

For Immediate Release | June 13, 2016

New phone line and email address to help report elder abuse

Interior Health has launched a new, confidential toll-free number to report the mistreatment of older adults.

“Research shows that seniors are the most likely to suffer physical, psychological or financial abuse or neglect from a family member,” says Minister of Health Terry Lake. “World Elder Abuse Awareness Day reminds us to treat everyone, at any age, with dignity and respect. There is no excuse for abuse.”

Anyone within Interior Health who has concerns regarding elder abuse can call 1-844-870-4754 to be connected with an Interior Health staff member who is trained to respond to such situations. The phone number and corresponding email address ihadultguardianship@interiorhealth.ca were launched in May this year. (Always call 9-1-1 if the situation is an emergency and you require immediate help.)

Elder abuse takes many forms, including physical, financial, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse, and neglect or self-neglect. It can affect anyone, regardless of their health, financial background or social standing. It can occur anywhere and anytime, whether an individual is living independently, with family, or in a residential care home or other facility.

“Seniors are trusting and open-hearted, they are willing to help, and it’s troubling that sometimes people prey on that kindness,” said Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors Darryl Plecas. “It’s essential for all of us to be aware and take action, because we have a responsibility to promote a culture of respect and protect the safety of seniors.”

“The new toll-free number is one more tool we’re providing to assist one of the most vulnerable populations. As designated agencies under the Adult Guardianship Act, health authorities across B.C. have a role and responsibility to keep seniors safe,” says Interior Health Board Chair Erwin Malzer. “Nobody should have to suffer silently. We all need to stand up and speak out on behalf of those who may be unable to advocate for themselves.”

Almost 16 per cent of B.C.’s population is over 65-years-old. Within Interior Health, that number is higher, with more than 22 per cent of residents over 65, and climbing. As our society ages, it is increasingly important to be able to recognize elder abuse and give people the tools they need to stop it.

The BC Association of Community Response Networks, which supports a local community coordinated response to the abuse, neglect and self-neglect of vulnerable adults, applauds the launch of the new phone line.

“The BC CRN provides mentorship, resources and support to service providers and encourages public education activities to help residents understand the signs of abuse and how to help prevent it from happening. The launch of this number will further help communities to help address this important issue,” says Sherry Baker, Executive Director of the BC CRN. “I am pleased to add our support to this initiative being taken by Interior Health.”

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Wear purple to show support for the elimination of abuse and neglect of older adults and to promote independence, dignity, and security. For more information visit the [Adult Abuse and Neglect page](#) under Your Health at www.interiorhealth.ca.

Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 750,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter [@Interior_Health](#), or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.

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Note: spokesperson is available this week however has limited availability for interviews on June 15 Elder Abuse Awareness Day.