

Policies, Procedures & Interagency Protocols

Working together to prevent elder abuse

The Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy (EAPS) has been developed to protect and safeguard the rights of older Victorians. The fundamental principle underpinning the strategy is that every Victorian has the right to live safely and to be treated with dignity and respect. However some senior Victorians are affected by elder abuse and this is unacceptable.

The strategy aims to address elder abuse by:

- Working with families, service providers, professionals and the community to increase awareness of elder abuse and the devastating impact it can have on the individuals involved.
- Empowering older people and their families by enhancing their understanding of older people's rights, promoting community awareness of services available to support older people, and developing the capacity of local agencies to respond appropriately to suspected cases of elder abuse.
- Developing and implementing a range of initiatives to reinforce the unacceptability of all forms of abuse, by identifying key stakeholder channels and target audiences for the delivery of information and key messages pertaining to the prevention of elder abuse.

A key component of the EAPS Strategy is the Primary Care Partnerships Community Awareness Grants Program, which aims to empower senior Victorians and ensure the development of a collaborative response across government departments, service and support sectors, older people and their families to prevent and address elder abuse.

An element of the Community Awareness Grants Program is to support the development of agency policies and procedures to respond and act on suspicion of elder abuse and to develop and review interagency protocols that enable cooperation in responding to elder abuse.

The Victorian Government's strategic response to elder abuse affirms that Victoria's existing services, and the networks that bind them at a local level, are appropriately placed to manage suspected and actual incidents of abuse.

To assist agencies to develop policies, procedures and interagency protocols three sample documents have been created which are being used across the state. The three documents are reflective of the 'With respect to age – 2009: Victorian Government practice guidelines for health services and community agencies for the prevention of elder abuse'.

1. Sample Elder Abuse Prevention Policy
2. Elder Abuse Prevention Guide
3. Interagency Response Framework with examples extracted from 'With respect to age – 2009'

The documents, which have been approved by the Office of Senior Victorians, provide practical guidance for health and community service workers to develop agency policies and procedures and to support the development of interagency protocols. It is intended that organisations use and adapt the documents to meet their own needs.

Please note that this project is not concerned with situations of abuse in consumer-based circumstances, professional misconduct, harassment and criminal acts by strangers, self-neglect or mistreatment, or Residential Aged Care Services (RACS).

Additional Resources

Office of Senior Victorians

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/seniors/elder-abuse-prevention>

'With respect to age – 2009' Guidelines

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has released ***With respect to age – 2009***, the Victorian Government practice guidelines for health services and community agencies for the prevention of elder abuse.

The guide is available in PDF format at

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/policy/index.htm>

Hard copies of *With respect to age - 2009 Victorian Government practice guidelines for health services and community agencies for the prevention of elder abuse* may be ordered at any time from the Department of Human Services appointed distribution centre, Warehousing Fulfilment Distribution Solutions (WFDS).

Senior Rights Victoria

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is a free service that has been established to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians. It provides:

- telephone information and referral;
- advocacy and support;
- legal services; and
- community education.

People who are concerned about abuse or neglect that is affecting them or someone they know can call Seniors Rights Victoria on 1300 36 8821.

For further information go to www.seniorsrights.org.au

Professional Education Program- Victoria University

Victoria University in partnership with the Office of Senior Victorians will be offering a series of free workshops aimed at strengthening the capacity of professionals working with older people to respond appropriately to incidents of suspected elder abuse. If you have an interest in attending one of these workshops, would like to host a workshop in your workplace or community, please contact Betty Presilska - betty.presilska@vu.edu.au.