



JEWISH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE  
Strengthening Lives in Keeping with Jewish Values



# NOT IN MY FAMILY: RAISING AWARENESS ON ELDER ABUSE

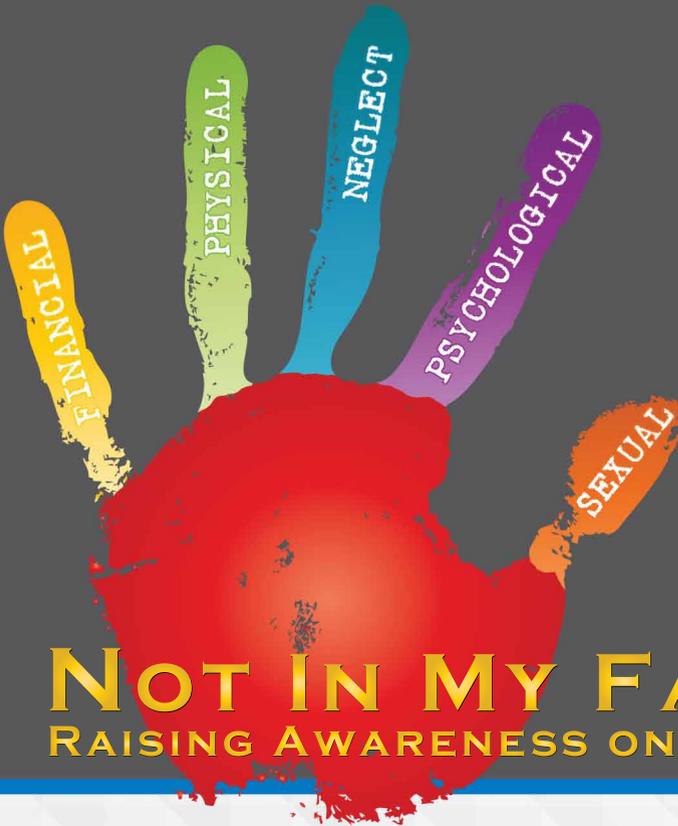


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## WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

**Elder abuse is harm done to an older person.  
Elder abuse is sometimes a crime.**

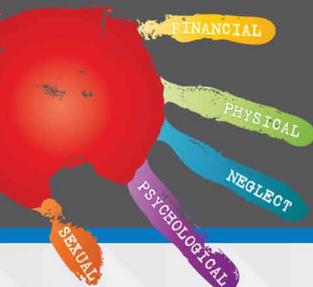
Someone who commits elder abuse usually has control or influence over the older person. Victims of elder abuse often know and trust their abuser. Some victims of elder abuse depend on the people who hurt them for food, shelter, personal care, companionship, or transportation.

### **The abuse could be caused by:**

- Family members
- Friends
- People the older person relies on for basic needs
- Staff in group residential settings: assisted living, supportive housing, long term health care facilities and hospitals



# WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ELDER ABUSE



**Financial**



**Physical**



**Neglect**



**Psychological**



**Sexual**

Type of abuse	Signs to watch for
 <b>Financial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Forcing an older person to sell personal property</li><li>Stealing an older person's money, pension cheques, or possessions</li><li>Committing fraud, forgery, or extortion</li><li>Misusing a Power of Attorney</li></ul> These actions are crimes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Standard of living not matching senior's income</li><li>Unexplained or sudden difficulty in paying bills</li><li>Refusal to spend money without agreement of caregiver</li><li>Missing possessions</li><li>Signing documents without understanding them</li><li>Unusual bank account activity by persons in positions of trust</li></ul>
 <b>Physical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Physical assault, such as slapping, pushing, or beating an older person</li><li>Forced confinement in a room, bed, or chair</li></ul> These actions are crimes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Depression, fear, anxiety</li><li>Unexplained injuries such as cuts, bruises, swelling</li><li>Injury where explanation does not fit evidence</li><li>Refusal of medical treatment</li><li>Frequent visits to doctors and treatment facilities</li><li>Fear and edginess in the presence of a caregiver or family member</li></ul>

