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Early intervention with families proven way to reduce elder abuse

Early intervention with families is an effective way of reducing elder abuse according to Relationships Australia.

“On World Elder Abuse Awareness Day we believe it’s important to focus on the positive steps that can be taken to prevent elder abuse and send a message to older people and their families that they can seek help to manage difficult emotional or financial situations,” said the National Executive Officer of Relationships Australia Alison Brook.

“If families are given the support and tools to work together, overcome differences and respectfully resolve conflict, the interests, health and safety of their elders and other family members can be met and protected,” Ms Brook said.

“Relationships Australia has a holistic counselling and mediation service that responds to the rising levels of elder abuse and other ageing related issues being experienced by contemporary Australian families.

“First piloted in 2016, the service aims to assist older people and their families prevent or resolve family conflict, plan for the future and resolve differences in ways that improve relationships and make decisions that protect the interest, rights and safety of all family members.

“Through our pilot we found the service was highly successful in helping many families move forward with a range of issues relating to their elderly members.

“From an initial six sites, we have now rolled the program out across the country with 28 of our Relationships Australia sites now offering Elder Relationship Services.

“As we work with elderly clients and their families we often find that a range of issues are unearthed that we can help address through our other services, including unresolved property matters, gambling addiction, poor mental health, financial problems and family violence.

“The most common presenting issue to our services in our pilot study was family relationship problems (58%). These included conflict, fragile relationships, disrespectful behaviour, poor communication, estrangement and elder abuse.

“Family relationship problems were evident in relationships between parents and siblings, and/or between sibling groups.

“In 50% of cases the presenting issue related to the future care or housing arrangements, often compounded by family conflict, family violence, estrangement, and grief and loss.

“In 25% of cases family violence was an issue perpetrated by adult children, older people and between members of sibling groups.”

People wanting to access Relationships Australia’s Elder Relationship Services can find more information on our [website](#) or call 1300 364 277.

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