

RECOGNITION

Module 1: Types of violence

In this module:

- **Recognizing violence;**
- **Types of violence;**
- **Stories from the front lines; and,**
- **Questions for reflection.**

Recognizing violence

To begin to work on preventing violence against older persons, it is important to first be familiar with the various types of violence experienced by older persons. Knowing these types of violence and being able to recognize them when they occur are the first steps in violence prevention.

It is also important to recognize that violence against older persons:

- Includes both intentional and unintentional acts;
- Can occur in all economic, social and cultural groups;
- Can occur in the home, community and in residential care facilities; and,
- Can happen once, occasionally or on an ongoing basis.

Types of Violence

In this section you will learn about nine main types of violence that are experienced by older persons: physical, psychological, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, neglect, spiritual and cultural. Under each heading you will find examples of each type of violence. Some examples of violence may fall under more than one heading because of the impact of this type of violence on an older person.

1. Physical Violence

Physical violence occurs when someone uses a part of their body or an object to control a person's actions.

Physical violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Using physical force which results in pain, discomfort or injury;
- Hitting, pinching, hair-pulling, arm-twisting, strangling, burning, stabbing, punching, pushing, slapping, beating, shoving, kicking, choking, biting, force-feeding, or any other rough treatment;
- Assault with a weapon or other object;
- Threats with a weapon or object;
- Deliberate exposure to severe weather or inappropriate room temperatures; and,
- Murder.

Medication abuse

- Inappropriate use of medication, including:
 - Withholding medication;
 - Not complying with prescription instructions; and,
 - Over- or under-medication.

Restraints abuse

- Forcible confinement;
- Excessive, unwarranted or unnecessary use of physical restraints;
- Forcing a person to remain in bed;
- Unwarranted use of medication to control a person (also called “chemical restraint”); and,
- Tying the person to a bed or chair.

2. Sexual Violence

Sexual violence occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity.

Sexual violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Touching in a sexual manner without consent (i.e., kissing, grabbing, fondling);
- Forced sexual intercourse;
- Forcing a person to perform sexual acts that may be degrading or painful;
- Beating sexual parts of the body;
- Forcing a person to view pornographic material; forcing participation in pornographic filming;
- Using a weapon to force compliance;
- Exhibitionism;
- Making unwelcome sexual comments or jokes; leering behaviour;
- Withholding sexual affection;
- Denial of a person's sexuality or privacy (watching);
- Denial of sexual information and education;
- Humiliating, criticizing or trying to control a person's sexuality;
- Forced prostitution;
- Unfounded allegations of promiscuity and/or infidelity; and,
- Purposefully exposing the person to HIV-AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections.

3. Emotional Violence

Emotional violence occurs when someone says or does something to make a person feel stupid or worthless.

Emotional violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Name calling;
- Blaming all relationship problems on the person;
- Using silent treatment;
- Not allowing the person to have contact with family and friends;
- Destroying possessions;
- Jealousy;
- Humiliating or making fun of the person;
- Intimidating the person; causing fear to gain control;
- Threatening to hurt oneself if the person does not cooperate;
- Threatening to abandon the person; and,

- Threatening to have the person deported (if they are an immigrant).

4. Psychological Violence

Psychological violence occurs when someone uses threats and causes fear in a person to gain control.

Psychological violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Threatening to harm the person or her or his family if she or he leaves;
- Threatening to harm oneself;
- Threats of violence;
- Threats of abandonment;
- Stalking/criminal harassment;
- Destruction of personal property;
- Verbal aggression;
- Socially isolating the person;
- Not allowing access to a telephone;
- Not allowing a competent person to make decisions;
- Inappropriately controlling the person's activities;
- Treating a person like a child or a servant;
- Withholding companionship or affection;
- Use of undue pressure to:
 - Sign legal documents;
 - Not seek legal assistance or advice;
 - Move out of the home;
 - Make or change a legal will or beneficiary;
 - Make or change an advance health care directive;
 - Give money or other possessions to relatives or other caregivers; and,
 - Do things the person does not want to do.

5. Spiritual Violence

Spiritual (or religious) violence occurs when someone uses a person's spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control the person.

Spiritual violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Not allowing the person to follow her or his preferred spiritual or religious tradition;
- Forcing a spiritual or religious path or practice on another person;
- Belittling or making fun of a person's spiritual or religious tradition, beliefs or practices; and,
- Using one's spiritual or religious position, rituals or practices to manipulate, dominate or control a person.

6. Cultural Violence

Cultural violence occurs when a person is harmed as a result of practices that are part of her or his culture, religion or tradition.

