

COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date:	18 January 2016
Subject:	Adult and Seniors Bullying Prevention Update
Boards Routed Through:	N/A
Date:	N/A

Issue:

Council is being provided with information regarding the possibility of expanding the current bullying prevention programming to include seniors and adults.

Background:

At the regular meeting of October 19, 2015, City Council directed staff to report back with information to expand current anti-bullying programming that includes seniors and other adults.

History:

In Airdrie, adults and seniors are protected under the anti-bullying prevention provisions of the Public Behaviour Bylaw that respect the safety, welfare and protection of all residents against bullying.

The purpose of the Airdrie Bullying Prevention Initiative is to support the City of Airdrie's multi-faceted approach to address bullying. Research shows that bullying prevention initiatives involve multiple stakeholders and address risk factors at a variety of levels. Canada, alone, has the 9th highest rate of bullying with younger adolescents on a scale of 35 countries (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2012).

Bullying can present itself in many forms and throughout our research bullying in the workplace is the most reported form of abuse experienced by adults. It is defined as “a repeated pattern of behavior intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group” (Government of Alberta, 2012). The Alberta Human Rights Commission protects all people from discrimination and provides support to those experiencing bullying in the workplace.

According to Canadian Statistics, on average 40% of Canadian workers experience bullying. The Alberta Human Rights Act (AHR) protects all employees against harassment if based

on one of the protected grounds that include race, gender, age, colour, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability and source of income as well as having a direct connection with the individual's employment (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2012).

In the literature on bullying and seniors, the most common definition is "a social and interpersonal problem that is characterized by intentional repetitive aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power and strength" (Hazelden Foundation, 2008). Studies indicate that elder abuse is the pattern in behavior most commonly associated with bullying. According to Canadian statistics, the top reported cases within the most commonly used systems (justice and health) are generally in the form of financial and emotional abuse amongst the elderly population. These two areas represent 40% to 70% of all reported cases in Alberta (Addressing Elder Abuse in Alberta, 2010) In Canada, roughly 25% of crimes against the elderly are committed by family members (Canada Statistics, 2010).

Addressing the Issue:

In order to be proactive and preventative in nature, best practice suggests focusing on three key areas that can include adults and seniors: social isolation, increasing social support networks and raising awareness.

Decreasing Social Isolation

Social isolation can result in depression and create a sense of loneliness. When seniors specifically experience isolation, they are less likely to participate in and contribute to the community. (Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors, 2014). Programming and services that help decrease social isolation can be offered through support groups, access to respite options for caregivers, awareness strategies, friendly visitor programs and counselling. These are all good examples of effective ways to decrease social isolation.

Strengthening Social Supports

Strengthening social support networks can assist with decreasing the risk of social isolation among the older adult and senior populations. Research suggests that rather than focusing on seniors that exclude other age groups, places such as community agencies, libraries and faith groups are good examples of environments that can provide services that allow for multi-generational relationships to form. (Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Seniors, 2015). Good examples of programming that can strengthen social networks include volunteer/mentoring, community club participation and community meal programs such as Meals on Wheels.

Increase Awareness

Studies indicate the need to increase awareness across all levels of services that address bullying. By understanding the scope of bullying and who it can affect, residents, organizations and employers can become knowledgeable about the issues. Once staff within service based organizations have the tools and skills, they are able to provide appropriate information to assist adults and seniors in accessing the most appropriate services.

Adult Bullying

In general, research indicates that most forms of adult bullying occur in the workplace. The Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations of Canada require all Alberta employers to have a violence in the workplace prevention program. This speaks to the behaviors, actions and circumstances that are connected to an individual's employment. (The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, 2009). The Act encourages all places of work to participate in preventative measures that support workplace injuries and illnesses. Counselling, programming and legal options can be made available when an employee is requiring support through internal protocol or by accessing resources made available by the Government of Alberta's website. Currently, there is no data in Airdrie to suggest the need for direct programming specific to the adult population that would best reflect workplace bullying. Most employers address workplace harassment through internal policy and procedures.

Senior Bullying

As mentioned in this report, studies indicate that elder abuse is the pattern in behavior most commonly associated with bullying. Elder abuse is a complex issue and requires communities, organizations and residents to strive for improved awareness and ensure all Albertans have access to legal tools and other resources (Highlights of elder abuse strategy, 2010). There is limited research and evidence that provides concrete data that speaks to the effectiveness of intervention based programming when addressing elder abuse (Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Seniors, 2015). Literature suggests that there is a need to conduct further studies in order to fully understand the impact of various elder abuse service delivery program models. As mentioned in this report, best practice suggests decreasing risk factors associated with the vulnerable senior population.

Community Approach that Address Risk Factors:

The City of Airdrie has a proactive and vibrant approach that indirectly provides services and resources that align with decreasing social isolation, strengthening social support networks and raising awareness. Preventative measures aim to reduce the risk factors that include the older adult and senior population. These preventative programs and services highlight Airdrie's approach in providing opportunities that create a safe and socially sustainable community.

These are examples in the Airdrie community:

- Seniors Outreach – provides one to one and group advocacy and support
- Volunteer and mentoring opportunities with local agencies and events
- Counselling Services
- Community Clubs
- Airdrie Public Library
- Meals on Wheels Program
- Friendly Visiting – Increases community connection for seniors

- Caregiver Support Groups
- Tip Sheets (youth, seniors and newly developed workplace bullying)
- Senior Support Groups – workshops and awareness sessions are provided at seniors centers

In addition to the existing services and resources available in the community, eligible adult and senior bullying projects are able to apply for funding under the innovative projects category and building organizational capacity of the 2015 Special FCSS Funding Increase. Applications must fall within the FCSS guidelines and cannot duplicate an existing service funded under a different ministry.

Alignment with AirdrieONE:

The Bullying Prevention Initiative aligns with AirdrieONE by creating socially sustainable communities and providing opportunities for social interactions and meeting people’s needs.

Boards Routed Through:

N/A

Alternatives/Implications:

Option 1: Council can choose to maintain the status quo.

Implications: As mentioned in the report, the Airdrie Bullying Initiative and other social programs in the community indirectly aim to reduce the risk factors by providing adult and seniors’ preventative programming and services. City administration will continue to provide barrier free connections that ensure Airdrie residents have access to local agency programs and/or provincial resources that provide information and mechanisms to help protect individuals from abuse.

Option 2: Council could direct administration to include FCSS eligible components of adult and seniors bullying projects through the innovative projects and/or organizational capacity funding category of the 2015 Special FCSS Funding Increase.

Implications: Eligible Not-For-Profit organizations may apply for FCSS funding through the 2015 FCSS Special FCSS Funding Increase through the funding category of innovative projects and/or build organizational capacity. The proposed projects must fall within the guidelines of FCSS. Staff suggest Council reviews prospective projects to ensure there is no duplication of existing programs and services. The risk with this option is that the lack of current local research in this area does not provide confidence that a pilot project would in fact address the real needs associated with adult/senior bullying.

Option 3: Council could direct administration to include adult and senior programming in the Airdrie Bullying Initiative.

Implications: As mentioned in this report, Airdrie has existing services and resources available in the community that aim to reduce social isolation, increase support networks and raise awareness. The risk with this option is that there is a lack of data to substantiate the need for direct programming that includes seniors and adults. This could also result in duplication of existing programs and services that currently provide prevention based support.

Communications Plan:

N/A

Recommendation:

That Council accepts the report for information, thereby maintaining the status quo of the Airdrie Bullying Initiative.



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Attachments:	N/A
Appointment:	N/A