



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Service Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse
January 1 to December 31, 2024

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board

Report Date: 2025-04-25

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Police Service Board (Board) receive this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (Service) is in compliance with By-Law 444-2024 – Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse.
- By-Law 444-2024 contains provisions requiring the Chief of Police to report specific information in order to ensure compliance with the legislative guidelines.
- This report is submitted to the Board for review and consideration of information relating to the Service's response to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications relating to the recommendations contained within this report.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 444-2024, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year in respect of the investigation of elder and vulnerable adult abuse occurrences. This report will contain:

- a) a summary of the written procedures concerning elder and vulnerable adult abuse investigations;
- b) the status of Service compliance with the said procedures;
- c) a summary of training given to Members regarding elder and vulnerable adult abuse;
- d) a summary of the steps taken by the Service to monitor and evaluate responses to elder and vulnerable adult abuse; and
- e) a summary of issues raised and/or discussed with community partners relating to elder and vulnerable adult abuse.

This Board report will outline each of the above and confirm compliance with the By-Law.

- a) *“...a summary of the written procedures concerning elder and vulnerable adult abuse investigations...”*

The Service has specific policies related to the investigation of elder and vulnerable adult abuse occurrences. General Order (GO) 165.08 - Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse establishes rules, procedures, and responsibilities for managing investigations into elder and vulnerable adult abuse incidents.

- b) *“...the status of Service compliance with the said procedures...”*

The Service, as outlined by Adequate and Effective Policing LE-021 – Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse, has policies and guidelines that set out the rules and responsibilities of officers for providing assistance and investigation to the elder and vulnerable population. A ‘Resource Attachment’ is included as Appendix A in GO 165.08 – Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse, detailing community and government agencies that are available to assist when required. The current reporting structure within the Service will continue to be evaluated to ensure compliance with the procedures and Adequate and Effective Policing.

- c) *“...a summary of training given to members regarding elder and vulnerable adult abuse...”*

The Service provides officers with training in elder and vulnerable adult abuse investigations through the Fraud Investigators Course, which covers topics such as theft by Power of Attorney and the Elder Abuse Investigation Course, which provides training on various topics related to the investigation of crimes against seniors. Elder Abuse training is also delivered through the online Canadian Police Knowledge Network.

The Crisis Intervention Training Course provides information on dementia, recognizing the signs and symptoms of dementia, and how these symptoms can be related to elder abuse.

The Central Fraud Unit (CFU) is readily available to frontline officers on fraud-related investigations such as thefts and Power of Attorney matters.

- d) *“...a summary of the steps taken by the Service to monitor and evaluate responses to elder and vulnerable adult abuse...”*

The summary of such steps and measures are detailed in the duties of the units involved in these investigations and are as follows:

- Review calls for service entered on Versadex to ensure quality control;

- Provide direct assistance to seniors and vulnerable adults, and/or their family members, who require advice or guidance with specific police-related issues or concerns, as well as emotional support and referrals to outside agencies to assist the elderly;
- Provide agency partners with support via information exchange, teleconferences, and assistance with visits where the senior or vulnerable person is being evaluated;
- Evaluate police response on a regular basis with regards to calls for service to ensure appropriate referrals to collateral services;
- Determine police response in relation to Adequate and Effective Policing and to GO 165.08 to ensure compliance;
- The Officer in Charge (OIC) of the CFU is available to members of the community and community agencies/groups who have comments or concerns regarding the Service's response to elder or vulnerable adult issues;
- Members of the CFU regularly conduct fraud awareness/information sessions at events across the Niagara Region. In 2024, 11 presentations were conducted at community events, retirement centers, and church groups; and
- When appropriate, the OIC of the CFU issues fraud alerts and media releases in an effort to educate the citizens of Niagara in the hopes of reducing the number of victims and heightening community awareness to emerging fraud-related scams.

Elder Abuse Statistics:

It is difficult to quantify statistics for Elder Abuse calls due to variations in the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) reporting process. CCJS does provide for a primary offence code titled "Elder Abuse/Neglect"; however, not all elder abuse cases are captured through this primary offence code as the definition indicates that the abuse is caused by someone in a position of trust or authority. Oftentimes, reports are submitted under other related offence codes, such as Fraud, Theft, Information, Threats, Assault, Sexual Assault, Welfare Check, etc. that reflect the nature of the allegation being made.

The following chart illustrates the statistics regarding Elder Abuse/Neglect reports for the Niagara Region over the past four years:

Statistics	2021	2022	2023	2024
Elder Abuse/Neglect Incidents	68	100	71	83

- e) *“...a summary of issues raised and/or discussed with community partners relating to elder and vulnerable adult abuse...”*

Although there was a decrease in the reported incidents in 2023, the general increasing trend of incidents over the 4-year period can be attributed to a greater awareness within elder/long-term care homes. Many long-term care institutions are now reporting minor incidents to police that were not reported in the past. O.Reg 246/22 of the Fixing Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2021 provides that:

“105. Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that the appropriate police force is immediately notified of any alleged, suspected or witnessed incident of abuse or neglect of a resident that the licensee suspects may constitute a criminal offence.”

Early recognition and intervention of elder abuse incidents have reinforced the importance of having a designated position responsible for elder and vulnerable adult issues. Incident reports involving elderly and potentially vulnerable adults that are classified as information reports and lack any criminality, or cannot be classified otherwise, are forwarded to the OIC of the CFU for review. This additional review has resulted in the early identification of potentially vulnerable adults who lack support and can be referred to appropriate community support agencies. It is also beneficial to the early identification of elderly and vulnerable adults who are being victimized criminally, prompting an immediate investigation, and stopping the abuse in a timely manner.

The OIC of the CFU is a member of the following committees that focus on elder and vulnerable adult abuse and related issues: Niagara Elder Abuse Prevention Network, Law Enforcement Agencies and Partners Protecting Seniors, and Gatekeepers. A common goal of these committees is to unify knowledge and best practices when educating or investigating matters of senior/vulnerable adult abuse. The multi-disciplinary background of the committees' membership provides valuable insight and knowledge for individual case consultation, when necessary.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with Adequate and Effective Policing Regulations.

Relevant Policy Considerations

Board By-Law 444-2024 – Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse
GO 165.08 - Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse

Other Pertinent Reports

8.12 - 2024.05.23 - Annual Report – Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse – January 1 to December 31, 2023.

This report was prepared by Andrew Knevel, Staff Sergeant, Major Crime Unit, in consultation with Trish Rancourt, Detective Sergeant, Central Fraud Unit. Reviewed by Mike Tripp, Inspector, Major Crime. Reviewed and recommended by Dave Masotti, Acting Deputy Chief, Community Services.



Submitted by:

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Appendices

Not applicable.