

Elder Abuse Awareness Day

There is a hidden crime in our society, one that affects those who are most vulnerable, our seniors. It is called elder abuse. The definition of elder abuse is any act or omission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his/her health or welfare. Elder abuse can come in the form of neglect, and/or physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse. It can take place in the home, in a facility setting or in the community. The sad truth is it is a crime that often goes unreported, as victims fear consequences or reprisals and have a feeling of shame.

This is why Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario will be marked for the second consecutive year on October 19, 2005. Candlelight Vigils and other awareness activities are to be held in communities to remember those who have been victims and to shed some light and awareness on this hidden crime. Jim Bradley, Ontario Minister Responsible for Seniors, is urging the public to come out to a candlelight vigil or awareness event in their community.

There are several signs of elder abuse, which is often perpetrated by someone in a position of trust or authority. They are unexplained physical injuries; depression; withdrawing from social activity; passivity; nervousness, shame or fear; changes in hygiene and nutrition; lack of food, clothing and other necessities; failure to meet financial obligations; and unusual banking withdrawals.

Ontario seniors deserve to live safely, with dignity and as independently as possible, with the supports they need. The Legislative Assembly of Ontario named October 19, 2004, as the first Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario.

If you are a victim of elder abuse or know of a potential victim, you should contact your local police, the OPP or community service agencies. You can also get information on elder abuse or speak with a trained counsellor by calling the Ministry of the Attorney General's Victim Support Line toll-free 1-888-579-2888 in Ontario, or 416-314-2447 in Toronto.