

Aging without Violence

The victims of abuse
and neglect:
how can we recognize them,
how can we help them



Coordination :

Luc Forest,
Director General
Fondation Docteur Philippe-Pinel

Louis Plamondon,
Jurist and Sociologist
Violence, Victims and Society Certificate
Faculty of Continuing Education
Université de Montréal

Research and validation of ODIVA*

testing (*Outil de dépistage et
d'intervention des victimes aînées, a tool
developed to screen and aid victimized
seniors) :

Louis Plamondon,
Université de Montréal
Sylvie Lauzon,
University of Ottawa
Charles-Henri Rapin,
Université de Genève
and Marc Bourdeau,
Université de Montréal

With the contribution of in-home
service associations in the Canton of
Vaud (Switzerland) under the direction
of Jacques Charbon.

Special collaboration :

Québec Human and Youth Rights
Commission (CDPDJ)
Public Curator of Québec
Montréal Association of Caregivers
(RAANM)

ODIVA testing is based on an analysis
of 360 situations involving seniors who
are victims of violence or mistreatment
and who live at home.

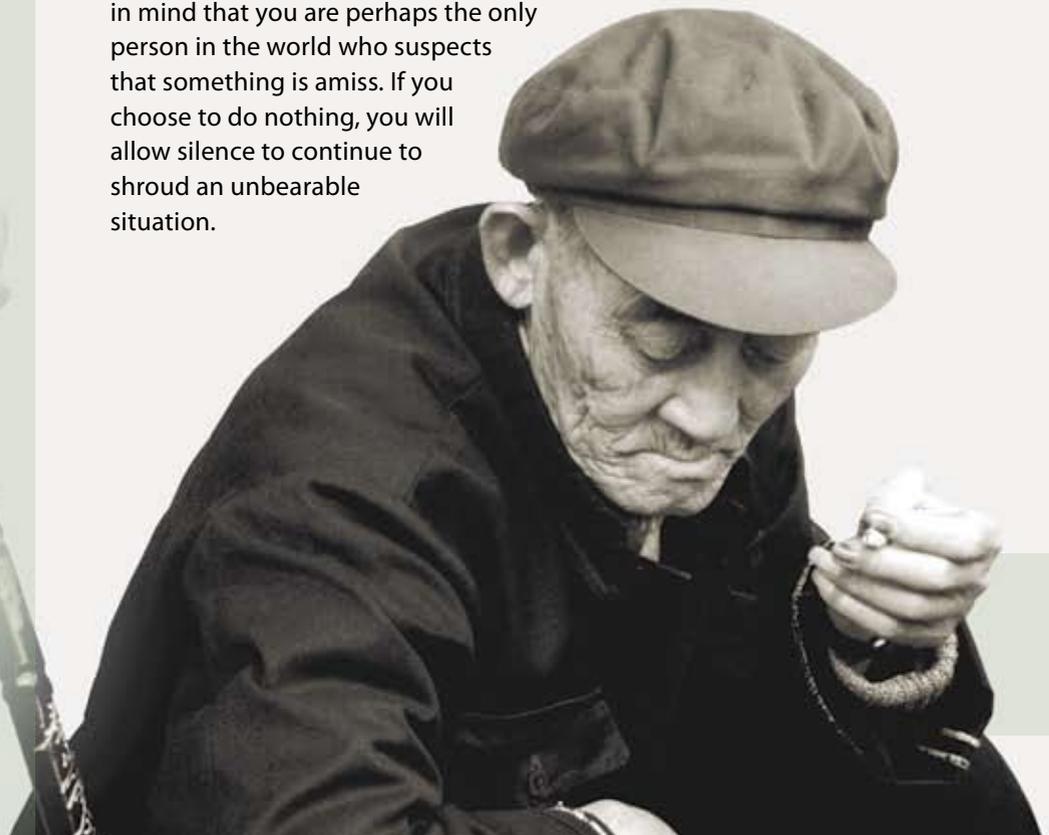
Acknowledgements :

Fondation Docteur Philippe-Pinel
wishes to thank all individuals and
organizations having contributed
to the original edition of this
booklet published in 1999.

Conception: David & Goliath
English translation: Texpertise Inc.
Impression: Solisco

Do you suspect that an individual close to you is the victim of violence or abuse?

