



## **Information Sheet 4 Mistreatment of Older People in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities**

### **What Is Mistreatment Of An Older Person?**

Any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person, is elder abuse. Mistreatment can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, social abuse and neglect.

### **Who Is At Risk Of Mistreatment?**

Mistreatment of an older person can happen to any older person, across all ethnic groups, all levels of education and all economic backgrounds. It is a hidden issue but research figures estimate that 3% to 5% of the older population is affected by it.

### **Why Older People From CALD Communities Might Have Additional Risks of Mistreatment?**

- Increased dependence on the immediate family.
- Social isolation.
- Lack of personal networks for support, eg extended family and friends.
- Limited knowledge of existing services.
- Language barriers in accessing mainstream services, eg: public transport.
- Not being accustomed to having community services in place.
- Regarding the use of community services as acceptance of charity.
- Culturally inappropriate or insensitive mainstream services.
- Acceptance of some types of mistreatment as normal in one's culture.
- Culturally based expectations of parental respect and the duty of the children to be the ones who provide care to their ageing parents.
- Widening intergenerational gap in the family, as the older people retain the traditions and culture of their country of origin while their children, and more so the grandchildren, integrate into the mainstream society.
- Diminishing own ethnic community, mainly in rural and remote areas.
- Reliving of pre-migration traumatic experiences

### **What Might Stop People From Seeking Help?**

- It is only recently that the Mistreatment of Older People has been recognised as occurring.
- Many ethnic communities regard relationships in the family as sacred.
- The shame associated with the 'loss of face' in one's community, when admitting to being mistreated by a family member.

- The fear of being placed in alternate accommodation especially if it is culturally inappropriate
- Deep sense of guilt in feeling deserving the mistreated.
- Not realising that mistreatment by a close person happens to others.
- The loss of self-esteem and self-value in the process of migration.
- Not being aware of one's human rights and the holistic approach to wellbeing.
- The negative way that ageing is viewed in the community.

### What Can Be Done To Prevent or Stop Mistreatment?

- Talk to someone you trust, eg: a general practitioner, a community leader or a social worker.
- Request an accredited interpreter who can provide a professional and confidential service. Avoid the use of family members as interpreters.
- Accepting services from Community Organisations might benefit the whole family, improve relationships and reduce stress, anger and frustration.
- For requesting the provision of services contact an Aged Care Assessment Team. Consult the Age Page in the White Pages.
- Before signing legal documents always ask for explanation of the content or consult an independent lawyer (Community Legal Centres offer free consultations).
- If in immediate physical danger call the police. Cross Cultural Police Liaison Officers can provide a culturally appropriate approach.
- For further options and support call the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit HELPLINE (see below). Conversational English needed.
- You may choose to approach a service provider in your own community and they may contact the HELPLINE on your behalf.

### Where To Go For Help

The EAPU operates a state-wide CONFIDENTIAL telephone information, support and referral service for anyone experiencing or witnessing the abuse of an older person. Callers can call **HELPLINE** on **1300 651 192** between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Queensland.

If you experience or witness elder abuse now or in the future please phone the **HELPLINE** on:

**1300 651 192**

If you are physically unsafe – please call the police.  
**POLICE – Phone 000 – Emergency Only**



#### Elder Abuse Prevention Unit

PO Box 108 Fortitude Valley 4006

Phone: 1300 651 192

Fax: 3250 1929

E-mail: [eapu@lccq.org.au](mailto:eapu@lccq.org.au)

Website: [www.eapu.com.au](http://www.eapu.com.au)



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