

# ROW

RESOURCES FOR OLDER WOMEN

**British Columbia Edition**



**NICE**

National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly

Initiative nationale pour le soin des personnes âgées

*We care together*

*Ensemble pour le bien-être des aînés*

[www.nicenet.ca](http://www.nicenet.ca)



## What Is This Information Booklet About?

This information booklet is for older women who feel uncomfortable or unsafe in their home because they are being treated badly by someone who lives or visits there.

**The information will help you decide:** if what you are experiencing is abuse, **why** you should seek help, and **how** and **where** to find the help you need to be safer.

If you think there is a good chance that your abuser might read the information inside and mistreat you further, do not keep the booklet.

Part One of this booklet was created in 2009 by a group of older Ontario women with ‘lived expertise’ of abuse. The project was supported by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) and received financial assistance from Status of Women Canada (SWC).

Part Two of this booklet is a BC adaptation of the resource list put forward by the NICE “Bridging Aging and Women Abuse” project team in Ontario. Inclusion of an organization/program in this resource directory does not imply endorsement, nor does exclusion imply lack of endorsement.

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## Are You Being Abused?

The following six examples will help you determine whether you are experiencing abuse and what type of abuse it is.

*“He was raised to believe spanking and strict rules are a part of running a home. With the kids gone he’s been more frustrated with me. He’s slapped me a few times but only when he was really angry.”*

If anyone causes you physical harm by hitting, burning or rough handling you; or keeping you from moving about or leaving a room (using physical force, alcohol or medication), **this is physical abuse.**

*“I moved here to help my daughter during her divorce. But, she’s so angry and depressed. I can’t have visitors and she keeps the phone from me. She rarely lets me go places without her and times my trips when I go alone.”*

If anyone is controlling your comings and goings, your activities in or outside the home and/or who you talk to, **this is emotional abuse.**

*“When my husband comes home drunk, he forces me to have sex. Saying ‘no’ doesn’t stop him. I’m his wife; maybe I shouldn’t say no.”*

If anyone (including your husband) exposes him/herself or touches you against your will, or forces you to look at sexual material, have sex or perform other sexual acts, **this is sexual abuse.**

*“I am grateful to my daughter-in-law, who’s been caring for me since my stroke. But, I wish she wouldn’t leave me alone so often without my lunch or medication or a way to use the bathroom.”*

If the person providing your care consistently leaves you alone, without food, medication or a way to go to the bathroom, **this is neglect which is a form of abuse.**

*“I try to cook nice dinners but my partner Maria ruins it by drinking too much and screaming that I’m a bad cook, a bad mother and can’t do anything right.”*

If anyone does or says something to make you afraid, to make you uncertain about yourself or to cause you emotional pain by calling you names, yelling, insulting or threatening you, **this is emotional abuse.**

*“My son helps me with my banking and when he deposits my cheque he takes a lot of money for himself. I don’t say anything because he’s my son and I’m supposed to help him, right?”*



If someone close to you is taking your money, wrongly spending money you've given them access to, or making you feel like you have to give them money, **this is financial abuse.**

## Why Take Action?

These are some of the reasons why you might not want to take action and get help, and why you should act to be safer.

**You may not be seeking help because:**

- You **don't want the abuser to get in trouble or go to jail**
- You **believe the abuse is not intentional** because it is by someone you trust and care for OR by someone who 'can't help' their behaviour
- You **think no one will believe you** because the abuse didn't leave a mark OR it only happened once
- You **believe the abuse will get worse** if you seek help OR you think it's not a big deal and **hope it will get better** over time.
- You **believe that you are not able to take action** because you provide care for someone, you depend on someone for care, you don't have money OR you don't know where to turn

- You **believe that what happens in your home is private and family comes first** so you are embarrassed OR you believe you must accept your situation so your family stays together

**Abuse Is Not Your Fault, Is Always Wrong And There Are Ways To Get Help!**

## **How Can You Be Safer Now?**

These are actions that you can take yourself or with the help of people you trust.

**If you are living with your abuser:**

- Don't be ashamed - talk to people about what's going on
- Carry \$15 for a taxi and change for a pay phone
- Open your own bank account (\$5 to start) and request that no bank mail come to your home
- Get a cell phone, keep it charged and program numbers in speed dial
- Avoid the kitchen and rooms with one exit when abuse is possible
- Create a telephone code word with someone to signal danger and ask them to call 911 if they think you're in danger
- Ask someone to help you find services and go with you to appointments

- Have someone take photographs or notes as evidence of the abuse
- Join activities outside your home (art or fitness classes)

### **If you are leaving your home:**

- Leave an emergency bag at a safe location or with someone you trust, with copies of your identification, prescriptions, phone numbers, health/credit/drug/bank cards and spare glasses/cane
- Bring a picture of the abuser to show police, neighbours and co-workers; record the abuser's licence plate number
- Make arrangements for dependent adult children, spouse/partner and pets because it may be difficult to get them out of the home once you've left

### **If your abuser lives outside your home:**

- Change/strengthen the locks and install a peephole
- Inform your neighbours that your abuser shouldn't be around
- Change the places you go and consider changing your doctor, dentist and/or lawyer if shared with your abuser
- Carry restraining, custody and bail orders with you

## How Can You Get The Help You Need?

When you call for help it is very important that the person you speak to understands the type of abuse, and the most important help you need right now.

