

THE UNION OF BRITISH  
COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS



# Elder Abuse

A GUIDE FOR INDIGENOUS SENIORS

**2019**



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**If you are being abused, call VictimLinkBC at 1-800-563-0808, or visit page 4 of this guide.**

VictimLinkBC is a free and confidential telephone service available across BC and the Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

VictimLinkBC provides information and referral services to all victims of crime, and immediate support to victims of family and sexual violence.

Elder abuse is a form of family and sexual violence.

VictimLinkBC can help you find support near you, even in rural communities.

All victims' services in BC are free.

## **A note on the term "elder":**

In this guide, the term "elder" will refer to Indigenous people who are 55 years and older

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We will use the terms "elder" and "senior" interchangeably.

This term should not be mistaken with "Elder" as an honour or title.



## What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is the mistreatment of an older person by a friend, family member, spouse, nurse, or caregiver.

Elder abuse is a crime. Elders deserve respect, safety, and security. There is no excuse for abuse.

There are three categories of elder abuse:

- Domestic elder abuse usually takes place in the elder's home or in the home of the caregiver. The abuser is often a relative, close friend, or caregiver.
- Institutional abuse is abuse that takes place in a nursing home, foster home, or assisted-living facility.
- Self-neglect is behaviour of an elder that threatens their own health or safety.

## Terms to know:

- An "elder" is an older person who is 55 years and older.
- A "caregiver" is a person who has been trusted to take care of an elder. A caregiver can be a spouse, friend, or family member. A caregiver can also be a professional, such as a nurse.



## Elder abuse can take on many different forms.

The most common types of elder abuse are physical, emotional, and financial. Elder abuse can be difficult to identify because the caregiver may not allow people to check-in on the elder or keep financial records a secret. It's important to know what elder abuse is and what elder abuse can look like.

The chart below lists different types of elder abuse, the specific actions that are considered elder abuse, and the signs of each type of abuse.

If you or someone you know is being abused, seek help immediately.

Type of elder abuse	Actions	Signs
<b>Abandonment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deserting an elder at a hospital, nursing home, or other institution</li><li>• Deserting an elder at a shopping centre or other public location</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An elder left alone in a public place</li><li>• An elder's report of being abandoned</li></ul>
<b>Physical abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assault</li><li>• Rough handling</li><li>• Withholding necessities like food, water, medication, and hygiene</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bruises, welts, lacerations</li><li>• Broken bones and fractures</li><li>• Cuts and internal injuries</li><li>• Medication overdose</li><li>• Broken glasses</li><li>• An elder's report of physical abuse</li><li>• An elder's sudden change in behavior</li><li>• A caregiver refusing to let anyone see the elder</li></ul>



### **Emotional abuse**

- Verbal assault
- Isolation
- Threats
- Humiliation
- Lack of affection
- Not allowing elders to make their own decisions
- Treating the elder like a child
- Feeling emotionally upset or agitated
- Becoming withdrawn and quiet
- Dementia-like behavior (sucking, rocking, or biting)
- An elder's report of emotional abuse

### **Financial abuse**

- Improper use of an elder's money, property, or assets
- Theft
- Fraud
- Unauthorized purchases
- Missing funds
- Unauthorized withdrawals
- Adding names onto the elder's bank account or will
- Forgery
- Unpaid bills despite having funds
- Sudden changes in bank activity
- Sudden transfer of assets

### **Neglect**

- Failure to provide the elder with necessities, such as food, water, safety, hygiene, or medication
- Intentional refusal to provide the elder with necessities
- Dehydration and malnutrition
- Poor personal hygiene
- Untreated bedsores
- Untreated health problems
- Poor living conditions



### **Sexual abuse**

- Any non-consensual sexual contact
  - Sexual assault
  - Unwanted touching
  - Sexual contact while the elder can't consent
  - Sexually explicit photographing
  - Unwanted nudity
- \*REMEMBER: consent must be given freely before sexual activity. An elder who is mentally impaired, unconscious, or on medication cannot give consent for sexual activity.
- Bruising around genitals
  - Unexplained venereal disease or genital infection
  - Bleeding around genitals
  - Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
  - An elder's report of sexual abuse

### **Spiritual abuse**

- Breaking down an elder's cultural or spiritual beliefs
  - Denying an elder access to traditional practices
  - Forced assimilation
  - Cultural genocide
- Loss of language
  - Loss of spiritual practices or traditions
  - Loss of cultural practices



## Where can I get help?

If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or your community's emergency number.

Service Name	Description	Contact Information
<b>VictimLinkBC</b>	Free, confidential, and 24/7 support services for victims of Elder Abuse. VictimLink BC services are available in urban and rural areas of British Columbia.	1-800-563-0808
<b>Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL)</b>	Safe, free, and confidential hotline for elders to talk to someone about their abuse. SAIL is open every day from 8am to 8pm, excluding holidays.	1-866-437-1940 604-437-1940 in the Lower Mainland <a href="http://bcceas.ca/programs/sail/">http://bcceas.ca/programs/sail/</a>
<b>Assisted Living Registrar (ALR)</b>	Report instances of elder abuse by assisted living facilities in BC.	1-866-714-3378 250-952-1369 in Victoria
<b>Vancouver Coastal Health Authority ReACT</b>	Report instances of elder abuse and get help from VCH's Adult Protection Program.	(604) 904-6173 1 (877) REACT-99 or 1 (877) 732-2899 <a href="http://www.vch.ca/locations-services/result?res_id=1238">http://www.vch.ca/locations-services/result?res_id=1238</a>
<b>Transition Housing and Safe Homes</b>	Find a safe place to flee from violence in your area.	<a href="https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/women-fleeing-violence/transition-houses-safe-homes">https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/women-fleeing-violence/transition-houses-safe-homes</a>