



ALBERTA
ELDER ABUSE
AWARENESS
NETWORK

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Elder Abuse, like other forms of family violence, is an extremely complex issue. Our belief is that no one organization has a broad enough scope to address the issue in its entirety. A truly effective community response will involve many stakeholders working in collaboration. Each group builds on its own unique strengths for a common purpose.

The intent with this Community Kit is to provide a general list of considerations in building a collaborative approach, as well as to provide a few Alberta examples of collaborative initiatives. Each reflects the uniqueness of the community and its respective assets. Communities are diverse, and their responses should reflect this uniqueness.

The information that is provided in this Community Kit is not new. Collaborative efforts are used in your community to address a multitude of issues. What we are advocating is for you to be a catalyst in your community to address the issue of elder abuse. The stakeholders exist, what often is lacking is a person who will take the first steps necessary to create interest and support.

The approaches outlined build on the strengths of the community and all work differently. Certainly not all approaches can be undertaken at once, nor are they steps to be followed one after another. Rather, each community sets its own priorities and moves forward according to its own timetable.

The examples have been provided to stimulate thinking, offer strategies to consider and offer concrete follow-up information, if required. As a potential catalyst, this contact information may prove useful in building your own local response. We hope it does.

Considerations in building a community response.

Collaboration

Communities are diverse; the response should reflect this uniqueness. The group will need to consider if one or more agency(s) is going to lead the process, or if a multidisciplinary team will be formed. Consider how existing services can be strengthened (i.e. protocol development). Evaluate for and consider how culturally appropriate services and service delivery methods are integrated in all community agencies.

Coordination of Services and Accessibility

A key challenge is to make services accessible to those who most need them, but may be the least able to find them. Thus, an important factor is effective coordination of community services. Brainstorm those services in your community that may have a role to play in responding to the issue. These are some of the services you want to connect with when developing a coordinated community response:

- legal services and systems
- social service agencies
- seniors organizations, service providers, and groups
- health services (i.e. physicians, community nurses, home care)
- counseling services
- police
- mental health services
- seniors housing services
- government services for seniors (i.e. public guardian, public trustee, veterans affairs, income security programs)

Defining Abuse and Neglect

There is no commonly accepted definition of abuse and neglect. Thus, when individuals or groups begin to work together one of the initial tasks of the group is to come to an agreed upon definition of the terms 'abuse and neglect'.

Importance of Informal Supports

Consider how your community can strengthen informal support networks. Those in regular contact with the older adult (i.e. postal workers, apartment managers, bank tellers, neighbours, peers, etc.) can offer support, information and referral. Their front-line role can be strengthened through community education programs. The needs of the older adults must be central to all planning and delivery of service.

Awareness

Effective community response begins with awareness. An initial step may be to start a community dialogue to increase awareness.

Training and Support

Consider how your community can support ongoing training for service providers involved with older adults. When service providers from different disciplines, backgrounds and job settings are sensitive to the issue, they are able to identify abuse and neglect, handle cases more effectively and make referrals to appropriate agencies.

Alberta Community Responses

Action Group on Elder Abuse (AGEA)- Calgary

The Action Group on Elder Abuse (AGEA) is comprised of individuals and agencies concerned about the response to older adults experiencing abuse in family, community, or institutional settings in Calgary. The group has been meeting monthly as a steering committee since January 2004.

AGEA began as the result of informal conversations by a few agencies concerned with the lack of a coordinated response in Calgary. These conversations occurred through much of 2003. A great deal of impressive work was already being undertaken in Calgary. This work included, but was not limited to, Kerby Centre, Kerby Rotary Shelter, Older Women's Long Term Survival group, Calgary Police Services- Seniors Liaison Officers, ABCs of Fraud, Money Matters, outreach workers around the City, etc. The intent of AGEA was not to duplicate this work, but rather to build upon the impressive programs, services and knowledge that already existed.

