



Grow THE CONVERSATION

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Celebration Guide

Ways to promote World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and this year's Theme: **Grow the Conversation- Don't Let Ageism Stop the Conversation**

WEAAD was launched June 15, 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations. WEAAD is also in support of the United Nations International Plan of Action acknowledging the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue. Since its inception, communities throughout the country and around the world used this day to raise the visibility of elder abuse, by sharing information about abuse and neglect and promoting the resources and services that increase seniors' safety and well-being.

Join the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council (AEAAC) in promoting World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) and helping to **#ABGrowTheConversation**. It is an excellent way to engage your community and increase awareness about this important topic.

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is any action or inaction by self or others that jeopardizes the health or well-being of a senior.

Common forms of elder abuse include:

- **Financial:** This is "the misuse of an older person's funds or property through fraud, trickery, theft or force."
- **Emotional or Psychological:** This may take the form of verbal aggression, humiliation, isolation, intimidation, threats and inappropriate control of activities. In all cases, it diminishes the identity and self-worth of older people. It can also provoke intense fear, anxiety or debilitating stress.
- **Physical:** This is the use of physical force causing discomfort which may or may not result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. Older persons who are subjected to rough handling or mistreatment are the victims of physical abuse.
- **Sexual:** All unwanted forms of sexual activity, behaviour, assault or harassment to older persons is elder sexual abuse.
- **Neglect:** This is the intentional or unintentional failure to provide for the needs of someone. Neglect can be active (intentional) or passive (unintentional) and has the effect of failing to provide older persons with basic necessities or care. Self-neglect, while not technically considered abuse, is also a significant concern. It involves cases whereby, older adults, by choice or ignorance, live in ways that disregard their health or safety needs and can in some cases pose a hazard to others.
- **Medication:** This is the misuse of an older person's medications and prescriptions.

Common signs of elder abuse:

- Confusion
- Depression or anxiety
- Unexplained injuries
- Changes in hygiene
- Seeming fearful around certain people
- Fear or worry when talking about money
- Victims commonly suffer more than one type of abuse at the same time. The most frequently identified and reported types of elder abuse in Canada are financial and emotional.
- Any senior can become a victim of elder abuse regardless of gender, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, income or education.
- Elder abuse is often committed by someone known to the victim who is in a position of power, trust or authority. Approximately 25% of crimes against seniors are committed by family members, usually a spouse or adult child.
- Like other types of family violence, the dynamics of elder abuse are complex. Elder abuse is often impacted by the mental and physical conditions of both the abuser and the victim. These factors interact in ways uniquely dependent on the individuals involved and the situation.

What is Ageism?

- This is the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. Ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs

Stats

- A 2015 study found that 8.9% of Albertans age 55+ living in a community dwelling (and not an institution) experienced at least one of the following five forms of mistreatment in the past year – physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse financial abuse and/or neglect.
- In 2019, there were 14,156 senior victims (age 65-89 years) of police reported violence in Canada. One third (32%) of senior victims were victimized by a family member, which represented 4,518 victims.
- Of the 14,156 senior victims (age 65-89 years) of police reported violence in Canada in 2019, 1,530 (11%) were victimized in a nursing or retirement home.
- Provincially, the rate of police-reported violence against seniors (age 65-89) in Alberta decreased by 7% from the previous year.

Ideas to Celebrate World Elder Abuse

Awareness Day:

