

Elder abuse a complex issue

By Pat Power

Elder Abuse Intervention Team

There is a reason for concern for the wellbeing of a significant number of Edmonton seniors.

Are you aware that as many as 7% (according to surveys done in Canada) and maybe as high as 10% (according to those that work in the field) of the senior population in Edmonton could be in an abuse situation? Right now this could be anywhere from 7,000 to 10,000 seniors.

We only started to learn about the amount of elder abuse that goes on in our community since the late 1980s.

With elder abuse, we are still just in the midst of understanding the complexities of the issue and the best ways to deal with the problem.

In Edmonton we have had the good fortune to have a commitment made in 1998 by the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service, Catholic Social Services (CSS) and Victorian Order of Nurses. This collaborative team has been working at prevention, education, and intervention of elder abuse since that time. This team works alongside the Elderly Adult Resource Service of CSS to do this very difficult work.

The team is responding to 1,200 to 1,500 calls (many are repeat calls) per year now, which then translates into providing advice or a direct service to more than 600 seniors and their families. The abuse situations we deal with are all involving family members or caregivers.

This is still just a tip of the iceberg in terms of the size of the problem as mentioned earlier. There are other elder abuse services (which we will talk about in future issues) in Edmonton as well as so many senior-serving agencies that try to assist the abused senior. Altogether we are still falling short of addressing the issue adequately.

To find out more or to discuss a concern of abuse, call the Elder Abuse Intervention Team intake line at 780-477-2929.