

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

For many, to talk about the abuse of an older adult is difficult. This is especially hard to do if it's a family member who is emotionally, physically, financially abusing or neglecting the older person. In Manitoba, the most common type of elder abuse is emotional and financial. As you read this column, you may be thinking about your friends, family members and neighbours and wondering how many of them may be experiencing abuse. According to Canadian research, four to 10 per cent of older adults will experience some form of abuse or neglect in their later years. That means that 6,000 to 16,000 older Manitobans are experiencing abuse right now. However, only one in five cases comes to the attention of those who can help.

Together we must prevent this from happening by educating people about what abuse is and where to get help. That is why I encourage you to participate in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) held on June 15 every year. This day is an opportunity for us to address this hidden issue, create supportive communities and ensure that older adults know where to get help.

Communities across Canada, and the world, will once again recognize this day through various activities. For the last four years, Manitoba has been a leader in planning WEAAD activities. For example, communities have placed articles in local newspapers, used the colour purple — which has been designated as the awareness colour for elder abuse — in purple ribbon campaigns and organized intergenerational events, such as parades. I encourage you to once again plan, or participate, in activities in your community. For ideas on planning an event or WEAAD information kits, please contact the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat (SHAS) at any of the numbers provided at the end of this article. To find an event in your community, visit the calendar of events on the SHAS website at www.gov.mb.ca.

I invite you to join me at the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event in Winnipeg on Monday, June 15. It will include the official launch of the *It's Everybody's Business* elder abuse video and the recognition of students from across Manitoba who have created awareness or prevention messages about abuse towards older adults through artwork, theatre, song and essay. We will also celebrate the winners of the first Manitoba Elder Abuse Awareness Recognition Awards who have made outstanding contributions in the areas of elder abuse awareness, prevention and advocacy. To register for this event, please contact Age & Opportunity at 204-956-6440.

Our government is committed to creating age friendly communities that provide a broad spectrum of programs and services for seniors. That includes ensuring older adults are safe and respected and know where to get help if they are experiencing abuse. If you have concerns about elder abuse, please contact the Seniors Abuse Line at 945-1884 in Winnipeg; or toll free at 1-888-896-7183. This is a confidential information and referral line that provides seniors and others with information on community resources and support services available to help.

It is important to remember that elder abuse is never the fault of the older person. Nobody ever deserves to be abused. On WEAAD, let's come together and let it be known that abuse of older adults is not acceptable and that together, we are working towards a society that is respectful of all ages.

As always, I invite you to call the Seniors Information Line for more information about WEAAD or with any comments or questions at 945-6565 in Winnipeg; toll free 1-800-665-6565; or visit www.gov.mb.ca/shas.

Kerri Irvin-Ross
Minister responsible for Seniors

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Facts

- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was launched by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA).
- The INPEA developed a theme for the day: My World...Your World...Our World – Free of Elder Abuse.
- WEAAD raises awareness of the following :
 - elder abuse should never be ignored
 - most elder abuse is hidden
 - age discrimination and disempowerment of older people are major factors in the causes of, and hiding of, abuse
 - empowerment of older adults may be the most effective tool in the response to elder abuse
- The INPEA developed a *Community Guide to Raise Awareness on Adult Abuse*. It provides many ideas on how communities can collaborate to raise awareness about elder abuse. The guide is available at www.inpea.net.

Manitoba Elder Abuse Initiatives

In 2002, Manitoba established a Provincial Elder Abuse Strategy which includes the Seniors Abuse Line, educational materials and community development. Currently, the secretariat supports the following initiatives through this strategy:

- the Manitoba Network for the Prevention of Abuse of Older Adults, who's mission is to act as a central point of contact for provincial efforts and to support community prevention initiatives
- safe accommodations to provide a safe haven for older adults leaving an abusive relationship
- the Peer Helping Program and the Manitoba Peer Support Line for Older Adults which provides peer outreach and support to older adults affected by elder abuse and/or addictions
- elder abuse counselling services (in Winnipeg only)