Impossible, you might think! Never would a son, daughter or relative neglect or mistreat a parent or friend. Think again. According to recent scientific surveys, between 6% and 10% of all individuals 65 years of age and over are victims of violence or abuse. If you suspect that an individual in your family or circle of friends and acquaintances is a victim of violence or abuse, this booklet will provide you with the tools for initiating action and helping this individual. Violence or abuse is often insidious and victims are generally afraid to speak up or complain for fear of reprisals. They feel isolated and resourceless. Bear in mind that you are perhaps the only person in the world who suspects that something is amiss. If you choose to do nothing, you will allow silence to continue to shroud an unbearable situation.





Recognizing victims of elder violence and abuse

Discretion is of the utmost importance when it comes to validating one's suspicions with regard to potential aggressors. However, if one should decide against doing something to help, it is certain that many elders will continue to suffer their intolerable fate in silence.

Each of us must do our part and take action to put an end to elder violence and abuse. There are a number of indicators to evaluate the risk of elderly individuals being victims of violence or abuse.

The questionnaire on Pages 6 and 7 (Risk Evaluation Test) will help you identify these indicators and ascertain whether or not there is cause for concern. It is important to

complete all four stages of the questionnaire as they are all interrelated. If your answers to each of the four stages of the questionnaire indicate that there is indeed cause for concern, you must then seek out the assistance of a competent professional (Consult the list of resources on the back cover of this booklet).

Aggressors are part of a small minority... In completing the questionnaire on Pages 6 and 7, bear in mind that the vast majority of individuals who house or care for an elderly individual do so with a combination of exemplary dedication and selfless generosity.

Violence can take the form of...

FINANCIAL ABUSE A large proportion of reported abuse is financial in nature. Abuse of this kind ranges from stealing an individual's property, misappropriating funds, fraudulently acquiring power of attorney, forcing the sale of an individual's home, fabricating fictitious service contracts, refusing to reimburse a loan. In some families, the abuser will even go as far as claiming a parent's inheritance before the death of the individual in question. Financial abuse is often accompanied by bribery and threats.

PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE Some individuals are forced to endure pinching, shoving, bullying or slapping. Others are unnecessarily strapped to their beds or made to take medication to render them submissive. Others yet are forced by a spouse, neighbour or service supplier to engage in unwanted sexual acts.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE The object of psychological abuse is to gain control over the individual through fear, insecurity and guilt. Abusers resort to a variety of means, including belittlement, unjustified reproaches, verbal abuse and intimidation. Some go as far as threatening to institutionalize their victims, to show them the door, or to deprive them of visits by or contact with

their grandchildren. Some victims are confined to their homes or limited to the use of only one room. Others yet are denied access to the telephone or treated like children.

NEGLIGENCE Abuse through negligence takes a number of forms: omitting to provide essential care, or failing to provide an individual with adequate food, medicine and basic hygienic care. It can also extend to depriving an individual of meaningful social contact. Abuse can result when relatives are ill equipped to care for a dependent individual or feel resentful about having to take charge of an individual who is unwell. Negligence is sometimes involuntary, owing to a lack of information, or inability on the part of the caregiver to face up to the situation or deal with his or her own health issues.

Neglect does not occur solely in the home. Institutions, both public and private, are guilty of neglect when they fail to provide adequate nutrition, place individuals in rooms which are too small or poorly ventilated, do not ensure proper after hours and weekend services, and do not take action to relieve pain or treat depression.

In Quebec, between 60 000 and 100 000 elderly individuals are victims of abuse or negligence, in other words victims of deliberate acts or omissions by trusted individuals which result in serious injury or wrongs. Abuse is regularly repeated and can take a number of different forms.

Break the silence!

05

VICTIM SILENCE: What is it that victims fear?

- They fear reprisals and are afraid of being bullied if they speak up.
- They fear being abandoned, left to fend for themselves, or deprived of visits by and contact with their grandchildren.
- They fear being placed in a home and forgotten.
- They fear being expelled from a care facility without knowing what to do or where to go.
- They fear causing conflict among family members or scandal in the care facility in which they live.

BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN JUST FEAR

Their silence is sometimes a result of ignorance.

- Victims may be suffering from confusion and be unaware of the gravity of their situation.
- Others, as is frequently the case, may be unaware of the aid and recourse to which they are entitled.

