



2. Tips for community champions

Your role

Community champions are people in the community who take on an issue or project and are fearless in raising awareness and support for it. In this case, the issue is senior abuse awareness and prevention.

You do not have to be an expert or a highly skilled presenter to be a community champion. But you should feel comfortable leading a group conversation about senior abuse, and be willing to use the messages in this toolkit to guide the conversation.

Community champions come from a variety of backgrounds. They represent a range of ages, cultures, genders, and professions (see Figure 1). The unique qualities you bring to your role will enrich the program and reflect the diversity of Nova Scotians.

Figure 1.



What is the commitment?

This is a volunteer position, so you have control over your level of commitment. Ideally, you will be available to participate in conversations and lead presentations on senior abuse when you are needed in your community. But you are not obligated to make a presentation if you are unavailable. The Department of Seniors or your local Seniors' Safety Program may be able to arrange another presenter if you are unavailable.

We hope this toolkit will inspire you to promote respect, safety, and freedom of choice for all older adults. Talk about the issue whenever you have the chance. You can make a difference by challenging the assumptions people make and the stereotypes we accept.

What are the rewards?

As with other volunteer positions, the rewards of the work are both practical and personal. You will meet people, learn new things, use your strengths, and develop your skills. You will be helping to make your community safer and healthier. And that can make you feel safer and healthier, too.

Getting ready

You do not have to organize and plan a presentation on your own. You can let people know that you are available to talk to their groups about senior abuse. Ask them to invite you. Many community groups will be interested in having presentations and will take care of booking a space, inviting participants, copying materials, and providing refreshments. Build on existing networks by attending gatherings where people already come together to address similar topics. This could include seniors' groups, caregiver groups, professional groups, service clubs, churches, schools, and other organizations.

Here are some things you will need to do to get ready for a presentation:

- Provide information** to the host group before the session. Let them know what to expect. Explain that the session will include a presentation, discussion, and opportunities to practice with case studies.

- Know your audience.** Ask the host group:
 - What is the purpose of the group?
 - How many people will be attending?
 - What does the audience expect?

- Will I be the only presenter? If not, will I be following or followed by another presenter? If so, what is their topic?
- How much time do I have?

- Order enough copies of the booklet, *Understanding Senior Abuse: Facts, Tips, Contacts*.** These are available from the Department of Seniors. See page 56 for contact information.
- Know your material.** Reread the presentation (section 3) and the booklet, *Understanding Senior Abuse: Facts, Tips, Contacts*.
- Choose cases for discussion** (section 4). Prepare enough copies for the participants, or ask the host group to make the copies. See the master copies in pockets 2 and 3.
- Decide how you will gather feedback.** If you plan to use the evaluation form provided in pocket 4, prepare enough copies for the participants, or ask the host group to make the copies.

These are some things you might ask the host group to organize:

- Book the meeting space.** Ideally this will have enough room for the group to divide into smaller groups for discussion. Movable chairs and small tables are helpful. It could be in a community room at your local library, residence, school, hospital, church, or community centre.
- Announce the event.** Here are some possible ways to spread the word:
 - Post flyers in the community. See the sample in Pocket 4.
 - Put a notice in the community newspaper or bulletin.
 - Send an e-mail to your contacts.
- Organize resources.**
 - If the session will include a slide presentation, make sure you have a projector, computer, and power cords. Locate the power outlets in the room. Test the equipment to ensure that it works.
 - Provide pens or pencils for participants to take notes.
- Think about and prepare for people's needs.** For example, is there room for wheelchairs and walkers?

Supporting the conversation

The focus of each session is on starting a meaningful conversation. Your role is to facilitate the conversation so the wisdom in the room can be revealed and can grow. Remember that everyone has something valuable to bring to the conversation.

Opinions may vary, and that's okay. Some participants may make statements that contradict the guiding principles of this toolkit (respect, safety, and freedom to choose for older adults). People are entitled to their opinions and your role is not to change their minds. You can ask questions about how their position promotes respect, safety, and freedom to choose for older adults. Ask for feedback and support from the group. You will find that the group can be your greatest ally and has the greatest wisdom.

The more you allow the group to have lively, respectful, and safe conversations, the more likely you are to have a positive impact on people. They may not agree or change their minds, but you will have given them something to think about and resources to help them continue the conversation when they leave the session.

Remember this about confidentiality! People may want to share their own stories or stories about people they know. Remind the group that personal stories are confidential. Ask people to respect confidentiality, both during and after the session. You can also ask people to feel free to speak with you after the session about personal stories or concerns they may have. Remember that you may be presenting in a small community and you want to respect everyone's privacy, including the privacy of those not in the room.



Keeping the focus

Design the session to achieve the agreed-on purpose. Develop an agenda to support and assess the goals of the session. Stay on topic so you don't lose people's interest.

Figure 2 shows a sample agenda for a session. The time for each item will depend on the size of the group. The suggested timeframe is 60 to 90 minutes, including time for people to settle in their seats.

Figure 2. Sample agenda

1. Introductions (5-10 minutes)

- Tell participants about you and your role.
- Invite them to introduce themselves.

2. Presentation (15-20 minutes)

- Distribute the booklet, *Understanding Senior Abuse: Facts, Tips, Contacts*, before the presentation so that participants can look at it and take notes if they like.
- Present the key messages, using the speaker's notes and optional slides in section 3 of this toolkit.

3. Case discussions (20-30 minutes)

- Hand out copies of the cases you will use. Encourage people to write notes.
- Facilitate a discussion of the cases. For more ideas about case discussions, see section 4.

