

## what is abuse?

Abuse is the deliberate mistreatment of an adult that causes the adult physical, mental or emotional harm, or causes damage to or loss of assets.

Abuse may include intimidation, humiliation, physical assault, theft, fraud, misuse of a power of attorney, sexual assault, overmedication, withholding needed medication, censoring mail, invasion or denial of privacy or denial of access to visitors or other basic human rights.

## what is neglect?

Neglect is the failure to provide necessary care, assistance, guidance or attention that causes, or is reasonably likely to cause the person physical, mental or emotional harm or substantial damage to or loss of assets.

## re:port who to call

If you have concerns that a vulnerable adult is being abused, is living at risk due to neglect or self-neglect, or is having difficulty accessing support and assistance on their own, call one of the following in your area.

- Adult Protection Social Worker
- Unit Social Worker
- Mental Health Therapist
- Continuing Care Case Manager
- Program Manager/Practice Consultant
- Licensing Officer

Document on the adult's file the date, any action taken, and who you called to report your concerns.

For more information and to submit a confidential report using the React Reporting System, go to: [www.vchreact.ca](http://www.vchreact.ca)

If you still require direction call:  
1-877-REACT-99 (1-877-732-2899)



Adult Abuse & Neglect - Adult Protection Program

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**re:act**  
recognize and report

**act on  
adult abuse  
and  
neglect  
it's your  
duty!**

This brochure provides important information for the family physician, nurse and health care professional about abuse, neglect and self-neglect of vulnerable adults and responsibilities to recognize, assess and report suspected and known cases of abuse under the BC Adult Guardianship Act.

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# what is self-neglect?

Self-neglect is any failure of an adult to take care of himself or herself that causes, or is reasonably likely to cause within a short period of time, serious physical, mental or emotional harm or substantial damage to or loss of assets, and includes:

- (a) living in grossly unsanitary conditions
- (b) suffering from an untreated illness, disease or injury
- (c) suffering from malnutrition to such an extent that, without an intervention, the adult's physical or mental health is likely to be severely impaired
- (d) creating a hazardous situation that will likely cause serious physical harm to the adult or others or cause substantial damage to or loss of assets, and
- (e) suffering from an illness, disease or injury that results in the adult dealing with his or her assets in a manner that is likely to cause substantial damage to or loss of the assets.

# vch a designated agency



Vancouver Coastal Health is a "Designated Agency" responsible for investigating situations of abuse, neglect and self-neglect of adults who are unable to seek support and assistance on their own due to restraint, physical handicap, illness, disease, injury or any other condition that affects decision-making ability.

The VCH response is built upon the principles of self-determination and autonomy and on the presumption of capability. Adults should receive the most effective but least restrictive and intrusive support and assistance.

The Adult Guardianship Act (Part 3) gives VCH enhanced powers to intervene in emergencies and to investigate situations in which vulnerable adults are living at risk.

## what to do

- Involve the adult as much as possible.
- Complete a medical and mental status exam.
- Determine if the adult is able to seek support and assistance on their own.
- Determine if the adult has a legal representative or substitute decision maker.
- Ensure the adult has support and assistance and is in a safe environment.
- Document your concerns and findings.
- Refer to the designated responder in your area.

# facing facts

- 1 out of 12 seniors in BC have been financially abused in amounts that averaged over \$20,000
- 4% of Canadian seniors suffer from one or more serious forms of abuse by a spouse, relative or other close contact
- almost half of all violence against seniors occurs in spousal relationships
- 10% of consumers of attendant care services said they have been physically abused by their attendants
- elderly women from ethno-cultural minorities are more likely to experience oppression and violence
- people with disabilities are 150 times more likely to be sexually abused than others
- poverty, mental illness, disabilities and old age dramatically increase the likelihood of abuse and neglect