



Manitoba Elder Abuse Awareness Day Student Project

Manitoba's population of older adults is growing and is expected to increase by 43% over the next 20 years. According to research, 4% to 10% of older adults will experience one or more forms of abuse or neglect at some point in their later years. This estimate, however, is likely only the tip of the iceberg as it is estimated that only 1 in 5 cases come to the attention of someone who can help.

Our experience in Manitoba has indicated that increasing public awareness and promoting positive, respectful intergenerational relationships are key to preventing the abuse of older adults. By dispelling ageist stereotypes and promoting empathy towards older adults, youth will be more respectful of them, and will be less likely to ever exhibit abusive behaviours toward them.

In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, this project was created to provide youth with an opportunity to creatively express what it means to treat older adults with respect.

Project Theme: Abuse hurts at any age

Who can participate?

This opportunity is open to younger Manitobans in grades 6 to 12.

What are the project categories?

Participants are encouraged to create an awareness and/or prevention message regarding abuse towards older adults using one of the following mediums:

- Artwork (ie. poster, portrait, sculpture, etc.)
- Theatre (maximum 15 minutes-theatre performance must be taped and submitted on video cassette or DVD)
- Song (must be taped and submitted on cassette or CD)
- Video (ie. short movie or public service announcement-maximum 15 minutes)
- Essay

Entries will be randomly selected by the Manitoba Elder Abuse Awareness Day committee in each category in two different age groups (grades 6-8 and grades 9-12). The randomly selected entries will be invited to display/perform their messages at a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Event in Winnipeg on Monday, June 15th, 2009. All students, who participate in this project, will receive a certificate of participation.

There are many ways to increase awareness and prevent the abuse of older adults through working together. Entries can be on any topic related to the abuse of older adults. Be creative; be positive, there are all kinds of exciting possibilities. Also think about how you can use this year's Manitoba Elder Abuse Awareness Day theme "Abuse hurts at any age" in your message.

Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

- Promote healthy intergenerational relationships
- Provide information on the abuse of older adults in your message
- Illustrate the importance of working together to support older adults in our lives and communities
- Demonstrate the positive impact of having a supportive community
- Dispel any ageist attitudes that contribute to the abuse of older adults
- Demonstrate ways that youth can portray respect towards older adults
- Illustrate the similarities between bullying relationships that youth may experience and the abuse of older adults

Also included in your package are some factsheets on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and the Seniors Are Cool Quiz to facilitate discussion amongst the students.

Deadline:

Entries must be sent by **Monday, May 4th 2009** to:

Manitoba Elder Abuse Awareness Day Student Project
Age & Opportunity Inc.
200-280 Smith Street
Winnipeg, Mb R3C 1K2

Please ensure they are labeled with the school's name, student name(s), grade and contact information. Randomly selected entries will be notified by Monday, June 1st. ***Please note that entries will not be returned.***

For more information, please contact:

Stacey Miller, Age & Opportunity Inc.
956-6440 or www.ageopportunity.mb.ca

Shannon Kohler, Manitoba Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat
945-6565 or 1-888-896-7183 or www.gov.mb.ca/shas

All entries will become the property of the Manitoba Elder Abuse Awareness Day Committee and may be used for future initiatives/projects without notification.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15th)

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day originated in Madrid in April 2002 when countries throughout the world adopted the United Nations International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Plan of Action recognized the importance of addressing and preventing abuse and neglect of older adults. It identified that mistreatment of older adults was a violation of internationally recognized human rights.

This day is a special day to share information, learn more, discuss the issue of abuse of older adults, and become involved. Many communities in Manitoba are using June 15th as an opportunity to recognize local and regional efforts that are being made to raise awareness of abuse of older adults.

Abuse of older adults refers to any action or inaction by a person in a relationship of trust which jeopardizes the health or well-being of an older person. Abuse of older adults is also known as senior abuse or elder abuse.

Abuse can happen to any older adult. In fact, contrary to commonly held beliefs, most older adults who experience abuse are mentally competent, are not dependent on other people and do not require constant care. Abuse of older adults can take place in the home, in a health care facility or in the community.

Types of abuse:

Physical Abuse is any act that causes physical discomfort, pain or injury. Examples include slapping, shaking, kicking and/or pushing.