# ... AND WHAT SHOULD I WATCH FOR?

Type of abuse	Signs to watch for
 <b>Neglect</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Abandoning an older person, or withholding food and health services</li><li>Deliberately failing to give a dependent older person what they need</li></ul> <p>This kind of neglect may be a crime but may also require immediate assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unkempt appearance such as dirty or inappropriate clothing</li><li>Untreated medical problems</li><li>Over-medicated, or not responding to prescribed treatment</li><li>Malnourished</li><li>Missing dentures, glasses, hearing aids, prosthetics, and walking aids</li><li>Poor hygiene, bed sores, unattended for long periods or being restrained to bed or chair</li></ul>
 <b>Psychological</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Humiliating, insulting, frightening, threatening, or ignoring an older person</li><li>Treating an older person like a child</li></ul> <p>Some of these actions may be crimes in certain circumstances. For example, it is a crime to threaten to physically harm a person or damage their property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Feelings of depression, fear, anxiety or agitation</li><li>Withdrawal or extreme passivity</li><li>Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness</li><li>Older person appears nervous around the abuser</li><li>Older person is excluded from discussions and major decisions</li><li>Difficulty visiting, calling or contacting the older person</li><li>Giving excuses for social isolation</li></ul>
 <b>Sexual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unwanted sexual activity</li><li>Sexual assault</li></ul> <p>These actions are crimes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Same signs as Physical</li></ul>



# WHY DOES ELDER ABUSE HAPPEN?

Elder abuse happens because of the abuser's power and control over an older person. In some cases, it may also be linked to an abuser's:

- **Drug or alcohol problem**
- **History of anti-social behaviour**
- **Mental health problems**



Abuse is more likely to happen when the family is going through a period of high stress, including the stress of looking after the older person. In addition, abuse may also occur where the abusive person is dependent on the older person. The family member is often dependent on the victim for money or a place to live. The abuser may not allow people to visit or talk to the older person, making them vulnerable. The older person may become isolated from the community, social services, and even from other family members.

Abusers in institutions are likely to be frustrated staff members who are not able to do their job properly. Sometimes this is because of poor in-service training or because of over-work and under-staffing. Most abuse takes the form of neglect, poor care, and a lack of respect for residents.

There is no excuse for abuse. The personal circumstances or problems of the abusive person do not excuse abuse of the older person. These problems may be factors in the abuse, but they do not justify it.

# WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF ELDER ABUSE?

Most victims of elder abuse are mentally competent and able to make decisions for themselves. Most are capable of taking care of their own health needs and do not need constant care.

***Do not assume that they are mentally incapable merely because they are older adults.***



# WHY IS ELDER ABUSE SELDOM DISCLOSED?

## Some victims do not disclose elder abuse because:

- They are afraid of what the abuser will do to them if they report the abuse
- They are completely under the control of the abuser and depend on the abuser for food, shelter, clothing and health
- They are afraid they will have to move from their home
- They are ashamed to tell anyone that a family member is assaulting them or stealing their money
- They think that the police and social agencies cannot really help them



## Sometimes family, friends, or health and social service providers do not disclose their suspicions of elder abuse because:



- They do not know who to speak to
- They do not know what can be done
- They do not want to get involved
- The older person asks them not to report it

## There are other reasons why service providers may not disclose elder abuse:

- They may believe that they have a confidential relationship with their client and cannot tell anyone else about what happens in the client's home
- They do not know that assault, theft, or serious neglect in the family or in a long term care home is a crime
- They might be afraid of the abuser and of going into the home after the abuse is reported
- They might believe that the police cannot help because the older person would not be physically able to testify in court
- They might think nothing can be done because the older person might deny the abuse is happening



# HOW SHOULD ELDER ABUSE BE REPORTED?

## Personal care homes, hospitals or other designated health care facility

The Protection for Persons In Care Act is a law to help protect adults from abuse while receiving care in any of the above facilities. Reporting suspected abuse is mandatory under this law.

The law requires reporting by anyone who knows or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a person has been, or might be, harmed by physical, sexual, mental, emotional and financial mistreatment. Any of these, alone or in combination, is considered abuse if the mistreatment causes or is reasonably likely to cause death, serious harm or significant loss of property.

