

WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE?

Family violence is the abuse of power within a family, a trust, or a dependency relationship. It may take the form of physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse. Violence against children is the mistreatment or neglect of a child by a parent, guardian or caregiver that can result in injury or harm to that child. Elder abuse is any act that can result in harm to an older person, whether physical or psychological, or by misuse of finances or medication.

HOW DOES ALCOHOL/OTHER DRUGS IMPACT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE?

Psychoactive drugs and alcohol change brain functions, primarily by producing changes in mood. The processes that may be altered include perception, attention, concentration, learning, memory and abstract thought. Users report a sense of security and confidence, easing of anxiety and concerns, and feelings of personal power. Family violence and the use of alcohol and drugs is highly correlated. Research indicates that:

- * Alcohol is involved in two-thirds of marital dispute situations where there is a police intervention.
- * Where partner violence is present, substance abuse is also more likely to be present.
- * Adults who have come from violent, substance abusing families are more likely to:
 - * be substance abusers themselves and, for males especially, to inflict violence on members of their own families.
 - * require help from mental health agencies.
 - * have an abusive, alcoholic partner.
 - * exhibit the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- * Women who seek help for symptoms of low self-esteem and/or depression are more likely to have experienced violence and/or to be abusing drugs or alcohol.

WHAT CAN FAMILY VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE?

EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Emotional abuse can mean continuous criticism, name-calling and put-downs, yelling and swearing. It includes unjust blaming, false accusations about loyalties and other ways of controlling the victims time, activities and actions. For older adults this can include being ignored, isolated and excluded.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE: Psychological abuse means constant threats of violence against an individual, their children, friends, colleagues, relatives or others, including the destruction of property, toys and pets. It includes harassment at work by phone calls and visits, destruction of prized possessions, and even suicide threats by the abuser. Threats of violence are illegal under Canada's Criminal Code.

PHYSICAL ABUSE: Physical abuse includes any action intended to cause pain, discomfort or injury. It includes slapping, punching, kicking, hair pulling, pinching, shoving, shaking, choking, or injury with a weapon or object. For older adults and children it can also mean the failure of a caregiver to provide the necessities of life such as, food, water, heat, medications, and/or medical treatment and adequate clothing.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Sexual abuse is forcing an individual to perform sexual acts, or to inflict pain and injury during intercourse, this applies to all relationships including marital. Sexual abuse of a child is the sexual gratification of someone who is in a position of power over that child. The abuse can include, but is not limited to, incest, sexual assault, touching for sexual purposes, and the use of a child for pornography or prostitution.

FINANCIAL ABUSE: Financial abuse means having no access to financial resources. For example a woman may have no control over family finances - what comes in, is spent or saved; and this may keep her trapped in a situation