

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 *Core Curriculum and Resource Guide* from the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (2008) outlines three A's to consider when interacting with older adults.

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>

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>

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 comments 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>