### When contacting someone for help:

- **Say that you are experiencing abuse and name it** - physical, sexual, financial, emotional or neglect
- **Make sure voice messages are very specific** - name the kind of abuse, what you need help with and whether it is safe to call you back/leave a message
- Tell them if you have **dependent adult children, spouse/partner or pets who will need care** if you are not around
- **Ask them to make the call for/with you** if they suggest you contact another agency
- **Don't stick with services that aren't helpful** - don't let a bad experience stop you from continuing to look for help
- **Know you have the right to consent, or not, to share your information** with others without losing your service provider's support (but know this may limit their ability to connect you with other services)

## Where can you find help?

The following directory includes services to help older women throughout British Columbia who may be experiencing abuse to find the help they need.

### Guide To Using This Directory

Don't wait until you are in an emergency situation to use this resource. This is intended to help you explore your options.

You may already have access to good support from your family, friends and current doctor and other care providers. Your local phone book "blue pages" list your local health authority and government services. You may seek help at a local seniors centre or community centre with seniors programming.

But, additionally, the agencies listed in the directory that follows will help you find appropriate services in your own community, and many have staff trained to listen supportively. Be aware that services change, and programs you are referred to may have wait-lists, eligibility requirements and restricted service areas and hours.

**Phoning:** Be sure you are in a safe location.

- All 1-800 numbers (i.e., 866, 877, 888) are free long-distance calling numbers.
- The 1-800 numbers listed below serve all of BC unless there are other numbers listed; then the 800 number serves the “rest of” BC.
- Numbers noted as being for “Vancouver” include all the communities in the greater Vancouver free-calling area.

For **toll-free access to provincial government services** call **Enquiry BC** (also known as Service BC) Vancouver 604-660-2421, TTY 604-775-0303; Victoria 250-387-6121; 1-800-663-7867, TTY 1-800-661-8773

**Internet:** For your safety, do not use your home computer when seeking helping resources. If you don’t have or use a computer, ask a trusted person to help you search online. Libraries generally have computer access.

**Symbol and abbreviation legend:**

**ML** = multilingual service available

24/7 = service 24 hours, seven days a week

## Who can you call if you are in immediate danger?

### DIAL 911


Or dial “0” for the operator and you will be connected as needed.

If your area doesn't have 911 or operator service, see the front pages of your phone book for your nearest **police**.

If using a cell phone, be sure you can reach 911 or other emergency numbers from your calling location. Be sure you can clearly specify where you are. Do not text 911.


## Who can you call 24/7 when in a crisis or feeling distressed?

### Crisis Line Association of BC

**1-800-SUICIDE** 1-800-784-2433 

#### **Mental Health Information & Support Line**

310-6789 no “1” or area code needed; serves all of BC

**VictimLink BC** 1-800-563-0808 


(120 languages, including 17 aboriginal languages)


**Indian Residential School Survivors National Crisis Line** 1-866-925-4419 Also helps family members.


**WAVAW's Sexual Assault Crisis Line** 1-877-392-7583

## Who can you talk to about getting the help you need?

**VictimLink BC** (24/7) 1-800-563-0808; for hearing impaired TTY 604-875-0885 or collect via 711, or text 604-836-6381

Dial **211** (24/7)  Comprehensive service information for Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley and Squamish-Lillooet regional districts.

**Health and Seniors Information Line** Victoria 250-952-1742; 1-800-465-4911 (M-F days)   
One-stop info source for federal and provincial government services for seniors.

**Alcohol & Drug Information & Referral Service** (24/7) Vancouver 604-660-9382; 1-800-663-1441  
 Also helps family members.

**Problem Gambling Help Line** (24/7) 1-888-795-6111  
 Also helps family members.

**BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres** 1-800-990-2432 (M-F days) Referral to 23 friendship centres. Elders programs, including abuse prevention. Online see [www.bcaafc.com](http://www.bcaafc.com)




## Where can you get help in a language other than English?

See services in this directory with the symbol 

**AMSSA—The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC** For immigrant-serving agencies in your community, see [www.amssa.org](http://www.amssa.org)

## Who can tell you about replacing your ID?

**Health and Seniors Information Line** Victoria

250-952-1742; 1-800-465-4911  Provides card replacement information for both BC (e.g., health CareCard, driver's licence, BC ID) and Canada (e.g., social insurance number, Canada Senior Citizen's ID, permanent resident card).

## Where can you get advocacy and/or legal assistance?

**BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support**

**(BC CEAS), Elder Law Clinic / Legal Advocacy Program**

1-866-437-1940 (after-hours messages are returned the next business day) Focuses on abuse and neglect.