Since its formation the group's existence has proven to be a 'lightning rod'. The first consultation meeting was held in January 2004, to explore interest among stakeholders in the formation of a multi-agency group to address the issue of abuse of older adults in Calgary.

Immediately, the existence of a multi-agency group in Calgary was recognized. AGEA was invited to provide a written submission, concentrating on the Calgary experience in the area of abuse of older adults, for the Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying.

Shortly thereafter, a funder encouraged the group to make a submission for funding. This money has served as an opportunity to build the group, as well as move some of the priority areas to action through the hiring of a part-time Community Development coordinator. The work of the coordinator has focused upon mapping of resources, identifying gaps, establishing protocols, training and organizational development of AGEA.

In the summer of 2004, a Calgary based family violence organization approached the group about planning a one-day workshop on elder abuse during Turn Off the Violence Week in November. The workshop entitled 'Abuse of Older Adults: Context, Dialogue, Action Conference' attracted 100 individuals with over 30 interested persons on the waiting list.

The work continues, but much of AGEA's foundation was the result of a few organizations agreeing to attend a first meeting and explore possibilities. From there, a common vision of a better response to the abuse of older adults has provided the impetus for much exciting work and the basis for enhanced relationships among the stakeholders involved.

For more information about AGEA's work please contact Robert Wiles at 403-974-3133 or robert.wiles@calgary.ca

Community Response to Abuse and Neglect of Elders (CRANE) - Medicine Hat

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CRANE's Goal: To decrease elder abuse and neglect through a coordinated, collaborative community response by providing education, advocacy and response to address the emotional, financial, physical, or sexual abuse and neglect or self neglect of older persons in our community.

CRANE's community based approach to wellness is a partnership among stakeholders, committed to the goal.

BACKGROUND

In preparation for the public education campaign planned by the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network in November 2003 and to address the alarming number of local enquiries and disclosures about abuse, neglect and self-neglect, the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee (SCAC) and Senior Services at the Veiner Centre, promoted the concept of a coordinated community response.

The SCAC agreed on the acronym CRANE to reflect the Community Response to Abuse and Neglect of Elders, while the purpose was to provide an EAR, Education—Advocacy—Response, to enquiries and disclosures. The CRANE logo is based on the origami crane as a symbol of honor, loyalty and hope for a happy ending. CRANE Subcommittees progressed toward strategies for Roles and Responsibilities, Assessment and Referral, Funding Applications and Marketing.

More than forty stakeholders, representing the well-being of older persons and families, came together a number of times to develop a service delivery model and its practical application. The Edmonton Elder Abuse Intervention Team shared its service delivery models, success stories and best practices. Medicine Hat College and University of Calgary practicum students researched funding proposals; assisted with developing the Terms of Reference; prepared the stakeholder directory; participated in our marketing strategy; and, helped coordinate networking meetings including the official CRANE launch in June 2004 during Seniors Week.

VON Alberta South is the focal point of contact with 24 hour telephone access. Strong communication links the stakeholders for effective referrals and problem solving through case conferencing. CRANE Champions deliver public awareness sessions using visual aids such as a slide show presentation and table top display as well as distributing the CRANE contact number printed on posters and origami cranes folded by volunteers from age 8 to 80.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL SELECTION

The Veiner Centre has successfully engaged a community based approach to wellness model over the past five years to assess and address gaps and overlaps in local healthy aging initiatives. The multidisciplinary partnership promotes access to information about crime prevention; family matters; housing or lodging; income support; mental health; nutrition; physical well-being; socialization or recreation; and, transportation. This model was applied to the CRANE project, adding in the EAR (Education—Advocacy—Response) component for clarity and complemented by the Edmonton Elder Abuse Intervention Team's Flow Chart and Intervention Indicator.