## How to report

The protection for Persons in Care Office (PPCO) of Manitoba Health, Healthy Living and Seniors receives and investigates reports of suspected patient/resident abuse.

Call **204-788-6366** in Winnipeg

or **1-866-440-6366** outside Winnipeg.

## How to report

Victims, or anyone else who suspects elder abuse, can report their concerns to the police or discuss the issue with, health or social services, or a legal service.

## Other settings such as the victim's home

If the victim of elder abuse lives in their own home or in any other setting, the law does not require anyone to report the abuse. In some cases, reporting might be required by someone's employment duties, a contract for services, or a professional code of ethics.



# WHAT DO VICTIMS OF ELDER ABUSE NEED?

Whether voluntary or mandatory, reporting is no guarantee that the abuse will be confirmed or stopped, or that the underlying problems that led to the abuse will be solved.

There are many different kinds of elder abuse, and many different ways to help. Depending on the situation, responses other than reporting may be appropriate as well.

Elder abuse victims need:

- The abuser to stop the violence, exploitation, or neglect
- Safety, shelter, and access to financial resources
- Emotional support, counselling, and greater links to the community
- Information about the law, their legal rights and the criminal justice system, especially about what is likely to happen to their abuser if it is a family member



# WHAT CAN THE POLICE DO?

If you have been abused, or if you think someone else is being abused, tell the police. If you are concerned about someone's safety calling the police is an important part of protecting yourself or being a good neighbour. Telling the police about crimes that have happened to you or that you have seen is one way to prevent future crimes.

When you call the police, the police operator will take as much information as is necessary to be able to send the police. The police might ask for your telephone number and name so that they can get more information from you in the future, or to check some facts. If you tell the police that you want to remain anonymous, they will not tell anyone that you called, including the victim or the person you suspect is abusive but can still attend to investigate if abuse has occurred or check on the victim's wellbeing.

If the police believe that a crime has been committed, they can lay charges. The police can lay charges against anyone who breaks the law when the victim can tell them what is happening but may also advise the victim to obtain legal assistance for non-criminal abuses. Some victims of elder abuse may not be physically or mentally capable of taking the initiative to charge their abuser. Police will respect the wishes of a capable victim if they want to make a formal report or not and will often include witnesses to the abuse to assist when laying criminal charges.

Victims who are concerned about what will happen to their abuser can ask the police for information on the law and the criminal justice system. This might help the victim to be more willing to cooperate with the police.

In an emergency situation or when a victim is in immediate danger, a person is instructed to call **911**.

In a non-emergent situation, a police report can be made to **204-986-6222** to initiate a police investigation.



# NOT IN MY FAMILY: FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

The purpose of this video is to provide the audience with an opportunity to put a face to elder abuse, realizing that it can occur in any family. Circumstances change as do families' abilities to cope. What may start out as a seemingly safe situation can change very quickly. The goal of the film is to stimulate dialogue, reflect on what has been seen in this portrayal and get the audience thinking about it. Together with this booklet, it is also designed to provide participants with the knowledge and resources needed to prevent and manage elder abuse in the future.

Sample questions for the facilitator to use after showing the film:

1. What kind of relationship, experience and family dynamics did you see?
2. What did you learn about the social issue of elder abuse from the story in this video?
3. Besides financial abuse; what other forms of abuse are or can be present in family situations?
4. In what ways are the living arrangements concerning the abuser and the abused, a crucial variable in this story?
5. Describe some of the factors that contributed to the abuse being able to take place.
6. What was your impression of the dynamics between the abuser, the abused and the neighbors? What was most frustrating about these interactions?
7. What needs to happen with the family arrangements in order for Mrs. Friesen's life to improve?
8. Who can help? Where can Mrs. Friesen get help?
9. How can you be of help to people you may know who are in situations of abuse or potential abuse?