Cultural violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Committing “honour” or other crimes against women in some parts of the world, where women especially may be physically harmed, shunned, maimed or killed for:
 - Falling in love with the “wrong” person;
 - Seeking divorce;
 - Infidelity, committing adultery;
 - Being raped;
 - Practicing witchcraft; and,
 - Being older.
- Cultural violence may take place in some of the following ways:
 - Lynching or stoning;
 - Banishment;
 - Abandonment of an older person at hospital by family;
 - Female circumcision;
 - Rape-marriage;
 - Sexual slavery; and,
 - Murder.

7. Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse occurs when someone uses language, whether spoken or written, to cause harm to a person.

Verbal abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Recalling a person's past mistakes;
- Expressing negative expectations;
- Expressing distrust;
- Threatening violence against a person or her or his family members;
- Yelling;
- Lying;
- Name-calling;
- Insulting, swearing;
- Withholding important information;
- Unreasonably ordering around;
- Talking unkindly about death to a person; and,
- Telling a person she or he is worthless or nothing but trouble.

8. Financial Abuse

Financial abuse occurs when someone controls a person's financial resources without the person's consent or misuses those resources.

Financial abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Not allowing the person to participate in educational programs;
- Forcing the person to work outside the home;
- Refusing to let the person work outside the home or attend school;
- Controlling the person's choice of occupation;
- Illegally or improperly using a person's money, assets or property;
- Acts of fraud, pulling off a scam against a person;
- Taking funds from the person without permission for one's own use;
- Misusing funds through lies, trickery, controlling or withholding money;
- Not allowing access to bank accounts, savings, or other income;

- Giving an allowance and then requiring justification for all money spent;
- Persuading the person to buy a product or give away money;
- Selling the house, furnishings or other possessions without permission;
- Forging a signature on pension cheques or legal documents;
- Misusing a power of attorney, an enduring power of attorney or legal guardianship;
- Not paying bills;
- Opening mail without permission;
- Living in a person's home without paying fairly for expenses; and,
- Destroying personal property.

9. Neglect

Neglect refers to situations in which your basic needs are not being met by someone who is responsible to provide your care or to assist you.

Neglect includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Failing to meet the needs of a person who is unable to meet those needs alone;
- Abandonment in a public setting; and
- Not remaining with a person who needs help.

Physical neglect

- Disregarding necessities of daily living, including failing to provide adequate or necessary:
 - Nutrition or fluids;
 - Shelter;
 - Clean clothes and linens;
 - Social companionship; and
 - Failing to turn a bed-ridden person frequently to prevent stiffness and bed-sores.

Medical neglect

- Ignoring special dietary requirements;
- Not providing needed medications;
- Not calling a physician; not reporting or taking action on a medical condition, injury or problem; and
- Not being aware of the possible negative effects of medications.

Note about Self-Neglect

- An older person who is self-neglecting is causing harm to himself or herself, as opposed to being harmed by someone else.
- Self-neglect is not considered to be in the same category as violence. However, in situations where there is self-neglect, violence or abuse may also be present, including neglect by another person.
- In respecting an individual's right to choose, any adult has a right to live in conditions that could be viewed by others as inappropriate or unsafe, as long as there is no risk of serious harm to self or others. However, it is possible that the person does not have information about self-care, or home care services, or other forms of assistance. If this is the case, consider offering help with information or resources.
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, the *Adult Protection Act* exists to protect adults who lack capacity and who are neglected and abused. It is required by law for all citizens to report situations where abuse, neglect and self-neglect is suspected. See Module 14 for more information about interventions, and Module 16 for helpful resources.

STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

See if you can identify all the various types of violence that might be present in the following scenarios:

Gloria

Gloria, 75, cannot read or write and had been quite dependent on her husband, who recently died. Her son and daughter-in-law have now moved into her home and have taken control of her finances. They neglect to pay her bills in order to purchase things they "need" more. They refuse to assist her with monitoring her blood sugar levels and do not take her to medical appointments. They can go for days without speaking to her.

- Physical violence
- Psychological violence
- Emotional violence
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Jack

Jack, 83, has been admitted to a long-term care facility. His family comes to visit him often. When they do, they usually ask him for money, saying that they need the funds for food or for their children. There is a history of alcohol abuse in the family. Some family members appear drunk and smell of alcohol when they visit the home. Jack is capable of making his own decisions, but he gives the money to them for fear that that they will not visit him.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Which types of violence had you not thought about before?
2. How did you feel as you were reading about the different types of violence against older persons?
3. Unfortunately, almost everyone experiences or witnesses violence at some point and in some aspect of life – in school, in the workplace, on the street, through family or friends. Can you determine whether you or someone you know has experienced or been affected by any of the types of violence mentioned in this module?
4. How will you use your knowledge of types of violence in your work? In your community? At home? With relatives or friends?