



Break The Silence

Giving a Voice Back to Abused Seniors

Utilizing Assistive Communication Devices in
Elder Abuse Screening

The Background



Communication Barriers

Elder Abuse

Any action, or deliberate inaction, by a person in a position of trust which causes harm to an older person.

- ❑ Older Adults who have impaired communication can be at increased risk of harm and elder abuse.
- ❑ There are numerous factors that can impair speech

What Do The Stats Say

- Estimated rate of elder abuse in Ontario: **4 – 10 %**
- What can impair communication? – Stroke, Parkinson's Disease, ALS, etc.
- Disease may leave communication impaired but not mental capacity
- Increases persons vulnerability

Finding a Voice

What happens if the victim of elder abuse...



Can not speak?

Can not write?

If cognitively unimpaired
But has no voice?

Assisted Communication - History

- Use of communication boards and other tools began in 1970's
- Primarily used with children who had autism
- Expanded for use with people with other communication impairments
- Commonly used for persons who have suffered stroke.

Our Project



Increase in the Cases of Suspected Abuse

- 70 year old male – stroke and aphasia
- 83 year old female – Long Term Care Home, impaired communication due to speech impediment
- 91 year old male – ALS and communications only with eyebrow movement

All potential victims, all unable to speak

Screening is Essential

- Care providers and others are unable to assist if it can not be determined

→ If something happened?

→ What happened?

→ What help is needed?

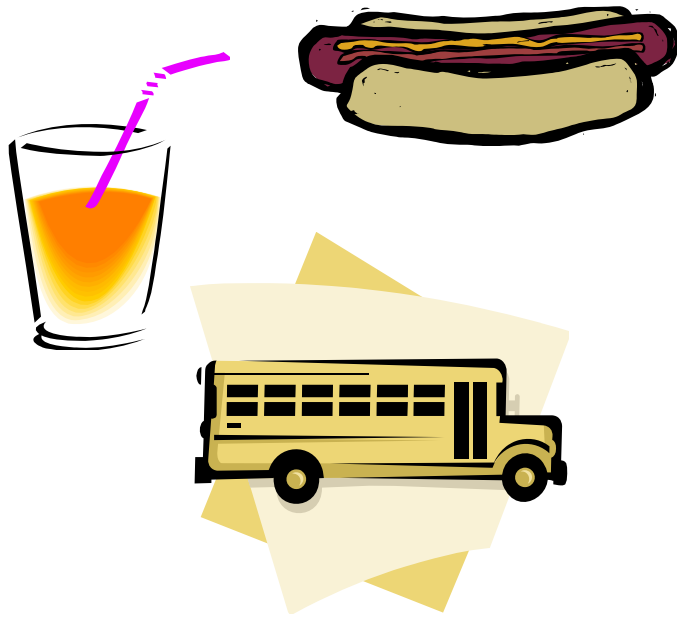
Language

- Major and critical component for obtaining facts
- Assistive communication toolkits can help bring the problem into the light
- The tools exist – we didn't invent them however we created a specialized approach to using them

What did we do?

- Brought together experts on abuse to generate terminology lists
- Brought together experts on assistive communication strategies
- Brought together the necessary pre-existing tools and combined with newly developed pictures symbols
- Conducted numerous focus groups
- Abuse specific and age appropriate

Traditional Communication Board



Without using words – how would someone report abuse?

