

ALBERTA SENIORS AND HOUSING

# SERVICE PROVIDER SCREENING GUIDE FOR ELDER ABUSE

This screening tool is intended to help front-line staff in assisting seniors in situations where elder abuse is suspected.

Many seniors are reluctant to disclose abuse or agree to assistance. They may be embarrassed, fear their abusers, worry about retribution or be unaware of services or supports that may be available to them.

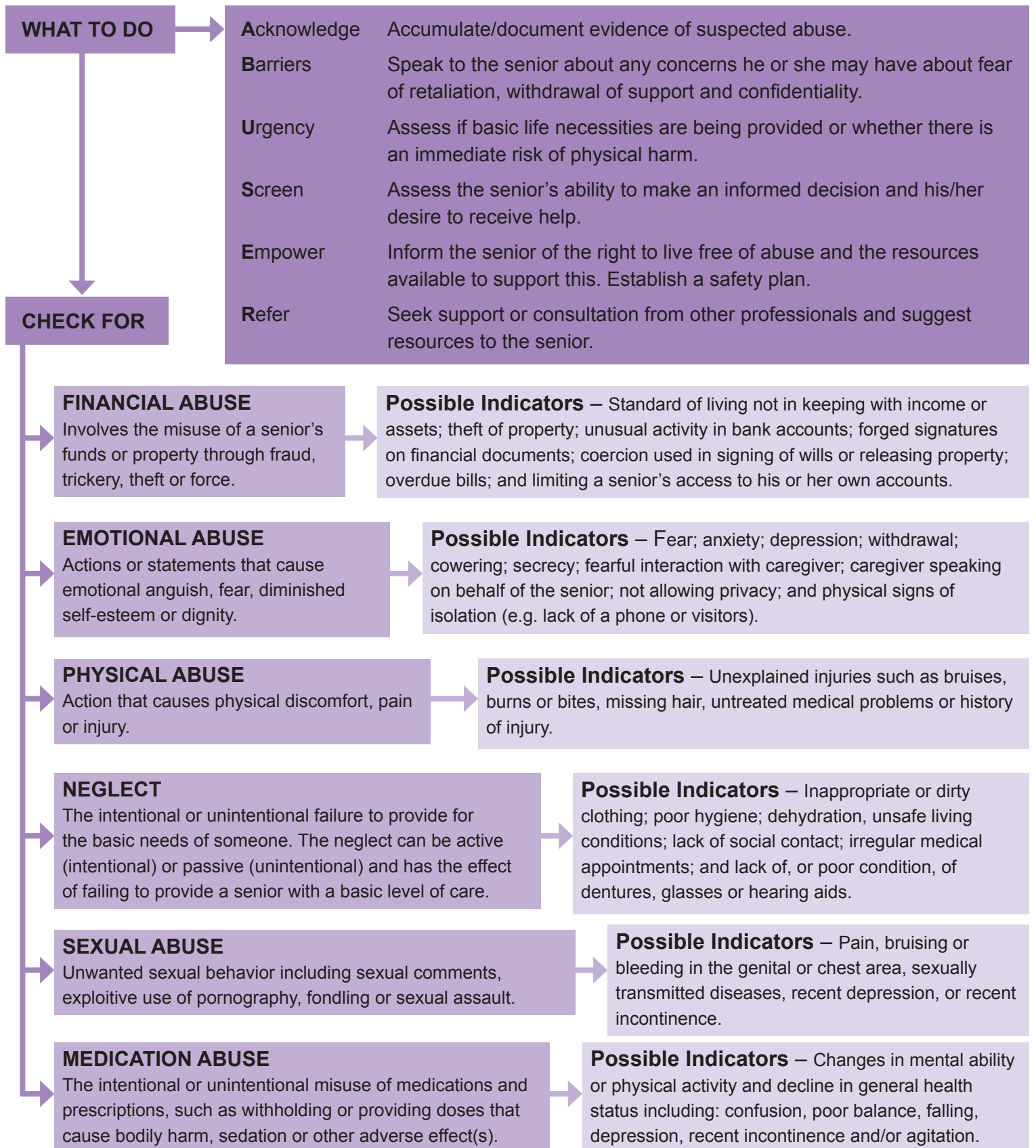
The wishes of seniors who may be experiencing abuse must be respected. Assistance should not be forced upon an individual, even if it seems to be in his or her best interest.

This tool is intended to help service providers identify situations where abuse may be occurring and some steps that can be taken to assist seniors in these situations.

If a senior is in immediate danger, contact your local police.

