

## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 12, 2025

#### **Seniors' advocates join forces to raise awareness of elder abuse**

VANCOUVER – Leaders of three seniors' advocacy groups joined the BC Seniors Advocate today to raise the alarm about elder abuse, a growing but often hidden issue affecting older adults across the province, in advance of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on Sunday, June 15.

The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”. Elder abuse often occurs when there is an imbalance of control and the abuser either limits or takes control of the rights and freedoms of the senior. Types of elder abuse include: emotional/psychological, physical, sexual, neglect or self-neglect, financial, and withholding rights and freedoms.

“Unfortunately, elder abuse continues to be an issue in B.C. Our most recent Monitoring Seniors' Services report outlines data from many sources and the increasing trends for most types of abuse are extremely concerning,” said Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate. “It's important to recognize elder abuse and report both suspicions and confirmed instances, and stay informed of evolving and increasingly sophisticated frauds and scams in order to protect vulnerable people in our province.”

The United Nations designated June 15 each year as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2011. Since its inception, communities around the world have used this day as an opportunity to raise awareness of elder abuse and neglect of older persons by sharing information about their rights and promoting resources and services to support seniors' safety and well-being. This year's theme is 'Be Bold: Age with Attitude' which encourages people of all ages to prevent elder abuse by standing up for the rights of older people.

“Seniors First BC provides direct services to older adults and those who care about their well-being,” said Marie-Noël Campbell, Executive Director at Seniors First BC. “We encourage seniors who are in situations of abuse, as well as those who care about them, to contact the Seniors Abuse and Information Line to speak with a professional intake worker for information, support, safety planning and referrals to our programs, including Victim Services and legal programs, as well as services near them. Seniors First BC assists older adults throughout the province, including First Nations Elders and seniors in rural B.C.”

Many seniors who experience elder abuse are ashamed or embarrassed to report it, however, several people have recently told Seniors First BC about their experiences. Their stories of verbal, mental and emotional abuse; identity fraud; and bullying and harassment are available online at <https://seniorsfirstbc.ca/about/testimonials/>.

“World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is a powerful reminder that every older adult deserves to live with dignity, safety, and respect,” said Heather Treleaven, Executive Director of the BC Association of Community Response Networks (BCCRN). “At BCCRN, we work alongside communities across the province to prevent abuse and neglect by fostering local leadership, building strong relationships, and ensuring every voice is heard. Together, we can create a British Columbia where older adults are valued, included, and supported—every day of the year.”

“Stopping elder abuse is everyone’s job, and at Family Caregivers of BC, we are proud to be a partner in the massive effort to increase awareness, prevention and response across the province,” said Barb MacLean, Executive Director. “Our BC Caregiver Support Line offers emotional support, access to education, resources and assistance navigating our health and social systems. Hearing from caregivers across the province, we understand the many facets of abuse and neglect, and its harmful impacts. For that reason, we’ve been a member of the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse (CREA) since it began in 2013.”

“CREA is a powerful network of service providers from multiple sectors, including financial, policing, health, social and non-profit work collaboratively to raise awareness of elder abuse, build stronger connections for sharing information, accessing resources and identifying gaps, said MacLean, who is also the chair of CREA. “We are grateful for the funding and participation of the Ministry of Health to support this work.”

Anyone experiencing or concerned about abuse, neglect or self-neglect of a senior is encouraged to contact the Seniors Abuse and Information Line, their local Community Response Network, BC211, Crimestoppers, health authority, RCMP, police, or the Office of the Seniors Advocate.

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### Quick Facts:

The Monitoring Seniors’ Services 2024 report, released by the Office of the Seniors Advocate in December 2024, found:

- Calls (7,102) to the Seniors Abuse and Information Help Line (SAIL) increased 28% over between 2019-2023; calls related to abuse increased 92% in that same time period.
- SAIL data shows and emotional/psychological and financial abuse are the most commonly-reported offenses.
- Violent offences against seniors reported to the RCMP increased 18% between 2019-2023.
- Cases of financial abuse and physical abuse against seniors reported to the Vancouver Police Department increased 67% and 7% respectively between 2019-2023.

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](mailto:info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca), Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

**Seniors First BC** is a charitable, non-profit society that provides information, legal advocacy, support and referrals to older adults across B.C. who are dealing with issues affecting their well-being or rights. The Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) is a confidential information line for older adults and those who care about them to speak to a professional intake worker about abuse, mistreatment and any issues that impact the health and well-being of older adults in B.C. SAIL can be reached at 604-437-1940 (Lower Mainland), or toll-free at 1-866-437-1940 (B.C.)

**BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN)** is a provincial non-profit organization that supports the formation of Community Response Networks (CRNs) to help communities work together to prevent and respond to adult abuse, neglect and self-neglect. BCCRN provides funding, resources and training for over 90 CRNs to facilitate prevention and education activities with local stakeholders and provide a coordinated, community response for vulnerable adults in B.C. By working together and building trusting relationships, we help communities grow stronger, more inclusive, and better prepared to care for and protect one another.

**Family Caregivers of BC (FCBC)** supports over one million people in British Columbia that provide physical and/or emotional care to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour. Services include a toll-free BC Caregiver Support Line at 1 877 520-3267 offering emotional support, assistance navigating the health care system, action planning and access to education including many tools resources at [www.familycaregiversbc.ca](http://www.familycaregiversbc.ca). FCBC provides leadership to strengthen the voice of family caregivers and the significance of their role. Our Caregiver Rx Program facilitates direct referrals between health care providers and caregiver support services (social prescribing) and advances "caregiver friendly" health care policies and practices. FCBC is a not-for-profit registered charity established in 1989 so that no caregiver cares alone.

**The Council to Reduce Elder Abuse (CREA)** is a province-wide group created in 2013 to advance the prevention of elder abuse including recognition, prevention, and response by sharing information, raising public awareness, and supporting professional development and capacity-building across B.C. CREA is made up of representatives from various sectors including the finance, policing, health, and law, and sustains its work thanks to the financial support provided by the BC Ministry of Health. SFBC, FCBC and BCCRN are all members of the CREA.

OSA Communications  
250 213-2024  
osa.comms@gov.bc.ca  
www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca

Seniors First BC  
Marie-Noël Campbell, Executive Director & Lawyer  
778 945-9866  
mncampbell@seniorsfirstbc.ca  
www.seniorsfirstbc.ca

BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN)  
Heather Treleaven, Executive Director  
604 721-9425  
heather.treleaven@bccrns.ca  
www.bccrns.ca

Family Caregivers of BC  
Barb MacLean, Executive Director, and  
Chair, BC Council to Reduce Elder Abuse (CREA)  
barbmaclean@familycaregiversbc.ca  
250 516-8866  
www.familycaregiversbc.ca  
reduceelderabusebc.ca