The distorted images some victims have of themselves can also result in silence.

- They believe that they alone can solve their problems.
- They feel powerless and lack the confidence to change the situation.
- They feel guilty about their dependency and the care they require.
- They can sometimes think that they are getting what they deserve.

WITNESS SILENCE: The silence surrounding violence and abuse is not solely victim-based. Much also depends on how persons close to the victim view the violence or abuse. Indeed, many often tend to deny that there is a problem:

- Some minimize the incident having given rise to a complaint.
- Others make their victims feel guilty by making them feel partially responsible for the situation.
- Others say nothing for fear of provoking conflict among family members.
- Others yet, such as employees who are aware of the problem, believe that they are bound by confidentiality or fear that they would lose their jobs were they to report the situation.

Violence does not stop by itself.

If you are a victim of violence, you need help.

If you are a witness to violence, offer your help.

If you suspect that an individual close to you is a victim of violence or abuse, put your intuition to work. Evaluate the risk by conducting the following four-stage test.

· 1 ·

	If 'Yes' circle the number
EVALUATE THE PROFILE OF THE POTENTIAL VICTIM <i>The individual I suspect is being victimized...</i>	
1 Is highly dependent with regard to basic care (eating and hygiene).	10
2 Has received assistance from the same person for some time.	10
3 Suffers from a physical disability requiring daily assistance.	10
4 Exercises no control over financial holdings or day-to-day financial needs.	10
5 Lives alone and is over 75 years of age.	7
6 Is incapable of expressing his or her experiences and emotions.	7
7 Suffers either from mental illness or a degenerative condition (e.g. Alzheimer's disease).	7
8 Is disoriented in time.	7
9 Has little contact with his or her family.	7
10 Suffers from chronic pain with little or no relief.	7
11 Shows signs of behavioural problems.	7
12 Lives with a family member and makes a financial contribution to the household.	5
13 Entertains ties with a single family member who is experiencing financial difficulties.	5
14 Is being treated for symptoms of depression.	5
15 Is married and has experienced problems of conjugal violence in the past.	5
Total	
<i>Add up your answers. If the total exceeds '18', your intuition is likely on target. If the total is less than '18', chances are minimal that the individual in question is being victimized. Proceed to Stage 2</i>	

· 2 ·

	If 'Yes' circle the number
EVALUATE THE PROFILE OF THE POTENTIAL ABUSER <i>The individual I suspect is abusing others...</i>	
1 Is unprepared to care for someone who is not well.	10
2 Lives with the victim and has cared for him or her for some time.	10
3 Derives no gratification from this responsibility.	7
4 Resents having caregiving responsibilities.	7
5 Is experiencing burnout or burdened by an overload of work and/or family issues.	7
6 Suffers him/herself from health problems.	7
7 Has financial problems.	7
8 Is financially dependent on the victim.	7
9 Is socially isolated.	5
10 Does not receive or refuses community service assistance.	5
11. Is an alcoholic or addict or regularly takes psychotropic (mind-altering) drugs.	5
12 Is a wage earner who receives no support or supervision for his or her caregiver responsibilities.	5
Total	
<i>Add up your answers. If the total exceeds '18', the individual in question may be a potential aggressor or abuser. Proceed to Stage 3</i>	



· 3 ·

EVALUATE THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE POTENTIAL VICTIM. IT CAN PROVIDE INVALUABLE CLUES.*The individual at risk of being abused*

	If 'Yes' circle the number
1 Lives in evident reclusion.	10
2 Appears frightened, distrustful.	10
3 Presents symptoms of depression, insomnia, loss of appetite, loss of interest in life and is given to frequent bouts of crying.	10
4 Appears too calm for comfort.	10
5 Is given to crying when mention is made of the caregiver.	7
6 Is given to abrupt mood swings.	7
7 Presents a neglected appearance.	7
8 Threatens to commit suicide or wants to die.	7
9 Requires the permission of a third party to answer questions.	5
10 Is not able or embarrassed to explain wounds.	5
11 Tells you that someone owes him or her money or that he or she is short of money.	5
12 Tells you that he or she is mistreated.	5
13 Expresses his or her intention to move or separate from his or her spouse.	5
14 Suffers from medically unexplained loss of weight.	5
15 Tells recurring stories of unexplained falls.	5
16 Complains of deficient heating or ventilation in his or her apartment/room.	5
Total	

