

Options to Support Older Adults Experiencing Abuse

If someone is concerned that an older adult is being abused, the first step is to talk to the older adult. Mention that the older adult can call 211 to explore options to address the situation. Help the older adult call 211 or call 211 yourself to find out options to share with the older adult.

If an older adult has an illness that causes them to be confused and unable to think or talk about their situation clearly, there are options to get help for them.

Call provincial authorities if the person lives in a retirement home or long term care home: If the older adult lives in one of these homes and is experiencing abuse by anyone, including their family, there are provincial organizations that will investigate. Start by talking to the manager of the home. If they take no action, then call the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (1-855-275-7472) or the Long Term Care Family Support and Action Line (1-866-434-0144) depending on the type of home. If you aren't sure about the type of home where the person lives, call one of these organizations and they will help and connect you with the right organization.

There are a few options to help the older adult if the person does not live in a retirement or long term care home.

Talk to the older adult's power of attorney: Sometimes older adults have signed documents called powers of attorney to name someone to make decisions for them if they are not able to make decisions themselves. Talk to the person named in the power of attorney about your concerns. Encourage them to call 211 if they do not know who can help them support the older adult.

Call the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT): The OPGT is an Ontario government office that will investigate concerns that an adult in Ontario is not mentally able to make their own decisions and is at risk of serious harm due to that incapability. If there is no one named for the older adult in a power of attorney, that person is the abuser, or is taking no action about abuse of the older adult by someone else, then the OPGT might investigate - call the OPGT at 1-844-640-3615.

Call police for a wellness check: Police can go into the older adult's home and check on the older adult. Police have options to help the older adult depending on the details of the situation they encounter during the wellness check.

The West Grey Police have started a pilot project with the Grey-Bruce Community Legal Clinic to explore options and resources for police and the older adult to address elder abuse situations. Legal Clinic staff are not able to go into the home to talk to the older adult unless the older adult wants to talk to the Legal Clinic staff. The Legal Clinic can be a resource to police to discuss options and can talk to the older adult if police receive permission for the Legal Clinic staff to speak to that person.

All of these suggestions are options for friends and family to help an older adult even if they are not named in a power of attorney to have legal authority over the older adult's affairs. We can end elder abuse in our society if we look after each other and talk to older adults and agencies that can help whenever we see abuse happening.