

# Financial Abuse

## Protecting British Columbia's Seniors

### **Did you know that financial exploitation is the most commonly reported form of abuse of seniors?**

Financial exploitation is one form of senior abuse. Other forms include neglect, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

Financial exploitation has two main forms – financial abuse and economic crime.

Financial exploitation can happen to anyone. If it happens to you, remember – you are not alone, and you are not to blame.

Economic crime includes consumer fraud, investment fraud, scams and identity theft. These crimes can be carried out through email or the Internet, by door-to-door salespeople, or by telemarketers. Call Consumer Protection BC, the BC Securities Commission or your local police if you suspect you have been targeted.

### **Financial abuse is a violation of trust.**

An example is when someone you know and trust – a family member, friend, or care provider – tries to take what belongs to you, such as your money, your property, or other assets. Financial abuse is wrong. Sometimes it is also illegal.

### **Examples of financial abuse:**

- Someone puts pressure on you to gain access to your money or property;
- Someone puts pressure on you to lend them money;
- Someone misuses a power of attorney to take your money;
- Someone forces or tricks you into signing or changing a contract or will.

Financial abuse often goes hand in hand with emotional abuse. The person may manipulate you, bully you, or threaten you to get your money or other valuables.

### **Remember...it's your money**

## What should you do?

### ***Prevent it!***

- Conduct your own financial matters as much as possible.
- Plan ahead and make your wishes known.
- Say “No” when someone pressures you for money – even family members.
- Make sure you understand every document you sign.

### ***Report it!***

- Talk to someone you trust.
- Call your local police. They may investigate to determine if the abuse is a crime and may recommend how to proceed.
- Call the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia if someone is misusing their powers under a power of attorney that you granted to them.

### ***Get legal information and advice!***

- Talk with a lawyer and review the resources below when making plans such as making a power of attorney.
- Good legal information and advice is an important investment.

## Useful Resources

### ***It's Your Choice, Personal Planning Tools***

#### **Public Guardian and Trustee of BC**

This publication provides information on enduring powers of attorney, representation agreements, advance directives, committees and other personal planning considerations.

[www.trustee.bc.ca/documents/STA/It's\\_Your\\_Choice-Personal\\_Planning\\_Tools.pdf](http://www.trustee.bc.ca/documents/STA/It's_Your_Choice-Personal_Planning_Tools.pdf)

### ***Making a Will and Estate Planning***

#### **Canadian Bar Association, B.C. Branch**

This telephone script discusses wills and other aspects of estate planning, such as joint assets and trusts. Call Dial-A-Law to listen to script 176, or to read the text, visit their website below.

**Ph: 1 800 565-5297**

[www.cbabc.org/For-the-Public/Dial-A-Law/Scripts/Wills-and-Estates/176](http://www.cbabc.org/For-the-Public/Dial-A-Law/Scripts/Wills-and-Estates/176)

## Who Should You Call For Help?

***If the situation is an emergency or if a person is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.***

Abuse may be a crime and fall under the Criminal Code. Call your local police station for information or to report abuse.

### **BC Centre for Elder Advocacy & Support— Seniors Abuse & Information Line (SAIL)**

SAIL is a safe place for older adults and those who care about them to talk to someone about situations where they feel they are being abused or mistreated, or to receive information about elder abuse prevention.

Available 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily (excluding holidays).

**Ph: 604 437-1940 or Toll-free: 1 866 437-1940**

Language Interpretation: Monday – Friday (9 a.m. – 4 p.m.)

*SAIL is TTY accessible.*

**TTY: 604 428-3359 or 1 855 306-1443**

**[www.bcceas.ca](http://www.bcceas.ca)**

### **VictimLink BC**

This is a toll-free, confidential and multilingual telephone service available across B.C. and the Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.

**Toll-free: 1 800 563-0808**

*VictimLinkBC is TTY accessible.*

**TTY: 604 875-0885**

### **Consumer Protection BC**

Promotes a marketplace that is fair to both consumers and businesses. If you have a question about your rights as a consumer call the following number.

**Ph: 1 888 564-9963 or 604 320-1667**

### **BC Securities Commission**

Phone the BC Securities Commission to report a suspected scam, or file a complaint against an investment advisor or a company.

**Ph: 604 899-6854**

**Toll-free: 1 800 373-6393 (across Canada)**

### **Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia**

To report financial abuse of a vulnerable adult or abuse by a substitute decision-maker, contact the phone numbers below and ask to be transferred to the Public Guardian and Trustee.

**Ph: 604 660-4444**

**Toll-free: 1 800 663-7867**

**[www.trustee.bc.ca](http://www.trustee.bc.ca)**

### **Seniors' Health Promotion**

For general information about government programs and services

Ministry of Health, P.O. Box 9825 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, British Columbia V8W 9W4

**[www.SeniorsBC.ca](http://www.SeniorsBC.ca)**

The Government of British Columbia thanks the Government of Nova Scotia for permission to adapt material from its senior abuse awareness and prevention campaign: *Respect Nova Scotia's Seniors*.