For further information about CRANE, contact Jeanette Devore, Seniors Outreach Services at the Veiner Centre (403) 502-8718, or jeadev@medicinehat.ca

Elder Abuse Intervention Team- Edmonton

The process used to develop the Elder Abuse Intervention Team (E.A.I.T.) was one of building on previous community efforts and key community based recommendations. In the early 1990's three front-line workers from the three core agencies, Edmonton Community Services (ECS), Catholic Social Services (CSS) and Edmonton Police Services (EPS), which make up the Elder Abuse Intervention Team today, began to notice an increase in the number of elder abuse cases they were seeing.

In 1996 these three frontline staff began meeting with stakeholders, doing presentations and collecting evidence on the extent of elder abuse. Hundreds of surveys were conducted amongst seniors, police members, the medical and mental health community and other professionals. Armed with the information gleaned from the various surveys and committee work, these front line staff members began to work with representatives from Capital Health and the United Way to draft an Elder Abuse Team proposal. This proposal was shared, not only with the management teams of the three respective organizations (ECS, CSS and EPS), but also with other existing services in the community at large through the media. Not only did the proposal receive approval from the management teams of the three agencies; it received support from the community. As a result, the E.A.I.T. began operation on April 13th, 1998.

The Elder Abuse Intervention Team is a collaborative effort of 3 agencies, each providing very different service. Currently the team consists of two members of the Edmonton Police Service; one community development Social Worker from City of Edmonton Community Services; and three Seniors Resource Coordinators employed by Catholic Social Services. This collaboration, in partnership with literally hundreds of other services and professionals, allows the team to address the holistic needs of the client. Since the team receives little external funding, it is very sustainable.

The E.A.I.T. provides a dual approach through both Direct Intervention and Community Development. All work is aimed at the fulfillment of the Team's mission statement:

“To prevent and respond to elder abuse by working in partnership with the community, thereby enhancing the safety and well being of older adults”

In 2003 the team offered intervention or consultation for 725 abused seniors. Since April of 1998, the Elder Abuse Intervention Team has provided service for over 2200 abused seniors. In addition to the intervention and consultation provided, in 2003 the E.A.I.T. responded to 134 calls for information on elder abuse from other professionals or students.

The community development model used is from a 'strengths and capacity building perspective'. The focus is to bring together all sectors of the community to: centralize efforts, explore, understand and address the issue of elder abuse. Given this approach, the community was intimately involved in identifying gaps and needs in the community and has worked to address these needs and gaps. These community based efforts have resulted in the creation of: Edmonton Seniors' Safe Housing, Edmonton Elder Abuse Consultation Team, Older Adult Knowledge Network, Seniors Abuse HelpLine and the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network.

For further information on the Elder Abuse Intervention Team please contact the Team at (780) 496 – 5932 or (780) 477 – 2929.

Family Violence - Elder Abuse Prevention Committee - Lethbridge

Several initiatives have been working separately in the Lethbridge community for varying time periods. A Prevention of Family Violence Awareness Committee has been in place for many years with membership from the YWCA, The Sexual Health Centre, Lethbridge Family Services, and The City of Lethbridge FCSS. The focus of the committee was to increase family violence awareness.

The Lethbridge Community College (LCC) and the Public Legal Education Network of Alberta have also had an active partnership for several years, creating the 'Crossing The Line' Elder Abuse awareness video and manual.

The Lethbridge Senior Citizen Organization (LSCO), in conjunction with Lethbridge Regional Police Services, has developed a very active volunteer-based Elder Abuse Awareness Campaign using the 'Crossing the Line' video and manual as its resource.

The City of Lethbridge FCSS has been a member of the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network (AEAAN) for several years and also a member of the Prevention of Family Violence Awareness Committee. Through a series of networking events, the separate groups have decided to collaborate to support one another, share resources and plan new awareness partnerships and events. This has resulted in the formation of a new entity, the Family Violence/Elder Abuse Prevention Committee.

Various members of the collaborative group have been actively involved in the Provincial Family Violence Roundtables, including the attendance at the Elder Abuse Best Practices roundtable in Calgary, the Lethbridge Family Violence and Bullying Roundtable and the Calgary Pre-Roundtable Family Violence Conference in Calgary.

