



**POSITION ON
Seniors' Shelters for
Older Adults Leaving Abusive Relationships**

Seniors' shelters in Alberta supply an urgently needed but often invisible service—safe havens for older adults fleeing abuse. Studies indicate that the abuse of seniors is under-reported, hidden and unacknowledged. Although this segment of the population is growing in Alberta and across the country, the sad reality is that there are only two seniors' shelters in Canada: in Edmonton and Calgary. In Alberta, there is no comprehensive funding program in place. Seniors' shelters need secure, on-going funding. Since Alberta is at the forefront of services to abused seniors, the shelters need to be supported to disseminate the outcomes of their work across the province and the country to enable the transfer of this important and urgently needed intervention.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters is requesting parity for the two seniors' shelters working in the province, in Edmonton and Calgary. ACWS believes that a fair funding formula that is congruent with current provincial formulas for women's emergency shelters should be established. As well, the funding must take into account the capacity issues being faced by Alberta's seniors' shelters. The Edmonton Seniors' Safe Housing, on an ongoing basis, turns away seniors requesting residency because the shelter is full. On the other hand, in Calgary the Kerby Rotary House has room capacity it is unable to use, due to financial restrictions. These capacity issues need to be addressed. Additionally, ACWS calls for a review of current services that includes an assessment of the need for additional space for older adults, especially in rural and remote areas and how they can best be supported, drawing upon the expertise of Alberta's seniors' shelters.¹

ACWS affirms the *United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1999)*, which is based upon the values of empowering older people and maintaining their dignity. This document identifies the rights of older people to live independently in their community and maintain a lifestyle of their choice, with dignity and respect. ACWS understands the spirit of this document to include right of access to needed services. Currently in Alberta, older adults fleeing domestic violence have very few options. The two seniors' shelters that do exist in this province are under-funded and lack a

¹ The two seniors' shelters have worked in consultation with ACWS to develop this position statement and the attached documents.

comprehensive funding program. It is time that service delivery to abused older adults in Alberta is funded on par with current provisions for provincially contracted women's emergency shelters. It is time for the provincial government to include seniors' emergency shelters in their funding framework. All Canadians should have equal access to emergency shelter services if they need them, regardless of age.

What is elder abuse? It is an act or omission that results in harm or threatened harm to a senior. It is commonly defined as:

- Physical abuse:
 - Pain or injury
 - Sexual abuse
 - Restraining
- Psychological abuse:
 - Mental anguish through humiliation, intimidation, threats
- Financial exploitation
 - Misuse of property or resources by another
- Neglect:
 - Intentional neglect
 - Unintentional neglect
 - Self-neglect
 - Abandonment

We know that abuse, neglect and maltreatment of seniors by family and caregivers is a growing social problem in Canada and globally. Sadly, it will likely increase as the population ages. Currently, the prevalence rates for elder abuse in Canada are from 4 - 10%. All socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds are vulnerable to family violence and therefore there is a need for culturally appropriate responses. However, we also know that it is estimated that *4 out of 5 cases are never reported*. The stigma that is experienced by older adult victims means that elder abuse is largely concealed by family secrecy. Many older adults are constrained by cultural and ethical values that prohibit their speaking out and finding support. Research discloses that:²

- Oldest elders (80 years of age and over) are most vulnerable to abuse and neglect.
- Females are abused at a higher rate than males.
- 7% of seniors had experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse by an adult child—in Alberta this means over 23,000 seniors have been so affected.
- 18% of Albertans know of an older adult who had experienced or was experiencing, abuse.
- Perpetrators of violence against senior men and women tend to be male adult children, or spouses.

In spite of the numbers identified above, elder abuse remains hidden. A case in point is the latest report card issued by the National Advisory Council on Aging: *Seniors in Canada: 2006 Report Card*. This document details the situation of seniors, measuring well-being, living conditions and other lifestyle indicators. Yet, in spite of the prevalence of elder abuse, there is only one observation in the entire document, stating

² Data is from: Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network Survey: 2003; Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing Homeless Count, 2006; Statistics Canada: *Family Violence in Canada: 2006*.

