

Laurie Salvador



# Neglect of Seniors

**N**eglect is the failure to provide necessary care, assistance, or attention, thus causing serious physical, mental, or emotional harm or damage or loss of assets.

## One Example of Neglect

An adult son is still living at home with his mother. The son is working or not usually available during the daytime. The mother is housebound and dependent on the son for food and personal care.

The son, who really doesn't enjoy looking after his aging mother, is not taking care of her needs—leaving her hungry, soiled, and in need of medical attention. Unhappy with his life, the son takes his resentment out on his mother and yells at her frequently. Sometimes, he even hits her. He tells her that if she complains, he will leave her or send her to a home.

Sometimes, that type of threatening behaviour can go on for years, until someone intervenes on the senior's behalf.

## Abuse at the Hand of the Caregiver

- Adult children or relatives remove items from the senior's home or bully the elder into providing an early inheritance.
- Caregiver intercepts all phone calls and mail or has the mail re-directed without the senior's consent.

- Caregiver begins handling all the bills and does not include the senior in decision-making.
- Caregiver does the errands and does not include the senior.
- The caregiver refuses to allow family members or social services to have access to the senior.
- The caregiver will not leave the room when those people are present.

## Neglect in a Care Facility

Neglect can occur at home, in a hospital, or in a long-term-care living arrangement. Fortunately, most nursing homes in British Columbia provide exceptional care. For the most part, employees are well trained and they know they must never accept money or gifts from their clients.

The things to be concerned about, however, if you are visiting someone in care, include the following issues, which would constitute neglect or abuse.

- Insufficient food and water, which can lead to dehydration
- Lack of sufficient assistance with eating, drinking, and bathing
- Inappropriate clothing for the room temperature or weather
- Delay or denial of health care and dental care
- Refusal by the caregiver to wash his or her hands between patients and when handling food

- Lack of assistance with a patient's body-positioning, leading to skin erosion
- Lack of assistance in moving the patient, including in and out of bed, to the toilet, and to exercise
- Lack of assistance with a patient's incontinence, which can result in skin damage, infection, agitation, and indignity
- Failure to provide medication and therapy for depression and other mood disorders ▲

**Laurie Salvador** is a founding partner of Salvador Davis and Co., Notaries Public, in Sidney-By-The-Sea, BC. Her practice includes many senior clients.

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## Help . . .

### BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support (BC CEAS)

Voice: 604 437-1940  
www.bcceas.ca

### BC Association of Community Response Networks

Voice: 604 660-4482  
Fax: 604 688-2247

Obtain a copy of their excellent brochure, "Be Clear . . ."

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www.bccrns.ca