In November of 2004, the collaborative group held a local multi-site, multi-presenter, month-long, Family Violence/Elder Abuse Awareness Conference. A 'Passport to Awareness' was developed, which was stamped with a sticker at every presentation. There were closing ceremonies with the Mayor of Lethbridge on November 30th at City Hall. The focus of the presentations for the 2004 Family Violence Awareness Conference was to deal with abuse through the life span, and included bullying, family violence, children who witness family violence, managing diversity, child internet safety, law and family violence, security in the work place and elder abuse. Many of the presenters are members of our Family Violence/Elder Abuse Prevention Committee and were actively involved in the planning and implementation of the event

The community is very excited about joining forces locally, supporting individual efforts and enabling the collaboration to create new opportunities for elder abuse awareness and prevention of family violence and bullying. The community is also preparing to combine with the Provincial Prevention of Family Violence efforts as much as possible, as new initiatives and goals come out of the Provincial Roundtable process.

For more information about the Lethbridge Family Violence – Elder Abuse Collaborative, please contact the City of Lethbridge FCSS Supportive Services Coordinator (403) 329-7396.

SeniorConnect- Calgary

SeniorConnect aims to reach out to those older adults that do not have family or friendships that would support them and help them connect to community services.

SeniorConnect evolved from work being done to pull relevant individuals together around the issue of home safety for seniors. In these early discussions, it was felt that there were multiple safety issues of concern to seniors. It was decided to approach other stakeholders and facilitate a discussion about how a more comprehensive initiative might proceed. One of the early partners took on the role of catalyst and pulled in appropriate stakeholders.

Work in numerous other communities had been done with respect to a 'gatekeeper' model of service. In this model, individuals working in the community everyday, referred to as gatekeepers, were provided training in recognizing 'red flags'. These gatekeepers were then provided with a **single contact number**. This agency would then follow-up with the individual senior and provides appropriate referral and follow-up on a voluntary basis. Group members felt this was a model that could prove successful, but certainly more stakeholders were necessary to ensure success.

A forum attended by approximately 50 stakeholders was held and this group spent ½ day being introduced to the model and providing feedback. Interested individuals and agencies then formed a working group to begin to develop the idea within the local Calgary context. This working group consisted of Calgary Police Service, Calgary Fire, Kerby Centre, Calgary Senior's Resource Society, InformCalgary, the Distress Centre, City of Calgary Seniors Division, the City of Calgary Corporate call Centre, as well as funding agencies including FCSS and the United Way. These groups provided the knowledge and creativity to develop the program's concept.

Very early in the process, the Calgary Senior's Resource Society indicated that they would be interested in hosting the program, building on the range of senior programs they already offered. But Calgary Senior's Resource Society did not have the 'call centre' expertise to host a single number that people could call to access the resource. The issue of a central phone number still needed to be addressed. The Distress Centre happened to have a dedicated senior information number as part of their service, but it had not been widely promoted in recent times. The Distress Centre could provide the call centre expertise and had trained volunteers that could facilitate appropriate referrals. Having the appropriate stakeholders around 'the table' provided the foundation for the *SeniorConnect* service.

As discussed, *SeniorConnect* through a partnership with the Distress Centre provides a **Help Line** that confidentially answers calls from concerned citizens who have identified seniors they believe could benefit from assistance. When the referral is received, trained staff persons contact the senior and connect them with services that will help to support their safety, health and on-going independence.

To promote awareness, *SeniorConnect* provides a free one-hour **Training** session to business and community groups to assist them to recognize changes that indicate a senior is at risk. Those individuals who have taken the training become 'Connectors' and are now able to, comfortably, know where to call if they have a concern for a senior.

For more information about the program contact Joan Chand'oiseau, *SeniorConnect*, Education and Program Coordinator at 266-6200.

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