



Responding to elder abuse: Rights, safety and participation

28 August 2019 | Adam Dean and Megan Frost

Questions

“ **What support and information can be provided to carers who suspect that their care recipient is at risk or experiencing elder abuse?**

Madeleine | 13 September 2019

“ If you believe a person is in immediate danger – call Police on 000. If there are concerns about potential or actual elder abuse – the national 1800 ELDERHelpline on 1800 353 374. This will provide information on how to access help, support and referrals in your area. If you are experiencing a crisis and need to talk to a trained professional, call Lifeline on 13 11 14. Additionally, Carers NSW (<http://www.carersnsw.org.au/>) has information, training, counselling and support available for carers. For those not in NSW, Carers Australia has links to relevant states: <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/about-carers/> Also, in July 2019 the Federal Government launched new early intervention support for carers on the national carer hub, Carer Gateway: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/> . Should the suspicion of elder abuse arise in your workplace, there may be policies, procedures that may give guidance and support. For example: Preventing and responding to the abuse of older people NSW Interagency Policy (June 2018) <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591024>

Megan Frost | 13 September 2019

“ **How frequently do older people experiencing abuse consent to mediation? Do you use supported mediation and/or shuttle mediation models?**

Shahaan | 13 September 2019

“ It is still early days for the Let's Talk project (we launched on 12 June 2019). Some general comments: Where a family member, or the older person themselves are concerned that elder abuse is being experienced by the older person, we refer to the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline (as we are in NSW). We have also referred to NSW Police. Depending on the type of elder abuse, we refer to other services, for example legal advice. During our assessment of suitability we assess for risk and also consider who needs to participate, what issues need to be discussed, is this the right time, will this process lead to more harm? This is done in individual sessions – ordinarily face to face (there may be a support person present). We do not mediate if safety has not been established. Shuttle mediation is a possibility – though we haven't used that yet. We have been more likely to offer counselling with supported referrals. We have



used support people in mediation. This has included professionals from other organisations who are already working with the older person / family. Finally, engaging the person who has been alleged to be abusing, or at risk of abusing an older person, is a challenge. We sometimes proceed without that person – the focus is on ensuring that safeguards are in place and working out how other parts of the family system (or older person's network) are able to work together in safe and constructive ways with adequate support.

Megan Frost | 13 September 2019

“ **Is this service available in other states?**

Susan | 13 September 2019

“ ‘Let's Talk’ is building on work that was done in a national trial in 2016 by Relationships Australia nationally. Contact your Relationships Australia to see what they can offer. Relationships Australia Senior Relationship Services: <http://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do/services/senior-relationship-services/senior-relationship-service-brochure.pdf> . A comprehensive stocktake of services nationally - Federal Government Stocktake of elder abuse awareness, prevention and response activities March 2019: <https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/protecting-the-rights-of-older-australians/Documents/Stocktake-of-elder-abuse-awareness-prevention-and-response-activities.pdf> . To find a private Elder Mediator in Australia, visit the Elder Mediation Australasian Network website for more information: <http://elder-mediation.com.au/>

Megan Frost | 13 September 2019

“ **I have previously used the Vic Government's 'With respect to Aged - 2009' practice guidelines for health services and community agencies. Are you aware if this resource is still used in Vic?**

Maria | 13 September 2019

“ Hi Maria. Yes, I believe these guidelines are still current and being used. Please see the Department of Health and Human Services website for more information: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care/wellbeing-and-participation/preventing-elder-abuse/elder-abuse-prevention-and-response>

Adam Dean | 13 September 2019

“ **Will there be a platform for reporting or seeing if a report needs to be lodged like the keep them safe website for mandatory reporters?**

Laura | 13 September 2019

“ I am unaware of a platform for reporting similar to the Keep Them Safe website. This is an area of development, so we would encourage anyone interested to keep abreast of any legislative developments in this space. To reiterate what Megan has mentioned above, if you believe a person is in immediate danger – call Police on 000. If there are concerns about potential or actual elder abuse – the national 1800 ELDERHelpline on



1800 353 374. The national ELDERHelpline can also assist people with advice and referrals. The Australian Government Attorney-General's Department also provides information about reporting the incidence, or risk, of abuse, including information about relevant statutory authorities and regulatory and complaints agencies, depending on your state/territory and the nature of the abuse, which can be found in the Everybody's business: Stocktake of elder abuse awareness, prevention and response activities in Australia document: <https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/protecting-the-rights-of-older-australians/Documents/Stocktake-of-elder-abuse-awareness-prevention-and-response-activities.pdf>

Adam Dean | 13 September 2019

“ **Is there an official 'correct' terminology for this population we should be using, 'Older Adults', 'The Elderly', 'Seniors'?**

Emily | 13 September 2019

“ Hi Emily, good question. We are not aware of any 'official' terminology. 'Older people', 'older adults' or 'older Australians' appear to be the more commonly used terms when referring to people aged 65 years and older. I am aware, however, that the term "elderly" is regarded as demeaning or ageist by some, so would suggest avoiding using that term. The Attorney-General's Department website has more information about protecting the rights of older Australians that you may find helpful: <https://www.ag.gov.au/ElderAbuseNationalPlan> . There is also helpful information and resources available relating to age discrimination on the Australian Human Rights Commission website: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/age-discrimination>

Adam Dean | 13 September 2019