“the rates of family violence and non-family violence against both senior men and women increased. Senior women are more likely to be victims of family violence, while senior men are more likely to be victims of non-family violence (p. 45). “ As well, the report comments upon seniors in shelter: “Recent studies suggest that seniors tend to *avoid* homeless centers and hostels because of their poor conditions . . . The current shelter system, which focuses on short term assistance, offers little help to older adults . . . (p. 44).” Neither observation rates as a “priority for action.” ACWS finds it unacceptable that federal government documents contribute to the lack of focus and hidden nature of elder abuse. All levels of Canadian governments must make elder abuse a priority issue.

Studies have been undertaken to identify the specific needs in service provision required by seniors resident in emergency shelters. These studies argue the case for specialized services for elder abuse: “Shelters for abused women are often unable to accommodate women with disabilities or those needing additional daily care. [For instance, if] an older woman is receiving assistance from home support for bathing or assistance with her daily care, her services may well be disrupted if she leaves her home and enters a transition house [emergency shelter].”³ Other factors may also inhibit older women and men from using emergency shelter services:⁴

- *Structure*: need for quiet; for extended time to sort information and find options; mobility issues
- *Language/culture*: shame, fear, traditional practice, language skills, need for translation services
- *Daily living*: special needs for age related conditions or impairments; need for special supports; capacity to participate in shared responsibilities; programming needs/focus;
- *Shelter workers*: staff need special training for work with seniors
- *Non-resident services*: specific outreach strategies

Shelter Director’s across the province are cognizant of the increase in the aging population of Alberta and their limited ability to respond to this growing need.

They recognize the specialized services provided by the existing seniors’ shelters and see an internal need to address the senior population. Alberta has the opportunity to build on the successes of its two shelters and the network of organizations working in the field of elder abuse to increase capacity and undertake training and infrastructure changes necessary for accessible shelter intervention province wide.

Providing older adults with specialized shelter services makes good sense, is in keeping with Canadian values and is consistent with international declarations.

Seniors’ shelters meets the needs of elders for social inclusion by providing them with communication and interaction with staff trained to provide for their special needs. Seniors’ shelters also create a safe environment for older adults to discover community and to work together on defining and achieving the quality of life they merit. Shelters reduce the social isolation that abuse engenders and undercut the victimization made possible through separation from others. Seniors’ shelters need flexible models, for instance concerning length of stay. It may take up to three months for old age

³ *Silent and Invisible: What’s Age got to do with it?* p. 49.

⁴ IBID, pgs 53 – 60.

security benefits to be divided and this directly affects financial independence for many Canadian seniors.

“Even when older women victims are willing and able to seek help, they are often met by service providers and systems that are unprepared to address their special needs.”⁵ Older adults fleeing domestic violence respond to care that is based on an empowerment model:

- Empathetic listening
- Documenting the abuse
- Providing information on abuse
- Offering options and choices
- Working with appropriate health and social services
- Encouraging planning for safety and support and other services

What is happening in Alberta’s seniors’ shelters is best practice and transferable across the province and across Canada. Older adults are in need of access to these interventions. In Edmonton and Calgary, the seniors’ shelters have been gathering data and information about effective interventions and outcomes. These shelters have worked out enhanced community responses to isolated and abused older people by consolidating community networks, increasing referral pathways and training, and linking points of contact (churches, home services, health care) with those resident in shelter. Collaboration and partnership with key agencies that strengthen direct access to services and activities is an integral part of their work. The result is astonishing: more than 80% of seniors left the shelter for safe environments! Seniors’ shelters need to be funded to support Alberta women’s shelters in designing best practice responses in smaller communities.

Kerby Centre, in a joint project with Health Canada conducted in 1995, identified shelter services as a need in the interventions required to address elder abuse in Calgary. This recommendation resulted in the Kerby Centre building and operation the first purpose built shelter for abused older adults in 1998.⁶

The Edmonton Elder Abuse Intervention Team first identified the need for seniors’ shelters in a 1998 survey of shelters. Because existing services did not address the specific needs of abused seniors, including the need for older men seeking refuge, the 1998 Edmonton Seniors’ Safe Housing Project was created. This project initially provided crisis lines, safety planning, support services and outreach, as well as residential services (2 suites). Due to the high success rate for helping seniors leave abuse and settle into peaceful lives, the Edmonton Seniors Safe Housing and Kerby Rotary House have gained world-wide attention for the work they do. They receive delegations from other countries and are cited in national reviews of best practice.