Add up your answers. If the total exceeds '18', it is likely that you are dealing with individual who is being victimized. Continue reading. This brochure will help you determine what action to take and which resources to contact. Proceed to Stage 4

· 4 ·

EVALUATE THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE POTENTIAL ABUSER. IT CAN PROVIDE INVALUABLE CLUES.*The individual I suspect is abusing others...*

	If 'Yes' circle the number
1 Complains about the behaviour of the elderly individual.	10
2 Belittles the victim.	10
3 Reprimands the victim.	10
4 Isolates the victim.	10
5 Harasses the victim.	7
6 Demonstrates aggressive behaviour (e.g. given to breaking objects, fits of anger, verbal aggression).	7
7 Appears distrustful and suspicious of strangers.	7
8 Is unnecessarily demanding.	7
9 Criticizes the victim constantly.	7
10 Insults the victim.	7
11 Threatens the victim.	7
12 Spends more money than would be required or restricts the expenses of the elderly individual.	7
13 Deprives the individual of required food and care.	5
14 Systematically answers in place of the elderly individual.	5
15 Threatens to interrupt in-home services.	5
16 Refuses to leave the victim alone with another person.	5
Total	

Add up your answers. If the total exceeds '18', the indicators would tend to confirm aggressive or abusive behaviour

Interpreting the results of the Risk Evaluation Test:

If you have identified indicators at each of the four stages and your total score adds up to more than '40', continue reading. In this booklet, you will find the information you need to determine what action to take and which resources to contact. Results suggest that you consult a competent professional.

If your total score for the four stages adds up to more than '75', the situation requires the intervention of a competent professional.

If you believe that either you or the individual evaluated is in danger, contact your local Police Service. Dial 911 and ask for the assistance of an agent specializing in the protection of seniors.

If you are a witness to abuse and the victim is not lucid or appears confused, refer to Page 10 of this booklet.

If you are a witness to abuse and the victim is lucid, refer to Page 11 of this booklet.

If you, yourself, are being victimized, see the opposite page for advice on how to extract yourself from the situation and obtain the assistance you require.

You are a witness to alarming situations in an institutional environment...

According to the findings of the elderly victim assistance network in France (ALMA-France)¹, 30% of all abuse-related alerts concern elderly individuals in institutions.

Various risk factors can attract your attention and justify your concern. We have short-listed those most often cited in studies and surveys². If several of these risks are found to be present in a given living environment, contact the Residents' Council or relevant complaints assistance and support service (See resources on the back cover).

1) <http://www.fep.umontreal.ca/violence/bilanalma2005.pdf> available online in French at www.rifvel.org

2) Log on to www.rifveh.org and click on the section entitled "Reconnaître la violence" (in French)

Need assistance or advice? Consult the list of resources on the back cover.

Persons representing a risk to vulnerable seniors in institutions:

