



**EXCERPT FROM PETERBOROUGH ABUSE PREVENTION OF OLDER ADULTS
NETWORK COORDINATED RESPONSE TEAM AGREEMENT**

<http://www.olderadultabuse.org>

Who the Agreement is Intended to Serve

The focus of the Agreement is abused older adults.

Purpose of the Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to provide a common accountability framework that guides an inclusive network of community organizations, professionals, and others in Peterborough County and City in providing a coordinated, client-oriented, rights-based approach that is inclusive of the victim, and deals with the root cause and effects of the abuse or neglect.

The purpose reflects the fact that adult abuse and neglect is an issue that ...

- Affects the whole community,
- Can come to the attention of any individual or organization that connects with older adults, and
- Is usually complex and multi-faceted, resulting in a variety of issues that need to be addressed by people with different skills, knowledge and expertise.

Philosophical Framework

Our work begins from the position that abuse is an issue of power and control. This implies that the best framework for working to prevent and respond to instances of mistreatment is one of empowerment. Adopting the power and control model shifts the focus to addressing the issue of domination and subordination.

The approach of this Agreement is a rights-based approach, dealing with causes and effects, and involves:

- Establishing trust
- Taking time, and
- Moving towards long-term improvements for the individual.

The focus is from the abused individual's perspective, wishes and needs.

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)

A Project of Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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Guiding Principles

The following principles that form the foundation of this Agreement are grounded in an empowerment model. They include the following:

1. *Abuse is a complex issue embedded in human relationships. It is an expression of power and control exercised over another person.*
2. *Every individual has the right to live his/her life free of abuse.*
3. *Abuse of older and vulnerable adults is a societal problem.*
4. *It is everyone's responsibility to end the abuse of older and vulnerable adults.*
5. *Social change will occur only through education and a comprehensive and diverse community response.*
6. *All forms of abuse, whether deliberate or inadvertent, are unacceptable.*
7. *Support, assistance and/or protection offered to each individual should always be in the most effective, but least intrusive form.*
8. *When addressing possible abuse, all aspects of the individual's circumstances are to be taken into consideration, including, but not limited to:*
 - *Cultural diversity*
 - *Language barriers*
 - *Religious beliefs*
 - *Lifestyle choices*
 - *Poverty*
 - *Educational background*
 - *Disabilities*
 - *Social supports*
 - *Health status*
9. *Service providers must be committed to developing and delivering services that meet a diverse range of needs, maximize the options available to older adults, and are responsive to the needs and wishes of the abused person.*
10. *Until the contrary is demonstrated, each individual is presumed to be capable of making decisions regarding his/her health, personal care, legal and financial matters.*
11. *A capable individual is entitled to live in the manner he/she wishes, and to accept or refuse support, assistance or protection.*

Rights-Based Approach

Early in the work with abused older persons, organizations, professionals and society tended to use a ‘Best Interest’ approach, acting in what they believed was the best interest of the older person. This approach often excludes the older adult and does not deal directly with the abuse or underlying problem. This approach tends to be immediate and short term and create its own abusive dynamic.

*This Agreement is based on a ‘Rights-Based’ approach.
It focuses on how the older adult sees the situation.*

The approach used in this Agreement is a ‘Rights Based’ approach. This approach deals with causes. It involves establishing trust, taking time, and moving towards long-term improvements. The focus is on how the older adult sees the situation and what actions they want to take.

Rights of Older Adults

Older adults have the entitlement to the following basic rights:

- ***Self-determination***: The right to live their lives as they want and to make decision for themselves, provided that their actions are not against the law or that they do not infringe upon the rights and safety of others. As such, an older person is free to control her/his affairs to the full extent of her/his abilities, including residing at home for as long as possible and the right to refuse assistance, intervention or medical treatment.
- ***The basic requirements of life***: These include food, shelter, clothing, social contact, and medical attention.
- ***Safe and adaptable environments***: Living conditions that are safe and appropriate to personal preferences and changing abilities.
- ***Informal support***: The right to benefit from family support and care consistent with the well being of the family.
- ***Formal support***: The right to access social, health, housing, legal services and any other services necessary to enhance capacity for autonomy and well being. This includes the right to access services, at the same level provided for other age groups, when dealing with the implications of violence in later life.
- ***Dignity***: The right to live in dignity and security and to be free of exploitation and physical, mental or financial abuse.
- ***Confidentiality***: Whatever information a person chooses to share or whatever information becomes known about them remains confidential except in specific situations, as dictated by law (See Section on Confidentiality.)

The Agreement is to be used to assist organizations, individuals and agencies in working together. No one group can do everything and this Agreement allows us to work together in a more collaborative and coordinated way to address older adult abuse.