

Candlelight Vigil - Introduction

Background

It is estimated that at least four per cent of seniors are victims of elder abuse. The signs may not always be visible – such as unexplained bruises or injuries. Potential signs include fear and uneasiness, depression, withdrawal or passivity, changes in hygiene, poor nutrition and unusual financial activity.

A candlelight vigil is held to remember those who have been victims of Elder Abuse. Elder abuse can take several forms: neglect, and/or physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse. The Ontario Government recognized this serious problem by proclaiming October 19, 2004, as the province's first Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Symbolism

It is hoped that by holding a candlelight vigil, participants will create awareness of the problem by shining light onto something often kept hidden.

Silence

The vigil will be silent. This will enable those participating to reflect on what elder abuse is about and be inspired to rise to the challenge to help combat elder abuse.

Participation

All ages can participate in this event. It would be ideal to have adults and children take part. The earlier Ontarians learn about elder abuse the better, so as they grow into adults they will be well aware of this crime. Help stop elder abuse. Know your rights; protect yourself and someone you know.

How to Host a Candlelight Vigil

There is no standard format for conducting a candlelight vigil; however you may wish to consider some of these key components when planning a vigil in your community:

Designate a Master of Ceremonies

- The Master of Ceremonies is a person designated to make sure the itinerary is conducted in an orderly fashion and communicated to the attendees.
- The Master of Ceremonies may wish to refer to the communications materials available in the Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2005 kit to prepare their speaking notes for the vigil.

Determine an Itinerary

Itinerary suggestions include:

- Speakers: Speakers could recite poetry or prose, or expressions of what awareness means to them.
- Choirs/Bands/Music
- Community Placement of Candles
- Reception

Arrange a Venue

Candlelight vigils can be planned both indoors and outdoors.

Outdoors

- Parks/Gardens
- Grounds of City Hall
- Grounds of Schools
- Grounds of Community Centres
- Grounds of Art Galleries
- Outside of Workplace

Indoors

- School Auditoriums
- City Hall Auditoriums
- Legion Halls
- Community Centres
- Museums
- Libraries

Planning Check-List

- Decide on date, time, and location of event
- Book facilities/venue
- Order candles
- Contact other potential partners
- Decide on Master of Ceremonies and itinerary
- Contact program participants
- Book sound system/audio (if required) and arrange for refreshments
- Arrange for volunteers for candlelighting and distribution, candle extinguishers, photographer etc.
- Distribute promotional materials
- Print map of event location
- Send out Media Release and Backgrounder

Prior to Event Day

- Reminder phone call to local media
- Set up room (if required); test and confirm power to sound system and set out refreshments
- Ensure Master of Ceremony is ready and confirm changes to itinerary/program
- Get applicable permits

Start Program

Sample Itinerary

- Welcome and Introduction by Master of Ceremony
- Guest speaker(s)
- Volunteers distribute candles
- Light first candle
- Minute of silence

After ceremony

- Write and send Thank You letters

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www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/seniors/index.html