4. Wrap-up and closing (5-10 minutes)

- Thank the group for their attention and willingness to share.
- Invite them to contact their local Seniors' Safety Program or the Department of Seniors if they are interested in more information or would like to become a community champion.

5. Evaluation (5-10 minutes)

- Ask the group to complete an evaluation. This will help you to continually improve and grow as a community champion.
-

Stick to your purpose and timeframe. Respect that people made a decision to attend based on the information you provided, so try as much as possible to stick to the time you were given. This may be difficult: once people start talking about the issue they can have a lot to say. There is a fine balance between providing enough time for discussion and not so much time that you feel you aren't able to say everything you would like to say. You can always check with the group about how they feel about going a little longer. You can also offer to come back to continue the conversation.

Make people comfortable. Take notice of things such as temperature, seating, and sound quality. Speak clearly and use plain language. The words that people understand and use every day are the words with the greatest power.

Respecting diversity

“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit.”

~ Wade Davis

Human societies are diverse, and different cultures emphasize different values. Most cultures consider it unacceptable to neglect older adults or treat them disrespectfully. But specific behaviours that are acceptable in one culture might be considered a violation of rights or duties in another. In some cultures, abuse is not discussed.

In any group you work with, there will likely be people with different cultural beliefs, practices, and understandings about aging and abuse. As a community champion, it is important to be considerate about other points of view. During any presentation, allow everyone to freely share their beliefs and perspectives **without judgement**. As the person guiding the discussion, it is your role to create an environment where people can speak without being judged. You have an ideal opportunity to demonstrate respect, safety, and freedom to choose for the group. You also have the opportunity to get people thinking about ways to talk and listen respectfully with an older adult from a different culture. By your example, you can show that other cultural views are not wrong, but different.

Evaluating and following up

Evaluation is key to knowing whether you have accomplished what you set out to do. You might worry about being evaluated, but without it you won't know how you or the materials are reaching people. So ask for feedback and share it with the Department of Seniors. It will help you improve and help us ensure our materials are effective.

Remember: Feedback offers you insight into how others experienced the session. It's different from a discussion and is not a debate. Give people privacy to write freely. Don't read or comment on the feedback forms or evaluation sheets while the participants are present. If you don't understand feedback that people give you directly in conversation, it's okay to ask for clarification. If you disagree with the feedback, resist the urge to explain, justify, or defend what you did. Consider the comments respectfully—not as criticism but as information to improve future presentations.

Figure 3 shows a sample evaluation form. See pocket 4 for a master copy.

As an alternative, you might prefer to put your own questions on a flip chart or slide and invite people to write their responses on blank paper. For example, you could ask the following three questions:

1. What was most useful to you today?
2. What was least useful to you today?
3. What would you suggest to improve the workshop?



Figure 3. Sample evaluation form

Understanding Senior Abuse

.....



Presenter:

Date:

Things I liked about today...

Things I didn't like about today...

I would like more information on...

Other comments...

.....

Thank you!

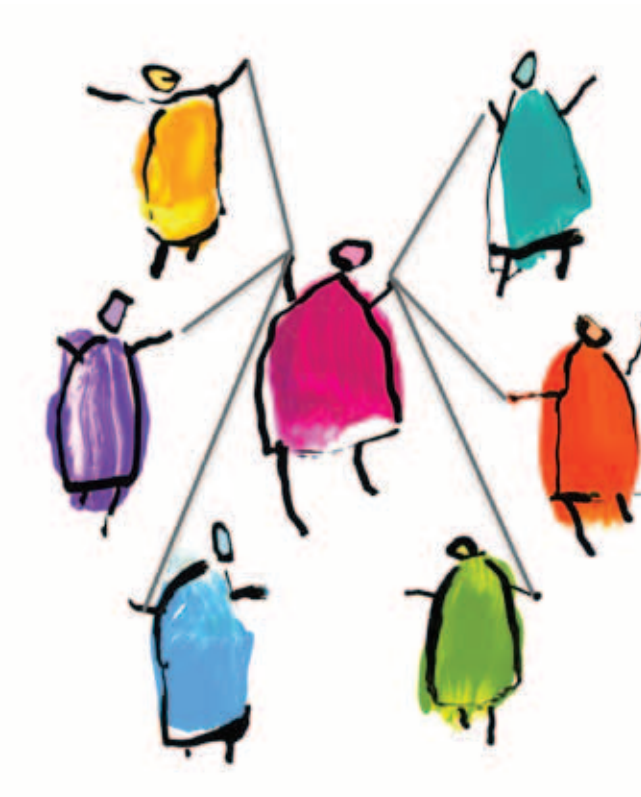

NOVA SCOTIA
gov.ns.ca/seniors/stopabuse

Expanding the circle of care and spreading the message

Circle of care is a way to describe the connections among people that make a community stronger. In healthy and safe communities, people care for each other, respect each other, and support each other's right to make their own decisions.

Take time to reach out and expand your own circle of care and the circles in your community. Continue to look for organizations that can provide support to older adults. Are support organizations meeting the needs of seniors in your community? Do they know what those needs are? Talk with those agencies and tell them what you know. Ask them to participate in creating a healthier and safer community for everyone.

Look for opportunities where the generations can learn from each other. This will help combat ageism—discrimination against people because of their age. The more we understand and respect each other as human beings, the less likely we are to be abusive or to tolerate abuse around us. Encourage healthy relationships.



My notes:

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.