



FAMILY SERVICE ASSOCIATION
OF TORONTO
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For immediate release

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First-of-Kind Best Practice Tool to Launch in Response to Elder Abuse

TORONTO, September 24, 2004 — For the first time, Canadians working with seniors have one-stop access to the best thinking and practices for dealing with issues of elder abuse. The Honourable George Smitherman, Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, will join seniors and representatives from the community service sector today for the launch of *Breaking the Silence: Best Practices to Respond to the Abuse of Older Adults*, a 90-page manual created by the Elder Abuse Consultation Team (EACT).

Approximately four to ten per cent of older adults living in private homes have experienced abuse or neglect—a conservative estimate as many cases of elder abuse are believed to go unreported. *Breaking the Silence* provides users with information on how to detect cases of elder abuse and provides profiles of elder abuse victims and perpetrators, risk assessment screening tools, cultural considerations and other intervention guidelines.

“Elder abuse continues to be a closeted, complex and often misunderstood phenomenon. It can be very difficult to for both victims and service providers to address,” says Lisa Manuel, Manager of Family Service Association of Toronto’s Seniors and Caregivers Support Services unit, which coordinates EACT. “*Breaking the Silence* equips people who may encounter seniors experiencing abuse with the best tools possible for identifying behaviours that lead to abuse, handling the wide variety of situations in which abuse arises and preventing future occurrences.”

EACT is a multi-disciplinary unit that brings together social workers, medical professionals, lawyers, financial consultants and trained volunteers to address crisis situations of abuse against elderly people. The best practices in the manual were identified through case consultations over a two-year period, as well as a review of current literature from the United States, Great Britain and Canada.

Statistics on Elder Abuse

While statistics on elder abuse are difficult to acquire because it is believe that most cases are not reported, here are some known facts:

- Some of the most commonly documented forms of abuse against seniors include physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse and neglect.
- Among all family-related assaults, violence against older adult most often involved an adult child (38%) followed by a spouse (26%) (Statistics Canada, 2004)
- While older females are more likely to be abused than older males, men are more likely than women to be victimized by an adult child (45% compared to 35%) and women are more likely than men to experience violence at the hands of a spouse (30% compared to 19%). (Statistics Canada, 2004)
- Wife battering carries on into old age. Spousal homicide accounts for nearly one-third (30%) of murders of women over 65 years of age. (Statistics Canada, 1999)
- Nine percent of older men and 6% of older women reported being victims of emotional or financial abuse. (General Social Survey, 1999)
- In 1996, nine out of ten crimes committed against older adults by family members were physical assaults. (Statistics Canada, 1998)

About Family Service Association of Toronto

Family Service Association of Toronto (www.fsatoronto.com) is a non-profit, social service agency offering a wide range of multilingual counselling and support programs that reflect the needs of Toronto's diverse communities. For 90 years, FSA has sought to end family violence, support inclusion of marginalized citizens, help children and families through difficult life transitions, support seniors and build strong, healthy, inclusive communities. FSA also works with government and other community organizations to advocate for social change to enhance the quality of life for all members of our community. FSA is a United Way member agency.

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Editors: Please note "Service" in Family Service Association of Toronto is singular.