

Helping professionals prevent abuse



The Ministry of Community and Social Services introduced a regulation in 2011 to help prevent the abuse of adults with a developmental disability in group homes, day programs and similar settings. Read our [February 2011](#) issue of Spotlight on Transformation to find out more.

A new campaign in central western Ontario is raising awareness about the neglect and abuse of people with developmental disabilities.

It will help professionals who work directly with people with developmental disabilities – support staff, case managers and advocates – to recognize and prevent abuse.


Many crimes against people with developmental disabilities go unreported because victims may not be able to communicate in conventional ways. Some may not be able to speak at all.

Together We Can Stop The Hurt includes materials to educate adults with developmental disabilities about their rights. They will learn how to set boundaries with those close to them, how to say “No,” and how to tell someone they trust if something does happen to them.

There is also training for teachers, victim and crisis counsellors, the police and other human service professionals. It will help them communicate with people with developmental disabilities and access community resources that support victims of abuse.

Gail Jones of Kerry’s Place Autism Services says that strong social networks reduce isolation, a key risk factor for neglect and abuse.

“The best safety net for people with developmental disabilities is having other people around them who care,” says Jones.



The next stage of the project is to create a website to help agencies launch their own abuse awareness campaigns. You'll be able to download brochures, posters and fact sheets and customize them to meet your needs.

If you are interested in learning more about the **Together We Can Stop The Hurt** campaign or to inquire about a workshop, contact Gail Jones at **905-457-1130** or email gjones@kerrysplace.org.

Why do we need a campaign?

- Three out of every four women with an intellectual disability have been victims of violence.
- Adults with developmental disabilities are nearly:
 - three times more likely to be physically assaulted
 - 10 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than someone without a disability.

Identifying abuse – what to watch for

If you suspect abuse, report it – call your local police department and tell them you are concerned about an adult who you believe to be vulnerable.

Signs of abuse

Watch for unusual behaviour. If someone is acting out, it could be because they are being mistreated. Warning signs can include:

- repeated illnesses or injuries, especially ones with no clear cause
- aggression
- excessive compliance, depression or withdrawal
- nightmares
- self-destructive behaviour
- sudden change in feelings about a particular person or place
- lack of attachment to caregivers.

Types of abuse

Abuse is any action or inaction that jeopardizes a person's health or well-being. It may include:

- **physical** abuse such as slapping, pushing, pulling or kicking
- **neglect** such as depriving a person of food, water, shelter, heat, medical care or hygiene
- **emotional** and psychological abuse such as insults, harassment or intimidation
- **sexual** abuse such as unwanted touching
- **financial** exploitation such as misusing funds or assets belonging to a vulnerable adult.

Preventing abuse

There are many things agencies can do to prevent abuse. For example:

- Visit vulnerable adults at least once a year, and make sure your staff know the signs of neglect and abuse.
- Request exit interviews when families withdraw from services.
- When multiple agencies work with the same individual or family, identify a lead agency and improve communication between service providers.
- Educate neighbourhood groups – such as Crime Stoppers or Neighbourhood Watch – about the potential for abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults.
- Train other social services agencies that play a role in protecting vulnerable people. Reach out to educators, self-advocates, family counsellors, victim and crisis services agencies and the police.

The **Together We Can Stop The Hurt** campaign stems from an earlier report on how communities can work together to prevent neglect or abuse. Read the Central West Region Community Discussion Report: [Protecting Vulnerable Adults: Lessons from the Past, Recommendations for the Future.](#)



New database means more reliable information

Developmental Services Ontario is getting ready to start using a new database. It will hold the records of all the adults in Ontario's developmental services system in a single, private and secure place.

Right now every agency, community and region keeps its own lists of people receiving and waiting for services. They keep different types of information, and some people are on the lists of multiple agencies.

"We have too many lists," says David Zuccato, Assistant Deputy Minister of Operations for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. "We need more reliable information. We don't know exactly how many people are getting or waiting for service. The new database will change that."

For the first time in its history, Ontario will have one list of every adult who is receiving or waiting for developmental services. This will improve planning and forecasting in every community and region of the province.

"We'll have more accurate and complete statistics," says Zuccato. "It will make it easier to assess current needs and identify future needs, which will benefit everyone."

Now agencies are sharing information with us about adults who are receiving or waiting for services. We will enter this information into the new database.