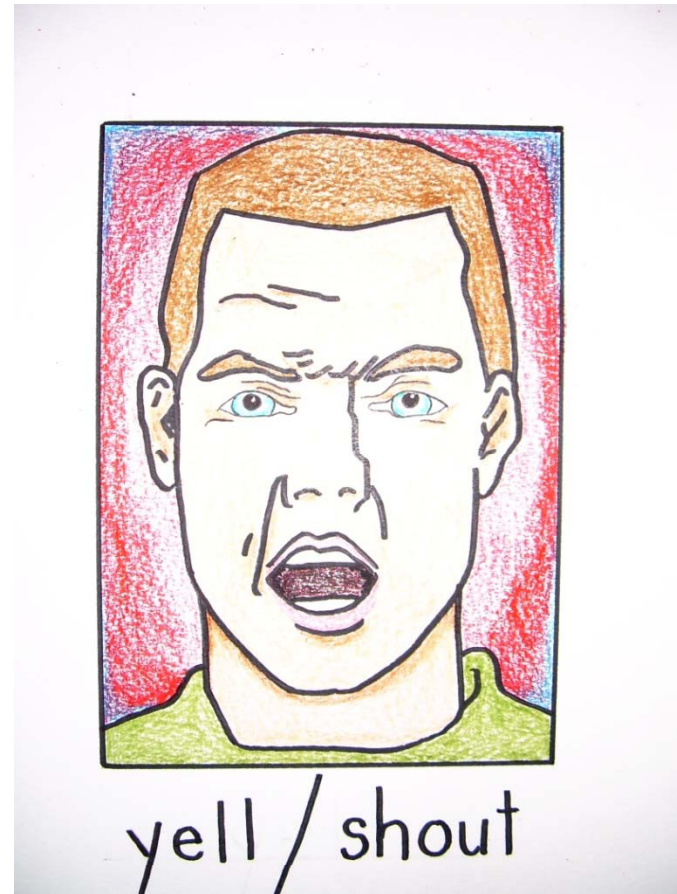


Pushing, shoving	Pulling hair, pinching	Hitting, slapping, punching	Not providing food, water,
misuse of a person's property and/or funds	Pulling Hair, pinching	Confinement or restrained	intimidating or humiliating gestures
Sexual touching without consent	Administering or withholding medication for inappropriate purposes	Denying access to grandchildren or friends	Improper use of a Power of Attorney for Property
Withholding care or medical attention	Theft, forgery or fraud	Withholding medical attention, necessities of life	Over or under medicating

Elder Abuse Screening Communication Tools



slap



yell / shout

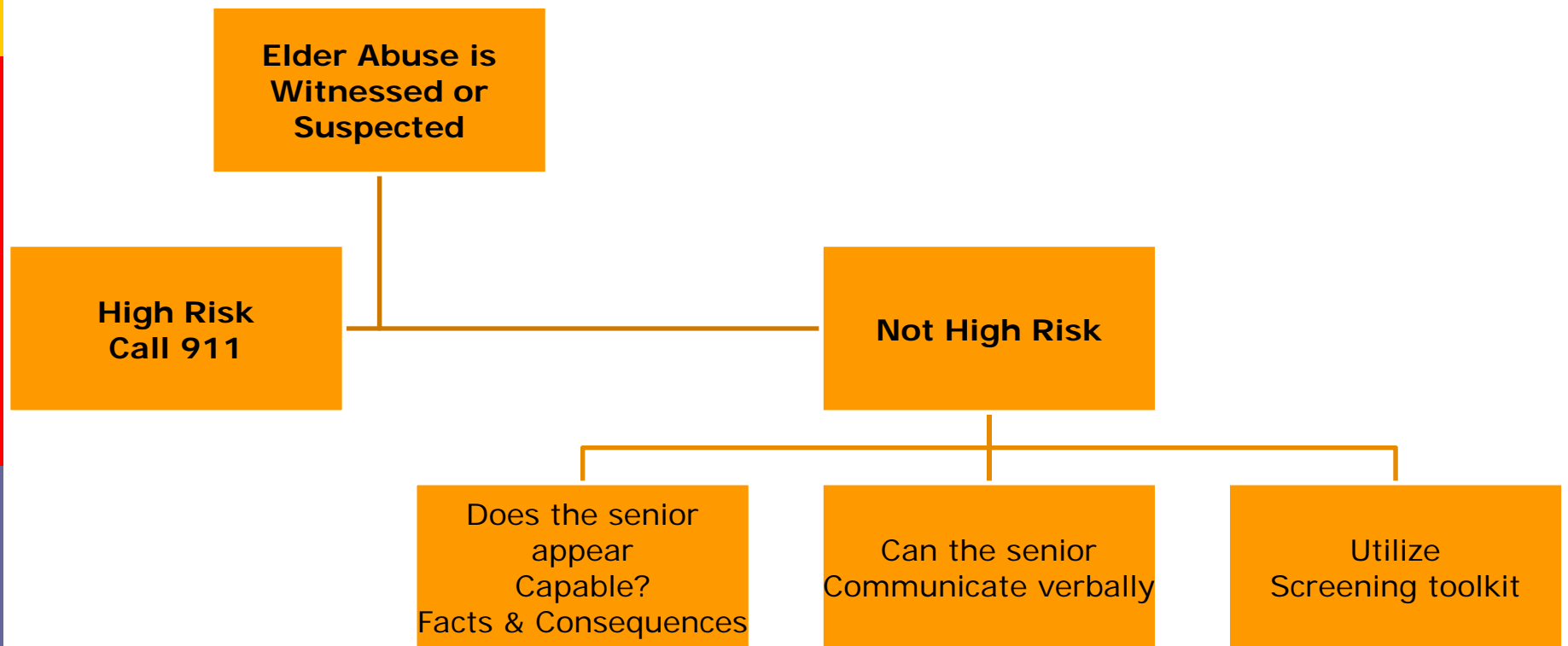
Pictures included in the kit

- Physical – slap, punch, choke, pinch
- Emotional/ verbal – yell/ shout
- Financial – bank, money, jewellery
- Neglect – drink, food, medicine
- Sexual – touch, kiss, use of doll
- People in my life – family, police, me, worker

Tips for Overcoming Communication Barriers

- ❑ Slow your speech.
- ❑ Sit directly facing the person so they can see your face/mouth
- ❑ Identify that you are aware of a communication challenge and ask permission to use some different tools to help.
- ❑ Ask if they want to talk to you alone.
- ❑ Select a quiet location free of distractions.
- ❑ Be mindful of any other barriers such as a hearing loss or other issues which might make interviewing more challenging.

How do they work?





For More Information

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