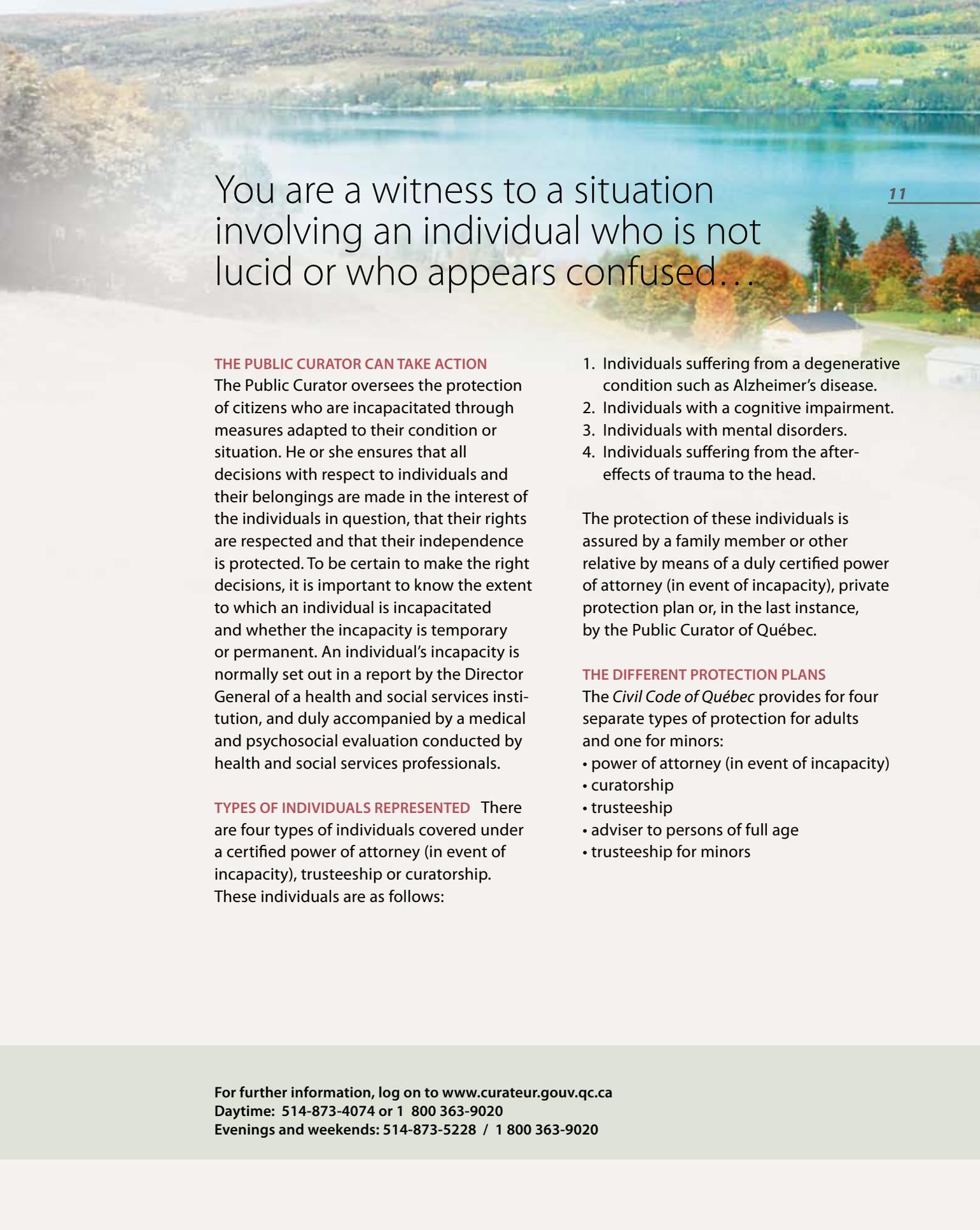
1. Share in the provision of care and support which places them in a position of authority and control (applies to family members as well).
2. Resent having to support or provide care for a dependent or disabled individual.
3. Lack training and supervision.
4. Work in isolation and do not seek out contact with colleagues or institution staff.
5. Demonstrate excessive control and behaviour indicative of abuse of authority.
6. Enjoy 'unrestricted' access to the individual's privacy and show little respect for the privacy of others.
7. Demonstrate evidence of depression and moral fatigue, as well as behaviour indicative of anxiety.
8. Afford little credibility to individuals with disabilities.
9. Take advantage of their hold on/control over the individual.
10. Are naturally rigid and aggressive towards others.
11. Present identity-related challenges, low self-esteem and pay little attention to others.
12. Experience difficulty distinguishing between their role as a caregiver and their relation to the individual.
13. Present significant weakness as a caregiver: excessively tolerant, place others in situations of danger, negligent in reporting to the team, systematically oppose orders and instructions.
14. Are subject to other stress-inducing factors such as alcoholism, substance addiction, as well as health, social, family or financial problems.

Are you being victimized? Here's what do...

- First, stop feeling guilty. You are not alone. Nearly one in ten seniors is in the same situation as you and searching for a way out.
- Gather the courage to speak to someone, discreetly, in the absence of the individual who is mistreating or exploiting you.
- Speak to a family member or a friend you can trust. Ask him or her not to say a word to the aggressor until a solution has been found or someone has been found to protect you.
- Are you afraid? You no doubt have good reason to be. Hence the importance of seeking the assistance of someone who will remain discreet until such time as you wish to take things a step further.
- Speak to your physician or CLSC resource person. Ask him or her to help you.
- To talk the situation out with someone or request advice, you can also call the special Info-Abuse line for seniors.
- If you are in an institution or home for the elderly, contact the Complaints Coordinator. Discuss the situation with him or her in the company of a member of the Residents' Council. If no such individual exists, contact the relevant complaints assistance and support service in your region. Telephone numbers appear on the back cover of this booklet.
- If you are the victim of financial abuse, contact a representative of your financial institution, your notary or your provincial Consumer Protection Office.