As the single point of access for adult developmental services in the province, Developmental Services Ontario needs a single database to do its work effectively. The new database will help Developmental Services Ontario connect people with available supports in a way that's fair, easy and efficient.

New policy directives for service agencies

Starting June 1, 2012, new policy directives for service agencies will come into effect for all developmental services agencies funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The new rules cover two topics:

- managing complaints and feedback from individuals, families and members of the general public, and
- supporting people who have challenging behaviour.

The policy directives set out standards for high-quality support.

Input from many individuals, agencies and groups interested in developmental services helped shape the directives, including:

- People First of Ontario
- the Provincial Network on Developmental Services
- family members, and
- the Community Networks of Specialized Care.

The requirements build on the [quality assurance measures](#) set out for agencies in Ontario Regulation 299/10.

You can find the new directives for service agencies, as well as directives for Developmental Services Ontario in [the Information and Resources section](#) of the ministry's website at Ontario.ca/community.

Do you have a question about the new policies for developmental services agencies?

We are here to help! Contact us at: DStransformation.css@ontario.ca


Training agency staff about physical restraint

The [quality assurance measures](#) outline a requirement about training agency staff on the prevention and use of physical restraint. The new policy directives for service agencies include more details about this requirement.

The requirement aims to:

- protect the safety, rights and well-being of adults with a developmental disability who have challenging behaviour, and
- make sure staff have the knowledge and skills to keep everyone safe in a crisis.

The policy directives create some flexibility on the training requirements. Agencies can base the training they provide, in part, on the needs of the clients they support, as set out below.



Agencies that support people who are unlikely to exhibit challenging behaviour — such as people who are medically fragile — may not be required to train staff extensively on the prevention and use of physical restraint.

In these kinds of cases, agencies would need to provide minimal training. This would include training staff on:

- understanding human behaviour
- supporting a person in a way that they feel safe, engaged and respected, and
- identifying and preventing crisis situations.

The [Community Networks of Specialized Care](#) are reviewing and identifying training packages that will help agencies meet the training requirement. A list of these training packages will be available soon.

Stay tuned for more details about these training packages in a future issue of Spotlight.

Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy Update

Regional champions lead the way

After identifying the key skills and values – or core competencies – for seven different positions, the [Human Resource Strategy](#) is turning theory into action. Sixteen regional champions from pilot agencies recently led training on core competencies for a number of agencies across Ontario.

The training sessions covered:

- an introduction to the core competencies
- using the core competencies to coach staff, and
- conducting behaviour-based interviews.

Core Competencies for Direct Support Professionals

- Advocating for Others
- Collaboration
- Creative Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Fostering Independence in Others
- Initiative
- Interpersonal Relations and Respect
- Resilience

The regional champions guide, support, train and mentor a lead person at each agency who will help roll out the core competencies to direct support staff.

The Human Resource Strategy Steering Committee and the Core Competencies Provincial Implementation Committee would like to thank the regional champions and their agencies for investing time and energy, and for demonstrating leadership:

Central East Region

- Kay Corbier, Community Living Oshawa/Clarington
- Leslie Steeves, Community Living Campbellford/ Brighton

Central West Region

- Susan Scott, Central West Specialized Developmental Services
- Liz Sloan, Community Living Cambridge

Eastern Region

- Lauri Cox and Pamela Johnson, Ottawa Rotary Home

Hamilton-Niagara Region

- Sandra Herkimer, Community Living Six Nations "Ronatahskats"
- Noor Multi, Mainstream
- Julia Wheeler, Community Living Brant

North East Region

- Sherry Carnevale, Community Living North Bay

Northern Region

- Kim LePine, Community Living Fort Frances & District

South East Region

- Cindy Chappell, Ongwanada

South West Region

- Lesa Jansen, Community Living Chatham-Kent
- Lara Macdonald-Deane, Community Living London
- Claire Market, Community Living Essex County

Toronto Region

- Stacey Donaghy, Reena
- Sandra Toth, Community Living Toronto

This training is part of the first phase of implementing the core competencies across Ontario. A key part of the Human Resource Strategy, the core competencies will strengthen human resource development, recruitment and retention practices in the sector. Be sure to read future issues of Spotlight as we promote developmental services careers and encourage more people to join this rewarding field.

We're on Twitter!

Interested in #accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities? Want to know more about #inclusion for people with a developmental disability?

Join the conversation on Twitter! Here's where to find us:

- [Twitter.com/OntMinCommunity](https://twitter.com/OntMinCommunity)



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