Emotional Abuse is any act (verbal or non-verbal) that causes pain or distress. Examples include verbal assaults, threats, insults, treating the older person like a child and/or isolating the older person from family.

Financial Abuse is the illegal or inappropriate use of another person's money or property. This is the most common form of abuse of older adults. Examples include improperly using a person's money, pressuring for money, using money without the person's consent and/or misusing a power of attorney.

Sexual Abuse is sexual contact with an older adult without that person's consent. It can also include sexual comments or jokes.

Neglect is the failure to meet the needs of an older adult who cannot meet those needs on his/her own. Examples include withholding care or medical attention, leaving the person in an unsafe place and/or over/under medicating.

Abuse of older adults most often occurs within the family, by a spouse, child and/or grandchild. However, abusers can also include friends, neighbours, care providers, or any individual in a position of trust, power or authority.

Canadian research indicates that between 4 and 10% of older adults experience one or more forms of abuse or neglect at some point in their later years. That means that 6,000 to 16,000 older Manitobans will experience abuse. However, this is only the tip of the iceberg as only 1 in 5 cases comes to the attention of someone who can help. Older adults may feel embarrassed, fearful of what will happen to them or the abuser or they may not know where to get help. Abuse is also not limited to older adults of any particular culture, ethnic group, social background or religion.

Older adults who are experiencing abuse may:

- Tell you they are being harmed,
- Show signs of depression or anxiety,
- Seem fearful around certain people,
- Become socially withdrawn,
- Have unexplained physical injuries,
- Lack food, clothing and other necessities,
- Show changes in their hygiene or nutrition,
- Suddenly become unable to pay their bills, or
- Have unusual withdrawals from their bank or other financial institutions.

Abuse of older adults is a complex area. There is no simple explanation for why abuse occurs. Some abuse may reflect ageism, be part of a cycle of family violence or be opportunistic behaviour. Abuse may also reflect a lack of understanding and knowledge about older adults and aging. Stereotypes and misconceptions about aging and older people may lead to ageist attitudes that older adults are not deserving of respect.

Some people use violence and control in their relationships with other people. Some people have negative beliefs about older people, while others do not treat older adults with respect. Some people incorrectly feel they are entitled to an older adult's property, simply because the person is old, or because they are helping the older adult, or because of their position in the family.

Some people experience personal problems or stresses that may increase their risk of harming or neglecting others. Some simply become overwhelmed or do not know more positive ways of relating.

It does not matter who the abuse is or why the person is abusing an older adult. No one deserves to be abused or mistreated.

(Information provided by the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Factsheets created by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors in Canada)

Seniors Are Cool Quiz:

1. Older people are slow, boring and helpless

Answer: False

- Exercising can lessen the effects of aging. While our abilities may reduce as we age, half of the challenges that affect our bodies and functions between ages 30 and 70 are due to disuse-the “use it or lost it” principle.
- Half of all people aged 65 and over engage in physical activity.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of Manitobans aged 65 and over indicate that their health is “very good” or “pretty good”
- The majority of older adults are happy with themselves and their lives. Most older Canadians report high life satisfaction-they feel less pressure, enjoy more personal freedom in older age, and cope well with the challenges of aging.

2. All older people retire at 65

Answer: False

- Thousands of older adults contribute to the labour pool
- Many older adults take advantage of their brain power by going back to school or learning new skills
- Seniors are now offering to share their skills by training younger employees, by becoming consultants or by working flexible hours.

3. Older people are grouchy and do not like children

Answer: False

- Many seniors look after children
- Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of older adults look after children at least once a week
- Many older adults volunteer at schools and at community clubs to help children read, learn and have fun

4. Seniors are too old to contribute to the community

Answer: False

- Older adults are major contributors to the economy through income, property and sales taxes
- Most older adults provide one or more types of assistance to spouses, children, grandchildren, friends and neighbours. They are also caregivers to spouses, family, friends and neighbours.
- Older adults are the largest per capita donors to charity
- $\frac{1}{4}$ of all Canadian seniors contribute time each week as unpaid volunteers in their communities
- The economic value of the volunteer work done by seniors is estimated between \$764 and \$2.3 billion annually