



1. About this toolkit

Goals and audience

This toolkit has been developed by the Department of Seniors to help Nova Scotians understand and prevent senior abuse. We call it a toolkit because it's packed with tools you can use to make your community a safer, more respectful place for older adults.

Senior abuse is a community issue. Everyone has a role in preventing and stopping it. This toolkit can help you become a community champion for senior safety. A community champion is someone who is committed to making their community a better place to live. You don't have to be an expert in seniors' safety to be a community champion. You just have to be willing to learn about and discuss the issue. The toolkit won't give you all the answers for every situation. What it *can* give you is information and ideas to spark good conversations.

TOGETHER, WE CAN

- Help seniors to know their rights and protect their safety.
 - Help neighbours, friends, and family members to recognize the warning signs of abuse and to offer support—safely and respectfully.
-

Guiding principles

When we talk about senior abuse in our communities, it's important to name what we want to stop; but it's also important to name the good things we want to achieve.

The *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* offers eight guiding principles to help build caring communities that support the wellbeing of seniors. All of the principles are important for the prevention of senior abuse, but these three principles stand out:

- **Respect** – Promote a culture of respect across generations and recognize the contributions of seniors to family, friends, community, and society.
- **Safety** – Enable seniors to live in safe and supportive living environments, free from danger, fear, and exploitation.
- **Self-determination** – Respect the right of seniors to manage their affairs and participate as fully as possible in decisions affecting their health and security.

Promoting respect, safety, and self-determination (freedom to choose) for seniors is really what this toolkit is all about. Keep these positive messages in mind as you learn about and talk about ways to end senior abuse.

The words we use

Senior describes an age range. In this toolkit it means adults who are 65 years or older. There is nothing magical about that age: it's just a point of reference. The guiding principles of this toolkit—safety, respect, and self-determination—apply to adults of all ages.

In this toolkit, the terms **senior**, **older adult**, and **elder** all mean the same thing. Different communities may have a preference for one term or another. Use the term that is familiar to you and respectful in your community.

The term **abuse** has different meanings to different people. All abuse is an abuse of power and a violation of trust in a relationship. The harm can be physical, emotional, financial, sexual, or involve some other breach of a person's rights and freedoms. Neglect is also a form of abuse. This toolkit does not make a distinction between "minor" abuse and "major" abuse. All abuse is harmful.

The term **abuser** is loaded and dangerous. It shows up in this toolkit, but not often. More often, the message refers to *people who are abusive*. It is important to hold people accountable for their actions, but it is also important to remember that they are more than what they do or don't do. People who are abusive need help.

What's inside

The toolkit is designed to be flexible and easy to use. The purpose of the toolkit is to help you understand and talk about senior abuse. It can also help you to organize a learning event for people in your community.

Here's what you'll find inside:

- tips for organizing an event in your community (section 2)
- speaker's notes and slides for a lively presentation about senior abuse (section 3)
- case studies for discussion (section 4)
- additional information to help you learn more (sections 5 to 7)
- the booklet, *Understanding Senior Abuse: Facts, Tips, Contacts*

The pockets in this toolkit contain master copies of all the handouts. Everything in the kit is also available online at gov.ns.ca/seniors/stopabuse. Go to the website for the latest handouts, and for news about changes in legislation, policies, programs, and more.

Please note

This toolkit offers general information about senior abuse. It is not a substitute for professional legal advice, counselling, or other supports. Remember that senior abuse is very complex. A response that is helpful in one situation might be harmful in another. If you have any doubts about what to do in a particular situation, talk to a professional.

