
NEWS RELEASE

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June 18, 2015

Ministry of Health

Province funds work to raise awareness of elder abuse

LANGLEY – As part of the Province’s efforts to reduce elder abuse, Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors Darryl Plecas announced \$2.6 million in funding to the BC Association of Community Response Networks.

The association’s mandate is to facilitate prevention and education activities with local stakeholders to help end abuse and neglect of older adults in British Columbia.

“It is important for the Province, local governments, community groups and all British Columbians to work together to prevent and respond to elder abuse,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “This collaborative effort is part of our renewed strategic direction, which guides us in supporting the health, safety and independence of seniors.”

June 15, 2015 marked the tenth anniversary of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – a day to shine a light on abuse that older adults may experience.

“Elder abuse can take on various forms. It is not always obvious, but it is always unacceptable,” said Plecas. “While it may be a challenging topic to discuss, it is essential for all of us to be aware and take action against elder abuse. Each one of us has a responsibility to promote a culture of respect and protect the safety of older adults.”

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or a lack of appropriate action that causes harm or distress to an older person. It often occurs in a situation of trust, for instance by a caregiver or adult child. Perpetrators may increasingly isolate their victim and seniors often remain silent, too afraid, ashamed, isolated or dependent on their perpetrator to seek assistance.

“The BC Association of Community Response Networks supports networks in 55 centres across B.C., with activity in 122 communities,” said BC Association of Community Response Networks executive director, Sherry Baker. “The networks are made up of agencies, service providers and citizens who develop a co-ordinated community response to abuse, neglect and self-neglect.”

“Financial abuse is by far the most common form of abuse, so many of the community response networks have bankers, notaries public, lawyers, police and others who learn from each other so they can provide the best response possible,” added Baker.

In addition to the \$2.6 million in funding, the Province has also provided funding totalling \$700,000 over two years to the BC Association of Community Response Networks to support the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse-related activities. These grants are to support community-based awareness building, enhanced training and improved response to elder abuse through community partnerships and collaboration. There are 14 grant recipients and each project has received up to \$50,000.

It is estimated that between four and 10% of seniors will experience some form of physical, emotional, financial or sexual abuse, and/or neglect. However, elder abuse is significantly under-reported.

“In my work, it is tough to see people who have worked hard all their lives, who have contributed to our communities and who have raised families, being abused and neglected sometimes by the very people they have cared for,” said Leanne Lange, clinical specialist, adult abuse and neglect with Fraser Health. “But with more cases being reported, we are working hard to respond to the abuse and neglect of seniors, and ensure they are receiving the care, support and respect they deserve, instead of allowing them to suffer in silence.”

If you or someone you know is being abused and you believe they might be in danger, call 9-1-1. If you want information about this serious public health issue, call the Seniors Abuse and Information Line, operated through the BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support at 604 437-1940 in Vancouver or 1 866-437-1940, toll-free in B.C., from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, excluding statutory holidays. Translation services and TTY are available.

The Ministry of Health has developed “Setting Priorities for the B.C. Health System,” an overarching strategy to create a more sustainable health system. A large part of the priorities are focused on quality of life for seniors. As part of this, a series of policy papers, including one on primary and community care, was created and provides strategies on how government can best support seniors to live independently and safely for as long as possible.

Learn more:

For information and practical resources on elder abuse, including brochures and other information in French, Chinese and Punjabi, visit: SeniorsBC.ca/elderabuse

To learn more about the BC Association of Community Response Networks, visit: www.bccrns.ca

To learn more about the services offered by the BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support, visit: www.bcceas.ca

To read the Ministry of Health’s strategic document, Setting Priorities for the B.C. Health System and the accompanying policy papers, visit: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=EF73BCF3DE34484CB4DBA9E34092402C

A backgrounder follows.

Media Contact:

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BACKGROUND 1

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Council to Reduce Elder Abuse grant recipients

The 14 Council to Reduce Elder Abuse grant recipients are:

Association of Neighbourhood Houses of B.C. in partnership with the Finding Home program

– Will create strategies to engage seniors and build a model for delivering and expanding the Finding Home program throughout B.C. The program will raise awareness with older adults from diverse ethno-cultural communities about elder financial abuse.

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres – Will conduct “Us and Our Elders” training sessions throughout B.C., which will bring together Elders and non-aboriginal social service providers together to develop through holistic education, an Elder peer support network that addresses vulnerability and social isolation.

BC Association of Community Response Networks – Mentors will train and support local communities to deliver more “It’s Not Right” workshops to educate the public in identifying and responding to elder abuse.

BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support – Will develop and deliver in collaboration with the Family Caregivers of British Columbia an education program and materials on elder abuse prevention, recognition and response for family caregivers via webinars, teleconferences and in-person workshops.

BC Crime Prevention Association – Will augment existing training for police, frontline criminal justice staff and community partners, and provide tools for these groups to further educate their community members about elder abuse.

Department of Sociology/Centre on Aging – University of Victoria – Will conduct a project to explore elder abuse in Chinese/South Asian communities within the Lower Mainland and Greater Victoria areas. The department and centre will engage with key stakeholders to map current elder abuse prevention tools for these communities, educate service providers, and determine what other elder abuse prevention tools are needed.

Japanese Community Volunteers Association – Will ensure work with other community organizations to ensure elder abuse information is available in Japanese for Japanese Canadian communities, provide training on elder abuse for the community and care providers, and build a network of supports.

Kwadacha Nation – Will develop culturally appropriate Elder abuse materials for community health workers, conduct community prevention and awareness campaigns, and develop Elder abuse response protocols.

Network of Inner City Community Services Society – Will increase social connections for Aboriginal Elders to be part of peer and community social groups in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver through outreach co-ordinators.

Simon Fraser University's Gerontology Research Centre – Will create a set of videos and fact sheets through a unique inter-generational project that brings together queer youth with queer senior creative writers, and will conduct town hall meetings in each of B.C.'s health authorities to raise awareness and address elder abuse in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. – Will increase public awareness of elder abuse issues and community resources in the Chinese community by educating Chinese speaking seniors, families, volunteers and health-care professionals.

Vancouver Police Department – Will provide community information sessions on elder abuse and training for community organizations.

West Coast Legal Education Action Fund – Will partner with the Canadian Centre for elder Law to produce a workshop curriculum on family law issues impacting older women fleeing domestic violence. The workshop will be delivered in-person and via webinar to support frontline responders to provide accurate legal information on legal issues. A booklet will be produced to provide the legal information in an accessible and appropriate format for diverse groups of older women.

West End Seniors' Network – Will train staff and volunteers to prevent and respond effectively to instances of elder abuse, specifically, abuse of senior renters by their landlords and neighbours.

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