The Advisory Committee provided guidance on layout for the new section.

Appendix B provides information on the layout for the website links in the abuse of seniors section, which lists web-based resources in English and French. The main topic areas (which provide background information and web-links) are: Resource Centre; Training Manuals; Training Workshops; Protocols/Guidelines; Key Centres & Innovative Programs; Caregiver Information; and Links. The new "abuse of seniors" section will be operational in May 2003.

VI. Conclusion

The Project "Taking Action Against Abuse of Seniors" funded by the Crime Prevention Partnership Program (Justice Canada) has provided 3 key benefits:

- a) For the Canadian Association for Community Care: The Project has enabled CACC to survey member agencies, and to respond to their needs in taking action against abuse of seniors by developing a new section of CACC's website listing recommended materials, resources and programs. CACC member agency staff and volunteers are key players in working with seniors who may be experiencing, or who are at risk of abuse.
- b) Practitioners, trainers, and policy makers: The results of the CACC Member Survey have been of great interest to practitioners, trainers and policy makers across Canada. The survey results have been widely shared, and will inform future decisions around training and priorities for action. The Final Project Report will be posted in downloadable "PDF" format on CACC's Main Web Site and will be widely accessible to interested organizations and groups both within Canada and abroad, as CACC's website has an international audience.
- c) Future Priorities for Action: The project has affirmed that education continues to be a priority area of need for staff and volunteers in responding to abuse of seniors. Evaluation of materials and training programs and identification of "recommended" resources requires further action.

CACC is very grateful to the Crime Prevention Partnership Program for their funding support. CACC will solicit ongoing feedback from member agencies on the usefulness of the new website link, and hopes to continue to expand the site and list updated resources in the coming year. And, CACC's web technology will enable the tracking of visits to, and downloads of, the Final Project Report.

APPENDIX A: ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Judy Cutler	Director of Public Relations CARP Canada's Association for the 50 Plus
Gianna Aitken	Field Supervisor VHA
Carol Burrows	Acting Chair Council on Aging of Ottawa
Christie Hitchcock Daniel Riendeau	Crime Prevention Partnership Program Justice Canada
Esther Hockenstein Francine Cytrynbaum	Elder Abuse Consultation Centre Centre René Cassin
Chris Peacock	Director of Volunteer Services & Program Development VON Canada
Barbara Newport	Manager Ottawa Community Care Access Centre
Dr. Taylor Alexander, RSW (ex officio)	President and CEO Canadian Association for Community Care

Project Staff:

Cathy Bonnah Ranjana Chopra Karen Smith	Project Coordinator Program Coordinator Financial Officer
Salvatore Strippoli Steve Long	Translation Web Site Design - Leverus

APPENDIX B: DESIGN OF SECTION ON ABUSE OF SENIORS WITHIN CACC'S WEBSITE

A) RESOURCE CENTRE:

- National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
- Brochures & Fact Sheets
- Aboriginal Resources
- Ethnocultural Resources
- Seniors' Resources
- Ethical Resources
- Legal Resources
- Risk Factors

B) TRAINING MANUALS

- Guidelines for Reviewing Materials
- Introductory
- Front Line Staff/Volunteers
- Intervention Models
- Community Networks
- Counselling
- Long Term Care Facilities

C) TRAINING WORKSHOPS

- Guidelines for Reviewing Materials
- Home Based Care
- Long Term Care Facilities

D) PROTOCOLS/GUIDELINES

E) KEY CENTRES/INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

F) CAREGIVER INFO

- For Staff
- For Family Caregivers
- Caregiver Links

G) LINKS