⁵ *Silent and Invisible: What’s Age got to do with it?* p. 45.

⁶ Synergy II a Demonstration Project to Address the Issues of Violence in Older Families. Project #4887-09-90-121 Family Violence Prevention Division Health Canada 1995.

Now, *nearly ten years later*, it is time for these organizations to receive proper acknowledgement for their work and for seniors fleeing abuse to have access to the services they need. ACWS is calling for:

- Immediate funding for the two seniors' shelters in Alberta, based on an equitable and fair funding model.
- Education and awareness raising campaigns focused on elder abuse.
- Dissemination plan of best practice developed by Alberta's seniors' shelters.
- Collaborative strategic planning on all aspects of Alberta's current boom environment that affects the lives of seniors in this province and its relationship to elder abuse.

- Specialized interventions for seniors living on reserve

ACWS has prepared the following funding model and outcome measures to provide a framework and benchmarks for a sustainable seniors' shelter funding programme.

Seniors Shelters Core Funding Model

STAFFING	Case Management Model	24-Hour Staffing Model
Program Director	1	1
Administrative Assistant	0.5	1
House Support Worker		2
Counselor/Case Manager	2.5	6
Outeach Coordinator	1	1
Public Education Coordinator	0.5	0.5
Volunteer Coordinator	0.5	0.5
Total Staffing	6	12

Item	Case Management Model	Case Management Notes	24-Hour Staffing Model	24-Hour Staffing Notes
Shelter Staffing Costs				
Salaries	\$172,525		\$390,742	
Benefits, Pensions and employment expenses	35,799 ⁷	20.75%	46,889	12.00%
Nursing (0.25 FTE)	12,000			
Total Staffing Costs	\$220,324		\$437,631	
Mortgage, rent or lease	45,000	Alberta Seniors/GEF Forgone Rent	48,000	Building owned
Taxes		Exempt	0	Exempt
Liability Insurance	3,000		15,000	
Building Insurance	No Extra	Alberta Seniors/GEF	5,000	
Utilities (power, gas, water, cable)	4,680	Alberta Seniors/GEF	39,375	5%
Total Facility Costs	\$52,680		\$107,375	

Maintenance Costs				
Building and Equip Maintenance and Janitorial Service	4,700	Alberta Seniors/GEF	15,000	
Total Maintenance Costs	\$4,700		\$15,000	

Operating Costs	Case Management Model	Case Management Notes	24-Hour Staffing Model	24-Hour Staffing Notes
Food	39,000		30,000	
Clothing	0		0	
Household and cleaning supplies	2,500		2,500	
Emergency Prescription and Non- Prescription Drugs	2,000		2,000	
Personal incidentals	2,000		2,000	
Transportation	2,500		2,500	
Client phones	4,500			
Interpreter Services	600		1,000	
Telecare emergency telephone support	2,700			
Total Operating Costs	\$55,800		\$40,000	

Administration Costs	Case Management Model	Case Management Notes	24-Hour Staffing Model	24-Hour Staffing Notes
Audit Fees	1,500		1,500	
Legal Fees	800		1,500	
Bank Fees	100		100	
Office Supplies and Postage	1,200		1,200	
Telephones (Landlines, Cells and Internet)	4,000		4,000	
Travel and Parking	5,000		5,000	
Board and Staff Development	3,500		3,500	
Computer Technical Support	1,350		1,350	
Advertising and Promotion	1,500		1,500	
Evaluation	5,000		5,000	
Total Administration Costs	\$23,950		\$24,650	
Sub-Total	\$357,454		\$624,656	

Support Functions				
Crisis Line				
Crisis Line Service	12,500	United Way	16,000	Alberta Seniors (0.5FTE)