**Legal Services Society Vancouver** 604-408-2172;

1-866-577-2525 (M-F days)  Legal aid for those with low income. See [www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca)

## **Family Justice Counsellors Call Enquiry BC**


Vancouver 604-660-2421; Victoria 250-387-6121;  
1-800-663-7867 **Help with spousal support.**

## **TRAC Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre Vancouver**

604-255-0546; 1-800-665-1185 (M-F days; leave a message anytime) Visit [www.tenants.bc.ca](http://www.tenants.bc.ca)

Info websites: [www.clicklaw.bc.ca](http://www.clicklaw.bc.ca); [www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org);  
[www.mosaicbc.com/multilingual-legal-publications](http://www.mosaicbc.com/multilingual-legal-publications) 

## **Where can you find out about finding a place to stay?**

**VictimLink BC** 1-800-563-0808 (24/7) 

Referrals to emergency, transition and safe housing.

**BC Housing** Vancouver 604-433-2218; 1-800-257-7756 Centralized database for subsidized housing; abused women may be eligible for priority placement. Also **Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters.**  
See [www.bchousing.org/programs](http://www.bchousing.org/programs)

## **Where can you get help with money?**


**Under 65:** Contact **BC Employment and Income Assistance** 1-866-866-0800 (M-F days) Women fleeing abuse undergo an immediate needs assessment and may be exempt from some eligibility requirements. Hardship Assistance may apply.


**65 and over:** Contact **Service Canada** at 1-800-277-9914, TTY 1-800-255-4786 Find out about pensions or have your cheque redirected; priority timing for women fleeing abuse. See “Under 65” above if waiting for pension income, or if not eligible for federal pensions.

See [www.canadabenefits.gc.ca](http://www.canadabenefits.gc.ca) and [www.gov.bc.ca/seniors/benefits](http://www.gov.bc.ca/seniors/benefits) for provincial and federal benefits, including the **BC Bus Pass Program** and more.

**BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, Advocacy Access Program Direct Line** Vancouver 604-872-1278; 1-800-663-1278 Assists women up to age 64 with disability benefits.

## Where can you find out about health care?

**HealthLinkBC** 8-1-1, TTY 7-1-1  Nurses and referral to local health services (24/7); access to dietitians and pharmacists.

**Health and Seniors Information Line** Victoria 250-952-1742; 1-800-465-4911 (M-F days)  Includes information on Medical Services Plan premium assistance, Fair PharmaCare, the Travel Assistance Program and more.

## Where can you get counselling or emotional support?

### **BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support**

#### **(BC CEAS), Seniors Advocacy and Information Line**

1-866-437-1940 (after-hours messages are returned the next business day) Emotional support and victim assistance.

### **Crisis Line Association of BC, Mental Health**

#### **Information & Support Line (24/7) 310-6789 no “1”**

or area code needed. Emotional support.

### **QMUNITY—BC’s Queer Resource Centre, Prideline**

Vancouver 604-684-6869; 1-800-566-1170

(M-F 7p-10p) Telephone peer support.


Call **VictimLink BC** 1-800-563-0808 to find local

**Stopping the Violence Counselling** and community- or police-based **Victim Services**.

### **WAVAW’s 24hr Sexual Assault Crisis Line**

1-877-392-7583 Emotional support from an anti-colonial, anti-oppressive perspective.

## Where can you find accessible transportation and disability support?

**HandyDART and Taxi Saver Program** Call **Health and Seniors Information Line** Victoria 250-952-1742; 1-800-465-4911  Transportation for those unable to use regular public transit. At [www.transitbc.com](http://www.transitbc.com) go to your community, then click on “Accessible Services.”

### **Personal Supports Information Line**

1-888-818-1211, TTY 1-800-661-8773 (M-F days)   
See [www.personalsupports.bc.ca](http://www.personalsupports.bc.ca)

## Who to call about a woman unable to act on her own behalf?

BC has abuse/neglect laws that enable staff of the regional health authorities to look into situations if adults are unable to seek help on their own due to a physical disability, restraint and/or possible mental incapability.

**Fraser Health** 1-877-REACT-08 (1-877-732-2808)

**Interior Health** For direct community numbers visit [www.interiorhealth.ca/report.aspx](http://www.interiorhealth.ca/report.aspx)

**Northern Health** Prince George 250-565-7414

**Vancouver Coastal Health, Re:Act Response  
Resource and Providence Health Care**

1-877-REACT-99 (1-877-732-2899)

For more direct community numbers visit  
**[www.vchreact.ca/report.htm](http://www.vchreact.ca/report.htm)**

**Vancouver Island Health Authority** South Island  
1-888-533-2273; Central Island 1-877-734-4101;  
North Island 1-866-928-4988

If the concern is about financial abuse of someone  
whose assets are at risk and there is reason to  
believe the adult is mentally incapable, contact:

**Public Guardian and Trustee, Services to  
Adults** See **[www.trustee.bc.ca/services/adult/  
assessments\\_investigations.html](http://www.trustee.bc.ca/services/adult/assessments_investigations.html)**



This is one in a series of tools in the NICE tool kit designed to detect, intervene in, and/or prevent abuse of seniors. For more information about this, or any of the other tools and related training events, please visit **[www.nicenet.ca](http://www.nicenet.ca)**

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**Canada**

New Horizons for Seniors Program  
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Programme Nouveaux horizons pour les aînés  
Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada



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