Need to confide in someone?

Tel-Aïnés: 514-353-2463 / Info Abuse Line: 1 888 489-2287



You are a witness to a situation involving an individual who is not lucid or who appears confused...

THE PUBLIC CURATOR CAN TAKE ACTION

The Public Curator oversees the protection of citizens who are incapacitated through measures adapted to their condition or situation. He or she ensures that all decisions with respect to individuals and their belongings are made in the interest of the individuals in question, that their rights are respected and that their independence is protected. To be certain to make the right decisions, it is important to know the extent to which an individual is incapacitated and whether the incapacity is temporary or permanent. An individual's incapacity is normally set out in a report by the Director General of a health and social services institution, and duly accompanied by a medical and psychosocial evaluation conducted by health and social services professionals.

TYPES OF INDIVIDUALS REPRESENTED There are four types of individuals covered under a certified power of attorney (in event of incapacity), trusteeship or curatorship. These individuals are as follows:

1. Individuals suffering from a degenerative condition such as Alzheimer's disease.
2. Individuals with a cognitive impairment.
3. Individuals with mental disorders.
4. Individuals suffering from the after-effects of trauma to the head.

The protection of these individuals is assured by a family member or other relative by means of a duly certified power of attorney (in event of incapacity), private protection plan or, in the last instance, by the Public Curator of Québec.

THE DIFFERENT PROTECTION PLANS

The *Civil Code of Québec* provides for four separate types of protection for adults and one for minors:

- power of attorney (in event of incapacity)
- curatorship
- trusteeship
- adviser to persons of full age
- trusteeship for minors

You are a witness to a situation involving an individual who is lucid. You can initiate action...

If it has been established that an individual is truly a victim of abuse, it is recommended that you contact those resource persons who will be best able to guide you in your course of action. At the back of this booklet, you will find a list of useful telephone numbers.

Next, you will need to check with the victim to get his or her take on the situation. Be certain that you are able to speak with him or her one-on-one, in the absence of the potential aggressor.

The victim is in dire need of being supported and feeling protected. Communicate regularly with him or her until the situation has been resolved.

It is extremely important that you refrain from passing judgement or act as the individual's saviour. Victims often feel guilty. Their low self-esteem is indicative of their feeling that they have failed. The individual will feel all the more capable of making decisions if you help bolster his or her self-confidence.



The Québec Human and Youth Rights Commission is an important avenue of recourse for victims.

The mission of the Québec Human and Youth Rights Commission is to oversee enforcement of the principles set out in the *Charter of Individual Rights and Freedoms*.

The Charter provides that seniors as well as the disabled are entitled to protection against all forms of exploitation if such individuals are psychologically, socially, economically or culturally vulnerable, or are dependent upon others for their basic needs. Under the Charter, exploiting seniors or the disabled means taking advantage of their vulnerability or dependency with a view to depriving them of their rights: demanding money of them, mistreating them, or depriving them of care essential to their health, safety and wellbeing.

WHAT TO DO FOR VICTIMS OF EXPLOITATION

If seniors or disabled individuals feel that they are victims of exploitation, they are entitled to request assistance from the *Québec Human and Youth Rights Commission* by lodging a formal complaint. The same is true for groups of individuals who find themselves in the same situation.

However, sometimes victims of exploitation are incapable of taking action themselves as a result of their vulnerability, dependency, insecurity or fear of reprisal. In instances such as this:

- An organization dedicated to the defence of the rights, freedoms and wellbeing of a given group of persons may lodge a complaint with the Commission.
- Any individual who witnesses such a situation (family member, friend, neighbour, volunteer or other) may report it to the Commission.
- The Commission can also initiate an investigation when advised of the possible existence of a situation involving exploitation.

The Commission may also investigate suspected exploitation without the consent of the victim. Each situation is assessed to ascertain the capacity of the individual in question to consent to the investigation. The complainant is then advised of the decision.

Know how to protect yourself and your property! Following is a list of precautions to take at all times.