# Abuse and Neglect of Seniors

Elder abuse is any action or inaction by self or others that jeopardizes the health and well-being of an older adult. It includes the denial of a senior's fundamental rights according to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The abusers are commonly family members and this type of abuse is termed family violence. Abuse occurring in a care facility is termed institutional abuse.



# How to help

- > Ask the senior questions alone in a safe location.
- > Develop trust and be sensitive to the senior's culture, language, religion, and comfort level in obtaining disclosure.
- > Ask the senior if you can gather information about their situation.
- > Let the senior know that the information they share will be kept confidential but that if he or she is in immediate danger or a crime has been committed, the appropriate authorities will need to be contacted.
- > Note anything out of the ordinary about the senior that could indicate abuse.
- > Identify what information is needed to assist the senior or if necessary, the police.
- > Be aware that whenever there is a relationship in which one person is dependent and another person has a helping or care giving role, there is potential for misuse of power by the caregiver.
- > Consider the impact on the person, the willingness to change and the ability to recognize abuse.
- > Ensure the senior is aware that speaking out may lead to legal consequences. Seniors often don't want to see their loved one punished for their behaviour; they simply want the behaviour to stop or change.
- > Note the senior's understanding of the information, consequences of decisions and the capacity to follow through on those decisions.
- > If there is no one the senior trusts to act on his or her behalf, the Office of the Public Guardian or the Office of the Public Trustee maybe be able to provide assistance.

## Sample Screening Questions

- > Is there something you would like to share with me?
- > Is someone making you feel unsafe?
- > Is someone forcing you to do things you do not want to do?
- > Is someone refusing to assist you when you need help?
- > Are you afraid of someone?
- > Have you been asked to sign documents that you don't understand?
- > Has someone hurt you?
- > Who makes the decisions about your life, such as how or where you live?
- > Would you like some help with...?
- > It must be hard for you to look after...?

# Resources

## Education

Inform the senior of services specific to their needs. Assist him or her in connecting with community agencies that can provide support and assistance. Encourage the senior to discuss their concern with trusted members of their family and friends.

The Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council Website ([www.albertaelderabuse.ca](http://www.albertaelderabuse.ca)) offers Alberta-based elder abuse resources and tools for professionals.

## Safety Plan

**Support the development of a safety plan when abuse is identified** – Let the senior know that no one deserves to be abused and that you are concerned for their well-being. Like all forms of family abuse, elder abuse is complex. For a variety of reasons, some

people choose to remain in abusive relationships or situations. A safety plan can be a key element in helping to keep them safe.

**Advise the Senior to Keep a Travel Bag in a Safe Place** – The travel bag should contain items that will be needed if someone had to leave home quickly, such as ID, medication, change of clothes, copies of house and car keys, cash, and important documents.

**Develop an Escape Plan** – Help the senior plan where to go in case of an emergency. Encourage contact with trusted friends and family. Safety plans will vary depending on the type and severity of abuse.

## Community Resources

See page 4.

## Community Resources

**Call 911 if it is an emergency** – Do not hesitate to call the police if you suspect a crime has been committed or that someone is in danger. If there is no immediate danger, call your local police to discuss your concerns with a police officer.

**Calgary Abuse Resource Line**  
Phone: 403-705-3250 (24 hours)

**Edmonton Seniors Abuse Help Line**  
Phone: 780-454-8888 (24 hours)

**Lethbridge Elder Abuse Response Network**  
Phone: 403-394-0306

**Medicine Hat – Branch Senior Support**  
Phone: 403-504-1811 ext 114 (24 hours)

**Alberta Family Violence Info Line**  
Phone: 310-1818 toll-free (24 hours) for information, advice and referrals

**Health Link Alberta**  
Phone: 811 (24 hours)

Provides telephone advice and information on health-related topics.

**Office of the Public Guardian**  
Phone: 1-877-427-4525

Provides decision-making mechanisms for individuals who are unable to make personal non-financial decisions for themselves.

### **Office of the Public Trustee**

Phone: 780-427-2744 (Edmonton) or  
403-297-6541 (Calgary)  
Call toll-free from anywhere  
in the province by dialing 310-0000

Protects the financial interests of vulnerable Albertans by administering their estates.

### **Protection for Persons in Care**

Phone: 1-888-357-9339

To report abuse or safety concerns for seniors in publicly funded care facilities including hospitals, seniors' lodges and nursing homes.

The information presented in this document was developed by the Council Against Abuse of Older Adults et al. (Hamilton, ON) and adapted by:

Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council  
[www.albertaelderabuse.ca](http://www.albertaelderabuse.ca)

[www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca](http://www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca)

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