Key points in facilitating discussion:

- Discuss from the perspective of both the victim and the abuser
- Remember not to be judgemental
- Consider that many risk indicators can and will overlap
- Look for and identify the risk factors as well as the symptoms of abuse described in this booklet
- Discuss situations that may precipitate an abusive situation



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Presented by

**JEWISH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE**

**Project Coordinator**

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### Credits

A special thank you to all of those who participated in the conception and production of this project

### Not in My Family Committee Members

Reesa Lang   Michael Jordan Goldberg  
Carla Divinsky   Larisa Tolchinsky

### Featured Actors

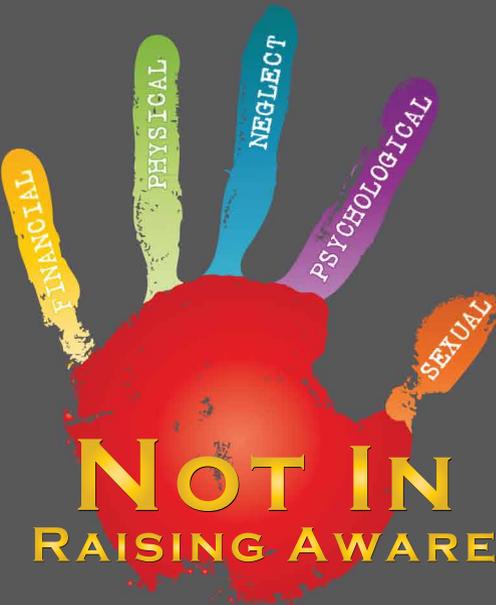
Barry   Jonah Simmonds  
Mrs. Friesen   Donna-Rae Gabbs  
Linda   Enid Barnes  
Marge   Laura Isbister  
Narrator   Ian Peters

**Produced by**   **Script by**

Barry Lank (Lank/Beach Productions)   Sharon Chisvin

*Special thanks to Diane Peters for assistance with location.*

Project funded by New Horizons for Seniors



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Vulnerable Persons Coordinator, *Winnipeg Police Department*

## **Sources:**

**“Elder Abuse: The Hidden Crime.”**

Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE) and Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO)

Manitoba Health, Healthy Living and Seniors > Protection for Persons in Care

[www.gov.mb.ca/health/protection](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/protection)

[olderadultabuse.mb.ca](http://olderadultabuse.mb.ca)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## **Seniors Abuse Support Line 1-888-896-7183**

The Seniors Abuse Support Line is available 24-7; calls are free and confidential. Counsellors are trained to provide one-on-one support to older adults experiencing abuse, and other concerned community members. This is a partnership between Clinic and A & O Support Services for Older Adults.

## **Crisis Accommodation and Supports Crisis Line: 204-788-8687**

Adults with disabilities who have experienced abuse, or who are at risk of abuse and whose abuse-related needs cannot be appropriately or effectively met by the protocols of existing crisis lines can be referred here.

## **A & O Support Services for Older Adults (formerly Age and Opportunity) Confidential Intake Line: 204-956-6440**

A & O: Support Services provides direct Elder Abuse services and receives referrals for the following: consulting around Elder Abuse issues, one-on-one support and counselling, communication support group for older parents / grandparents, assistance with Protection Orders and Safe Suite Program referrals. The Safe Suite Program provided shelter and support to older adults leaving abusive situations. Clients receive long-term counselling support and assistance with legal, financial and housing options.

## **Farm and Rural Stress Line: 1-866-367-3276**

Farm and Rural Stress Line provides telephone and on-line counselling & support to farmers, rural and northern Manitobans..

## **Provincial-wide Domestic Violence Information Line: 1-877-977-0007**

Provincial-wide Domestic Violence Information Line is a 24-hour domestic violence information line to discuss options and get information about services available in your area.

## **Law Phone-In and Lawyer Referral Program: 204-943-2305 (in Winnipeg) or 1-800-262-8800**

Law Phone-In and Lawyer Referral Program provides general legal information and advice over the phone in response to callers' inquiries. Callers are also referred to appropriate law-related agencies, where such an agency exists and the situation warrants it.

## **Legal Aid Manitoba: 204-985-8500 or 1-800-261-2960**

Legal Aid Manitoba provides legal help to people who are financially eligible.

## **Public Guardian and Trustee Manitoba: 204-945-2700 or 1-800-282-8069**

The Public Guardian and Trustee of Manitoba is a provincial government Special Operating Agency that manages and protects the affairs of Manitobans who are unable to do so themselves and have no one else willing or able to act. This includes mentally incompetent and vulnerable adults, deceased estates, and children.

