

For Immediate Release

BC SENIORS ADVOCATE AND CRIME STOPPERS SAY ELDER ABUSE IS A SENSITIVE TOPIC AND REPORTING IT IS ESSENTIAL – EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO TELL SOMEONE ANONYMOUSLY

June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

VANCOUVER, B.C. (June 14, 2024): Abuse of elderly people is one of the most underreported crimes in Canada, and the World Health Organization has estimated one in every six seniors over the age of 60 experiences abuse or neglect.

June 15th is Elder Abuse Awareness Day in B.C. and around the globe, and it serves as a reminder for all of us to be vigilant.

B.C.'s new Seniors Advocate Dan Levitt describes seniors abuse as any action that results in harm to a senior by someone in a relationship of trust, such as a family member (adult, child or spouse), friend or caregiver. Statistics from the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL), operated by Seniors First BC, show financial abuse, and emotional/psychological abuse are the most commonly reported offenses. Sadly, a senior may experience more than one type of abuse which may also include physical or sexual abuse, or neglect.

The Office of the Seniors Advocate, Crime Stoppers, [SAIL](#) and [BC211](#) are among several agencies anyone can call for help, along with the five regional health authorities and the police. But elder abuse often goes unreported due to embarrassment, fear of retaliation, or an unwillingness to get a family member in trouble.

“Reporting cases of elder abuse can be a sensitive matter especially if it means reporting family members or friends,” says Levitt. “Compounding the challenge is the fact there is no central reporting line people can call. A review from our office in 2021 found about half of people with information about elder abuse didn’t report it because they didn’t know who to call. Ultimately there should be a system with one phone number that is well known province wide. In the meantime, we urge people to call us or BC211 if they need help finding the best agency to report the information to, or Crime Stoppers if they have important information to pass on and wish to remain anonymous.”

Seniors’ abuse is a crime as well as a human rights violation and reporting it ANONYMOUSLY to Crime Stoppers is a safe way to help police gather enough information to take action.

Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers works year-round to create awareness with its “*See Something, Say Something*” *Elder Abuse Awareness Program*. Presentations are offered at retirement homes, regional community centres, strata councils, anywhere where seniors may gather to let them know they don’t have to suffer in silence.

“It’s mainly about making sure seniors understand they do have an option when it comes to reporting elder abuse,” says Linda Annis, Executive Director of Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers. “Abuse of seniors is a form of violence against some of our most vulnerable citizens. It’s a cowardly act that goes unreported much too often.”

Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers emphasizes everyone who provides tips about elder abuse, or any other crime, will remain ANONYMOUS. This applies to everyone, including newer Canadians who may find reporting the abuse of seniors an unfamiliar concept.

“Metro Vancouver is home to many immigrant families which may result in language and cultural barriers that can hinder older immigrant adults especially from reporting abuse,” Annis adds. “Crime Stoppers has operators who accept tips around the clock in 115 languages including Punjabi, Hindi, Mandarin and Cantonese. You don’t have to speak English or French to get help.”

(See attached backgrounder for examples of often-ignored forms of elder abuse)

About the Office of the Seniors Advocate British Columbia

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a mandate of monitoring seniors’ services and reporting on systemic issues affecting seniors. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers by calling toll-free 1 877 952-3181, BC211, via email at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca, Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

About Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers

First established in the Lower Mainland 40 years ago, Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers is a non-profit society and registered charity that receives anonymous tip information about criminal activity and provides it to investigators. Anonymous tips may be provided through Crime Stoppers’ downloadable “**P3**” app for **Apple and Android phones**, calling Crime Stoppers at **1-800-222-8477**, online at solvecrime.ca, or by following the link on the Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers [Facebook page](#).

Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers accepts tips in 115 different languages and will pay a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to an arrest or charge. Find MVCS on X (Twitter): [@solvecrime](https://twitter.com/solvecrime), Instagram: [metrovancouvercrimestoppers](https://www.instagram.com/metrovancouvercrimestoppers) and You Tube: [@metrovancouvercrimestoppers](https://www.youtube.com/@metrovancouvercrimestoppers).

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BACKGROUNDER

COMMON FORMS OF - AND RECOGNIZING - ELDER ABUSE

Emotional or psychological abuse

- Withholding basic rights and privileges
- Restricting freedom to socialize with others
- Denying a safe secure environment
- Removing decisions making powers
- Bullying - insults, threats, intimidation, yelling, ignoring and isolation.

Financial abuse

- Withholding, misusing, exploiting funds and assets
- Selling property or using funds without the owner's consent
- Forcing elders to alter a will, or abuse power of attorney.

Physical or sexual abuse and neglect

- Acts of violence and other ways to coerce elderly victims
- Depriving them of life essentials
- Using medication to incapacitate them
- Locking seniors in their homes
- Not providing adequate hygiene or meeting personal care needs.

Recognizing Abuse in Seniors

- Physical signs such as fractures, bruising or burns; unusual patterns/location of injury
- Signs of being unkempt or not well nourished
- History of unexplained accidents or injuries
- Behaviours that provoke fear of violence, isolation or diminish dignity or self-worth
- Lack of money for necessities when income appears to be adequate
- Sudden withdrawal of money; unexplained or forced changes to legal documents such as property titles, wills, powers of attorney or representation agreements
- Excluded from social gatherings, inaccessible to family members or long-term friends
- Being agitated, anxious or fearful of being alone with a specific person
- Change in social patterns, interactions and buying habits.