Appendix F: Communication Strategies

This appendix outlines considerations, tips and resources to support effective communication when addressing issues of abuse and neglect of older adults.

The three A’s


The three A’s include

- active listening and reassurance,
- ask the older person what he or she wants, and
- action according to wishes and follow-up.

**Caution: Nurses and other health-care providers might need to override the wishes of an older adult if mandatory reporting exists (e.g., abuse by a staff member).**

This resource is available at [http://www.onpea.org/english/trainingtools/corecurriculum.html](http://www.onpea.org/english/trainingtools/corecurriculum.html)

Tips for conducting caring communications

The document Looking Beyond the Hurt: A Service Provider’s Guide to Elder Abuse outlines tips for caring communications that help make it easier to talk about abuse and neglect. Caring communication includes the following:

- “I” messages (e.g., I am concerned about you…),
- is specific (e.g., because you missed your last appointment and today I see a bruise on your arm),
- is sensitive to others’ feelings (e.g., I understand that it’s hard to talk about personal concerns),
- is non-judgmental and non-threatening (e.g., would you like to talk to me about it?),
- empowers rather than “rescues” (e.g., do you want to talk about some of the resources you might want to use?),
- helps to remove any perceived stigma about being abused (e.g., I have often seen people who are not receiving the care that they deserve),
- is respectful of an older person’s right to make his/her own decision in his/her own time, and
- is prepared to assist the older person to find the supports and services he/she needs.

(Siegel, 2013)

This resource is available from the Newfoundland and Labrador Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse at [http://www.nlnpea.ca/LBH](http://www.nlnpea.ca/LBH)
Other communication tips—when talking about abuse and neglect

The Elder Abuse Modules from Employment and Social Development Canada (2011) outline communication tips to assist with having a preliminary conversation with an older adult regarding abuse and neglect. These tips include the following:

- choose an environment where the older adult is comfortable and at ease;
- do everything possible to ensure that the conversation will not be overheard or interrupted;
- be mindful of hearing difficulties, language barriers, cultural and religious values;
- maintain a relaxed, non-judgmental, supportive demeanor;
- talk less and listen more; allow them to talk at their own pace;
- notice inconsistencies and discrepancies;
- take time to allow them to respond;
- avoid inconsistencies that may seem like putting down the alleged or suspected abuser; and
- offer support, discuss options but do not give advice.

This resource is available at http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/seniors/funding/pancanadian/elder_abuse.shtml

Responding to disclosure of abuse

The RNAO guideline, Woman Abuse: Screening, Identification and Initial Response (2012), provides suggestions for responding to disclosures of abuse including suggested dialogue that may be appropriate for discussing issues of abuse and neglect with older adults. Refer to Appendix M of the supplement in the guideline.

This resource is available at www.RNAO.ca/bpg/guidelines/woman-abuse-screening-identification-and-initial-response

Therapeutic communication

In the Practice Standard titled Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship, the CNO (2006) outlines elements of therapeutic communication including communication strategies and interpersonal skills.

This resource is available at http://www.cno.org/Global/docs/prac/41033_Therapeutic.pdf

Strategies for working effectively with interpreters

In the Practice Guideline titled Culturally Sensitive Care, the CNO (2009a) outlines considerations and strategies for working with interpreters.

This resource is available at http://www.cno.org/Global/docs/prac/41040_CulturallySens.pdf

Communication with people who have dementia

The Alzheimer’s Society of Canada (2012) offers tips to enhance communication with people who have dementia.

This information is available at http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/Living-with-dementia/Helping-with-communication