Outreach Workers (1 FTE)				
Salary	37,500		37,500	
Benefits/Pensions/Salary Expenses	7,781	20.75%	4,538	12.10%
Travel and Parking	2,500		2,500	
Staff Development	750		750	
Office Space	1,200		1,200	
Office Supplies	500		500	
Total – Outreach Worker	\$50,231		\$46,988	

Administration Costs	Case Management Model	Case Management Notes	24-Hour Staffing Model	24-Hour Staffing Notes
Public Education Worker (0.5 FTE)				
Salary	17,000		17,000	
Benefits/Pensions/Salary Expenses	3,528	20.75%	1,700	10.00%
Travel and Parking	2,500		2,500	
Staff Development	750		750	
Office Space	1,200		1,200	
Office Supplies	5,000		5,000	
Total – Public Education Worker	\$29,978		\$28,150	

Volunteer Coordinator (0.5 FTE)				
Salary	17,000		17,000	
Benefits/Pensions/Salary Expenses	3,528	20.75%	1,700	10.00%
Travel and Parking	1,500		1,500	
Staff Development	750		750	
Office Space	1,200		1,200	
Office Supplies	1,500		1,500	
Volunteer Appreciation	2,500		2,500	
Total – Volunteer Coordinator	\$27,978		\$26,150	

Administration Costs	Case Management Model	Case Management Notes	24-Hour Staffing Model	24-Hour Staffing Notes
Administration Support (12%)	49,351		79,553	
TOTAL	\$527,492		\$821,497	
Less Funding from Other Sources	\$12,500		\$16,000	
Less Alberta Seniors - In Kind	\$54,380	Funding not required – Covered by existing arrangement	\$0	
Less Building			\$48,000	Building owned
Funding Required from Alberta Seniors	\$460,612		\$757,497	

Additional capacity for the 24 Hour Staffing Model is based on the ACWS emergency women’s shelter staffing model and would be adjusted accordingly.

Staffing and costs would have to be pro-rated to provide additional capacity for the Case Management Model.

Seniors' Shelters Program Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes Short-Term	Outcomes Mid-Term	Outcomes Long-Term	Indicators Of Success	Measurement Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal staff resources • SAGE/Kerby Centre programs • Other community agencies and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess for admission • Identify and address areas of risk. • Ensure the provision of basic living essentials • Develop informal supports between clients • Develop care plan with each individual looking at client identified needs • Develop a discharge plan with each client • Develop a Safety Plan with each client prior to discharge • Develop collaborations with community resources who have expertise in the areas identified by as areas of need • Connect clients to agencies to assist with identified needs. • Visits with the client in their new environment upon discharge. • Provide educational opportunities in the community on issues of abuse to seniors and available resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical data including: # of clients utilizing service, #of calls received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients are away from the abusive environment. • Clients are safer from risk of abuse while in the safe housing program. • Clients experience less isolation and loneliness while in the safe house. • Clients experience increased emotional support and practical assistance. • Clients are able to focus on areas of need that will facilitate overall wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients are safer from risk of abuse upon discharge. • Clients experience less isolation and loneliness upon discharge. • Clients leave the program having increased knowledge of resources and options available to lead a healthier lifestyle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients are safer from risk of abuse after discharge • Clients leave the program having an increased knowledge of resources and options available to lead a healthier lifestyle. • Clients have the ability to deal effectively with other risk situations they may encounter after they leave the safe house. • Other seniors in the community will become aware of the services available and recognize they have options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients report feeling safer and less fearful. • Clients report they are accessing more resources. • Clients report that until coming to the safe house they weren't aware of all the choices available to them. • Clients make statement/ take actions that indicate more feelings of personal control. • Staff observes clients taking more action. • Staff from other organizations providing services report the clients make use of services they offer. • Clients say they feel less isolated. • Staff observe changes that indicate overall better physical and mental health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff documentation in care plan throughout the client's stay at the safe house. • Staff observation and file documentation during client stay. • Staff observation and documentation during follow visits with clients after departure. • Entrance and exit surveys completed by clients. • Evaluation questionnaires with follow-up clients. (Kerby) • Periodic external evaluations. (Kerby)