

## Local Study Shows Action Needed to Address Elder Abuse in Grey- Bruce

The GBEAPN recently completed a study of elder abuse in Grey and Bruce Counties. The current members of the GBEAPN are the Grey-Bruce Community Legal Clinic, Beaver Valley Outreach, South East Grey Community Health Centre, Grey Bruce Public Health, and Health Services at Saugeen First Nation.

The GBEAPN met with Indigenous seniors in Grey and Bruce as well as groups of seniors living in most of the municipalities in the two counties. Almost 17% of them told us they had experienced abuse or know a senior who has experienced abuse. Most of the seniors said that they did not know whom to call about elder abuse other than police. Many of them noted there is a reporting and investigation system for child abuse and seniors should have the same service.

The GBEAPN also surveyed service providers in Grey and Bruce Counties. We received surveys from 78 service providers, most of whom work in health care, home care, and not for profit organizations. Fifty-five percent of service providers stated that they had encountered elder abuse in the past year. Two-thirds of those who encountered elder abuse said the abuse is ongoing. Service providers identified three main challenges to stopping abuse: the senior did not report the abuse, the senior was not aware the situation was abuse, or the senior was tolerating the abuse for various reasons, such as depending on the abuser for help.

Service providers also said they need more education about elder abuse and a reporting system for elder abuse. Merely 4% of service providers indicated their organization keeps statistics about elder abuse. Only 57% of service providers said they have the training they need to address elder abuse.

The GBEAPN is working on a strategy to address the needs for education and reporting about elder abuse found in our study. We have taken three steps right away to provide information about elder abuse in Grey-Bruce.

1. Grey Bruce Public Health created a website about elder abuse:  
<https://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Health/Injury-Prevention/Seniors-Health/Elder-Abuse-Prevention>
2. I am providing information sessions about legal options for preventing and responding to elder abuse. Contact me at 519-370-2200, ext. 33 or at [angela.yenssen@gbclc.clcj.ca](mailto:angela.yenssen@gbclc.clcj.ca) to schedule a presentation.
3. Information is available at the Hanover library about elder abuse in June in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD).

WEAAD is an official United Nations day observed every year on June 15. Everyone can take action to prevent elder abuse by taking the time on June 15 to show respect, care, and concern for a senior in your community in recognition of WEAAD.

*The guest author of this month's column is Angela Yenssen, staff lawyer at the Grey-Bruce Community Legal Clinic and chair of the Grey Bruce Elder Abuse Prevention Network (GBEAPN).*