

BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

Re-Opening Saskatchewan: A Call to Action for a More Age-friendly Community

Issue:

Ageism, Discrimination and Stigma

What is ageism?

Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination against people because they are old.

Ageism has negative impacts on physical and mental health. Ageism intersects with gender, disability, race, ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation. Its effects are compounded on these groups.

The pandemic is an opportunity to shift our thinking, reset our priorities and take action to combat ageism.

ACTIONS:

Develop a coordinated positive aging policy framework to enable healthy aging in place across urban, rural and northern locations to address the diverse needs of older adults.

Take systemic action to address deep-seated ageism. Counter false or misleading information that fuels prejudice, fear and age discrimination.

Collaborate with older people to develop a public education campaign that counteracts ageist attitudes, reduces age discrimination and practices and promotes a positive image of aging.

Develop a public policy statement on age discrimination.

Issue: Older Adult Abuse

What is older adult abuse?

Older adult abuse involves harm to an older adult within a trust relationship. Older people can be harmed physically, psychologically, financially, and through neglect.

Risk factors for abuse: Those who are physically frail, cognitively impaired or isolated.

The pandemic revealed lack of services for older adults who experience abuse and difficulty getting help. The pandemic has also led to new frauds and scams which target older adults.

ACTIONS:

Support age-friendly communities where people of all ages are connected, reducing social isolation and decreasing the risk of neglect and abuse.

Provide educational programs for the general public and service providers to raise awareness of older adult abuse; how to prevent it and address it when it occurs.

Implement a mechanism in Saskatchewan to address abuse of older adults who lack capacity by their substitute decision-makers.

Issue: Quality of Life of Older People

All elements of quality of life for older adults are reflected in the eight World Health Organization's (WHO) age-friendly dimensions.

- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Civic Participation and Employment
- Communication and Information
- Community Support & Health Services

All of these elements have had to be modified because of **COVID -19 pandemic restrictions** and safety precautions.

ACTIONS:

Engage with governments to create **legislation, and standards for safe staffing** in home care, special care homes and personal care homes.

Support living environments that **foster all aspects of quality of life.**

Develop and implement regulations for seniors' housing facilities pertaining to tenancy issues.

Foster innovations such as co-housing and intergenerational /multi-ability living options.

Invest in age-friendly community development for support across all generations of older adults.

Collect and analyze data re age-specific needs and circumstances.

Develop accessible tools for **awareness of available housing options** across the spectrum.

Issue: Mental Health and Social Isolation during COVID-19

The most prevalent protection from risk of COVID-19 infection has been social isolation. Social isolation can profoundly affect one's mental health in very short time periods.

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have reduced the access of family and essential caregivers on the team to interact with those who have cognitive impairment. Some recent literature about COVID-19 effects identify increased behaviour challenges and serious depression in this cohort of residents.

ACTIONS:

Develop policies, practices and systems to balance the risk of social isolation and mental health consequences with the need to contain COVID-19 or other viruses.

Introduce policies and practices within LTC that recognize family, in some instances, provide essential care components and are an integral part of the essential care team not "visitors".

Develop an outreach component for those living alone in the community based upon prevention and re-enablement. Outreach programs ensure that social interaction is maintained.

Issue: Human Rights for Older Adults

This pandemic presents a disproportionate threat to the health, lives, rights and well-being of older persons. It is crucial to minimize these risks by addressing the needs and human rights of older persons in our efforts to fight the pandemic.

During the pandemic response the rights of many older adults to healthcare, community services, autonomy, and information have been infringed. The virus took a much larger toll on older people than on other age groups. Measures to mitigate its spread have affected them more severely.

ACTIONS:

Emergency measures that infringe on human rights must be **temporary, necessary, and non-discriminatory**. Pandemic responses **must align with international human rights standards** and apply to everyone everywhere.

Prioritize restoring health services to the most vulnerable persons.

Information is **timely, accurate and accessible.**

Older adults are **included in policy development** and in decisions that affect them.

The right to health = **right to protection from the virus and social isolation.**

Stronger legal frameworks are needed to protect human rights of older adults at all levels.