



## AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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The percentage of the global population who are seniors is increasing each year. Estimates indicate that by 2050, the global age of people over the age of sixty will surpass those under the age of sixty. The increase in the senior's population has seen the issue of elder abuse become more prevalent in society and is an issue which must be addressed.

Elder abuse is recognized to be a family violence issue, an intergenerational concern, a multi-dimensional problem and a human rights issue. The United Nations has identified elder abuse as a growing problem which requires a global response. In 2011, the U.N. Secretary-General identified several challenges facing seniors that will require strategies at the national and global level. Some of the challenges are:

- Discrimination based on age
- The increasing poverty level of older persons
- The Lack of medical services
- Violence and abuse towards seniors

They have also identified that the rights of older persons **must** be protected. June has been designated by the United Nations as a month to recognize the serious issues surrounding elder abuse.

In Nova Scotia, it is estimated that 4% to 10% of older adults experience abuse. In most cases the abuser is someone in a relationship of trust to that person. One of the challenges in addressing elder abuse is to provide clarity to our communities on what constitutes elder abuse. Elder abuse can be defined as “**any action that results in harm or distress to an older person**”. Elder abuse can include physical, psychological, financial abuse and neglect. The abuse can be a single incident or a repeated pattern of behaviour. Often more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time.

Let me go into more detail on each type of abuse:

## **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse to seniors can encompass any action that injures or risks injuring a senior. These actions could include punching, kicking, shaking, pushing, over medicating or restraining.

## **Psychological Abuse**

Psychological abuse may include any action that diminishes the self-worth of the senior. They may include threats, put downs, humiliation, and harassment.

## **Financial Abuse**

Financial abuse could be any action which decreases the financial worth of the person. It may include the unauthorized use of a senior's bank card or cashing someone's cheques without their permission. It may be pressure from family members to change wills or legal documents.

## **Neglect**

While the other forms of abuse are actions perpetrated by the offenders, neglect is often the lack of any action to support the senior. Often this would be a caregiver or family member who fails to provide the senior with food, water, shelter, clothing or other necessities like medical assistance. Suspicions of neglect can be reported to adult protection at **1-800-225-7225**.

There are a few indicators that may assist the public in recognising if an elder is being neglected or abused.

- Physical injuries that cannot be explained.
- An appearance of poor nutrition or dehydration.
- Sudden fear, anxiety towards a family member, friend or care-giver.
- Appears to have no money in their accounts even though they are getting money from social assistance.
- Being isolated from certain segments of their family.
- A reluctance to speak about the situation.
- Unaware of new legal documents in their name, such as a new will or a new mortgage.

If you suspect a senior is being abused, please contact the Amherst Police Department at **667-8600** or contact the Senior Abuse Line at **1-877-833-3377**. The Cumberland County Senior Safety Coordinator is Cheryl Laliberté. Cheryl provides support for seniors and their caregivers. She can be contacted at **667-7484** and is also available for home visits.

June 12th is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**. The Amherst Police Department and the Cumberland Senior Safety Program invite you to join us at the Lion's Den, on June 12th from 10:30 – 12:30, to recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. We will be sharing information about elder abuse and including information on resources available in our community. Guest speaker Dianne Ardern will provide a presentation on Dementia. There will also be skits that will show a lighter look at a serious issue. The event is free and refreshments will be provided. Our overall message for awareness day is:

**To Live life without fear...**