- Buy and plant purple flower seeds.
- Buy and plant a tree that represents Growing the Conversation (could include a plaque that signifies this).
- Buy a purple plant and gift to a senior (violets, pansies, etc.)
- Reach out to financial and banking professionals to discuss ways to stop and prevent financial abuse of older adults.
- Connect to your politicians at all levels to discuss how they can support preventing and addressing elder abuse (through legislation, funding, and awareness raising).
- Get grocery stores to include information sheets in senior's grocery bags (including important information and important numbers). **See WEAAD 2021 Kit for printable sheets.
- Connect with caregivers (or give them a small gift or care package) in your area to Grow the Conversation around how burnout and stress can sometimes be a risk factor for using abusive behaviours, and provide resources available to assist them in coping and preparing a well-resource care plan for their care-recipient (including more people and resources than just them).
- Write a letter or postcard (or make a phone call) to let a senior or seniors in your community know you are available to talk to and that you care about their well-being.
- Take and host a on-line bystander training (It's Not Right: Neighbours, Friends, and Family). Visit www.albertaelderabuse.ca to find a trainer in your area.
- Virtual event – maybe you want to host a tea or luncheon through Zoom or some other virtual platform that can allow for a feeling of connection and provide an opportunity to share key information and celebrate the day.
- Do a Facebook (or other media platform) challenge. Ask/challenge people in your friend group to post pictures of themselves wearing purple in support of WEAAD and use the hashtag #ABGrowTheConversation #WEAADJune15.
- Send out a press release, hold a press conference, or submit an editorial to discuss elder abuse awareness and prevention efforts.
- Develop a PSA on elder abuse with a local TV or radio station.
- Harness the power of social media to raise WEAAD's profile and broadcast news of various events.
- Encourage young community members to reach out virtually to the older adults in their lives. Have them take a minute or two out of their day to call, text, FaceTime their older adults to let them know that they are thinking of them.
- Challenge the youth and young adults in your community to teach their family members who are older adults something new, maybe the older adult has something to teach them as well!

- Art for awareness – consider doing a visual display either on a social media platform or in person, where people are safely able to walk through (without touching anything and maintaining physical distancing) and view your display. This may be a billboard, a series of images or information posters (like a storybook walk) set up along a trail or other public walk-way, or art displayed in store front windows of your downtown area.
- Do a WEAAD driving parade. Decorate vehicles with purple decorations and WEAAD information and drive around caravan style (with only those who live in a household together in each vehicle) and honk your horns (ideally on fairly busy roads) – raising awareness for WEAAD.
- Print off the WEAAD postcard and staple tea bags on the back of the card with a little poem. Drop off these postcards around your community to hand out to individuals on June 15.
- Paint your pinky purple- Why paint your pinky purple you may ask? People will ask you why you only have one nail painted, you can then start a conversation about elder abuse and mistreatment of older adults.
- Print off the Grow The Conversation graphic to create flags to distribute to local greenhouses or garden centres. These flags can then be placed in pots for people to purchase.
- Print off the Grow The Conversation Poster and ask your parks department to display them around your community in the seasonal flowerbeds and planters.
- Light up your community! Reach out to various community partners or municipal departments and ask them to light up their buildings purple. Any building in your community that has significant exterior lighting may be able to be changed to purple to raise awareness. Make a call out to your community to take photos and promote on social media. #ABGrowTheConversation #WEAADJune15
- Have a great coffee shop or two in your community? Print WEAAD information on coffee sleeves and partner with a coffee shop of two to hand out with their coffees on June 15.
- Use the graphics or web banners for electronic signs around your community.
- Partner with your local drugstores to put a small package of seeds in everyone's prescriptions bags. Forget Me Nots flowers are a great example of a purple flower that can be used. You can use the back of the seed back to list local resources for individuals to view.
- Partner with elementary schools to have the children create purple flowers to display for the seniors living at lodges/assisted living sites.
- Have your place of work, friends and family wear purple on June 15!
- Plan for June 15 to be PURPLE. Purple food, purple clothing, purple ribbons etc.
- Have local seniors send in their stories sharing words of wisdom, advice or how the older adult overcame their own struggles in life so that the public can learn wisdom from them and acknowledge how valuable a senior is to the community! You can then share these stories through social media, local newspapers or you may just be able to add them to your presentations!
- Take part in the Taking Action Against Elder Abuse training offered by www.albertaelderabuse.ca



WEAAD

Alberta Elder Abuse
Awareness Council

albertaelderabuse.ca