
INTERVENTION

Module 13: The Violence Prevention Continuum: A holistic model

In this module, we present a new model for thinking about and acting on ways to deal with the problem of violence against older persons. The **Violence Prevention Continuum** model provides three strategies that can help by reducing risk and increasing capacity and resilience.⁴² These strategies, which comprise the Violence Prevention Continuum, are interrelated and may build on one another or share some of the same resources:

1. Short-term and emergency relief strategies. These strategies address the area of **intervention** in violence against older persons;
2. Capacity-building strategies. These strategies fall into two areas: individual skill-building strategies and community capacity-building strategies. These strategies address **recognition** and **prevention** of violence against older persons; and,
3. Systems change/societal change strategies. These strategies address both **recognition** and **prevention** of violence against older persons.

Short-term and emergency relief strategies

Short-term and emergency relief strategies are temporary measures. They target those who have been harmed or who are most at risk. These strategies provide short-term relief and safety for the immediate crises of violence. They do not address the root causes of violence against older persons, such as ageism or issues of power and control. Once the crisis has been addressed, individual skill-building strategies and community capacity-building strategies should be explored.

Examples of short-term and emergency relief strategies may include:

⁴² Thanks to Dr. Patty Williams, the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council, and the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University, for conceptualizing the three strategies for social change.

- Emergency shelters;
- Police interventions; and,
- Crisis counselling.

Capacity-building strategies

Capacity-building strategies address the problem of violence against older persons by building skills, increasing knowledge and awareness, and mobilizing people to work together for change. The focus of capacity-building is on bringing individuals, communities and groups together to define and explore how to address their issues and challenges. These strategies work best when the people experiencing the problem – older persons themselves, their families and their communities – are included and involved in finding solutions.

- **Individual skill-building strategies** help people develop effective coping skills, learn about helpful resources and reduce social isolation. Individual skill-building strategies that address the problem of violence against older persons include:
 - Individual safety planning;
 - Joining seniors' support groups;
 - Finding peer support; and,
 - Counselling.
- **Community capacity-building strategies** build skills and identify issues and resources at the community and group level. These strategies also provide opportunities for people to gather together to reduce isolation and form social support networks. Community capacity-building strategies that address the problem of violence against older persons include:
 - Community centre programs and activities for older persons;
 - Senior centre programs and activities;
 - Coordinated community responses to violence against older persons;
 - Friendly visiting programs; and,

- Lunch and Learn sessions on related topics (for example, preventing financial abuse).

Systems change/societal change strategies

Systems change is the process of improving the capacity of large human groups such as societies, governments and communities to advance the well-being of all members. It involves changes in policies, regulations, values, attitudes and relationships. Many community issues and challenges can be addressed through good public policy. The key ingredients for systems and societal change include:

- Leadership at all levels;
- Including the people who are experiencing the problem (older persons);
- Access to knowledge and resources; and,
- Sustainable solutions.

Systems change strategies to address the problem of violence against older persons include:

- Having a Residents' Bill of Rights in residential care settings;
- Adult support and protection laws;
- Social marketing campaigns; and,
- School-based violence prevention programs.

What can be done to prevent violence against older persons?
The Violence Prevention Continuum
- Strategies for Change -



1. Short-Term Strategies (Intervention)

- directed at those who have experienced violence or who are most at risk
- provide short-term relief for the immediate problem of violence
- usually for emergency situations; do not address underlying problems that cause violence
- examples: short-term shelters; police interventions; crisis counselling

2. Capacity-Building Strategies (Prevention)

Individual skill-building strategies:

- assist individuals to develop effective coping skills; enhance knowledge of helpful resources; reduce isolation
- examples: safety planning with seniors; joining seniors' support groups; finding effective peer or professional support; counselling

Community capacity-building strategies:

- build skills and identify resources at the community level
- provide opportunities to bring people together to reduce isolation and develop social support networks
- examples: community centre programs for older persons; senior centres; coordinated community responses; volunteer friendly visiting or "daily hello" programs in local communities; Lunch and Learns on relevant topics

3. Systems/Societal Change Strategies (Recognition/Prevention)

- longer-term strategies; aim to educate target groups and general public, and/or make changes to policies and programs that will build safety and prevent violence against older persons
- examples: Residents' Bill of Rights in residential care; adult support and protection laws; social marketing campaigns; school-based violence prevention programs