- Never divulge any information to a person you do not know or who professes to represent a financial institution. Financial institution employees already have all the details they require in hand. If you have any doubts, simply hang up and call your bank branch immediately.
- If you use a bank card, be certain never to lend it to someone else. Never divulge your personal identification number (PIN) to anyone, and do not keep this number in your wallet or hand bag. It is preferable to memorize your PIN. When conducting transactions at an automated banking machine, make certain that no one can see either the number pad or the screen.
- Never make a cheque payable to 'cash' or leave blank the space for either the beneficiary or the amount.
- Verify your bank statements, cancelled cheques and bank books regularly. Report any errors or irregularities to your financial institution immediately.
- Have all loans and financial transactions involving children or relatives notarized.
- A power of attorney is a document signed by you—and preferably notarized which authorizes one or more individuals to act on your behalf in the management of your affairs. This document empowers these individuals to make commitments of your behalf without having to consult you, which can open the door to financial abuse. To ensure that your wishes are respected when these individuals are required to act in your absence and on your behalf, it is a good idea to appoint two individuals.
- If your bank card is lost or stolen, advise your bank branch immediately or call the number of the issuing company or institution. Do not provide anyone with your account numbers. Also conduct your transactions in private.
- Beware when someone promises to make you rich through high yield investments and by providing you with a 'tip' to which only a select few are privy. Rather, seek counsel from a representative of your financial institution.

Remember that no one, whether an employee of a financial institution or a police officer, can require that you withdraw money even if the motive appears honourable, such as in the course of an investigation.



Respect: A universal value which avoids many a conflict

Demonstrating respect for others may sound simple, but it is not always a given when applied to day-to-day affairs.

Children and parents who live together must be prepared to sacrifice a portion of their freedom and privacy without forfeiting their mutual respect for one another.

When one experiences conflict with a relative, one must attempt to understand the needs and expectations of the other by demonstrating empathy. Conflict is often the result of accumulated dissatisfaction with regard to one's needs. It is important to resolve the issue at source by finding a solution which is respectful of both parties.

ADVICE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS Identify and specify your concerns. Clearly express your needs, present and future, as they arise. Know how to ask for help; it is a sign of good health.

Need assistance or advice?

QUÉBEC

TEL-AINÉS / 514-353-2463 / www.tel-ecoute.org/services.htm#telaines

INFO-ABUSE LINE / 1 888 489-2287

COMPLAINTS ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT CENTRE / 1 877 767-2227

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF PATIENTS / 514 861-5922 / www.cpm.qc.ca

CONSUMER PROTECTION OFFICE / 1 888 672-2556 / www.opc.gouv.qc.ca

EMERGENCY SITUATION INVOLVING PHYSICAL VIOLENCE / 911

FADOQ (VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION FOR INDIVIDUALS 50 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER / 1 800 828-3344 / www.fadoq.ca

JUSTICE QUÉBEC - VICTIMS OF CRIMINAL ACTS / www.justice.gouv.qc.ca

OBSERVATORY ON AGEING AND SOCIETY (OAS) / 514 340-3540 extension 3927 / www.ovs-oas.org

PUBLIC CURATOR OF QUÉBEC / 1 800 363-9020 / www.curateur.gouv.qc.ca

QUÉBEC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES OMBUDSMAN / 1 877 658-2625 / www.protecteurducitoyen.qc.ca

QUÉBEC HUMAN AND YOUTH RIGHTS COMMISSION (CDPDJ) / 1 800 361-6477 / www.cdpdj.qc.ca¹

MONTRÉAL ASSOCIATION OF CAREGIVERS / 514 374-1056 / www.perso.b2b2c.ca/raanm

1) *This website features online training in English with information and exercises relating specifically to the rights and freedoms of seniors*

CANADA

CANADIAN NETWORK FOR THE PREVENTION OF ELDER ABUSE / www.cnpea.ca

CANADIAN CAREGIVER COALITION / www.ccc-ccan.ca

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON FAMILY VIOLENCE, PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA / www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/nfv-cnivf/familyviolence/index.html

POLICY CENTRE FOR VICTIM ISSUES, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE / www.justice.gc.ca

THE FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVE, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA / www.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/index.html

RBC FINANCIAL GROUP / 1 800 769-2599 / or contact an RBC Financial Group branch / www.rbc.com