




HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Hamilton Police Services Board
BOARD MEETING DATE:	June 22, 2023
SUBJECT:	2022 Year End Report – Crimes Against Seniors Unit
REPORT NUMBER:	23-058
SUBMITTED BY:	Frank Bergen, Chief of Police
SIGNATURE:	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hamilton Police Service Crimes Against Seniors Unit (CASU) was created in 2004 in response to the growing concern of Elder Abuse among Hamilton's aging and vulnerable population. The unit was the first of its kind in Ontario and continues to be a leader for its advocacy and investigative expertise. CASU Detectives are assigned to the Investigative Services Division (ISD). In September 2022, CASU was placed under the umbrella of the Financial Crimes Unit.

CASU currently consists of one Detective, one Detective-Constable and one Senior Support Officer. CASU is responsible for the investigation of crimes against persons who have been victimized primarily because of their age or vulnerability. More specifically, this includes persons 60 years of age and older or vulnerable adults (persons 18 years of age and older) who are or may be unable to care for themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma, disability or any other reason.

The unit works closely with community agencies to ensure that all reported cases are properly investigated, including:

- Neglect/Abuse
- Exploitation
- Financial Abuse
- Sexual Assaults in conjunction with the Sexual Assault Unit
- Fraud and Theft by Power of Attorney cases

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The CASU Detectives are trained in Major Case Management and related criminal investigative techniques, including the writing of Production Orders, Search Warrants and similar legal documents in the course of their duties.

The Seniors Support Officer deals with issues, concerns and challenges that affect the seniors' community with respect to the law by:

- Cooperation - working with community services / agencies to address seniors' quality of life concerns,
- Education - developing, delivering and implementing presentations on seniors' safety and security,
- Investigation - assisting in the investigations of criminal abuse and neglect of senior and / or vulnerable adults.

INFORMATION

According to Statistics Canada's 2021 census, the population of those 65 and older in Hamilton comprises 18.3% of the overall population. The population of seniors in Hamilton has also grown at a rate faster than that of the general population. Between 2006 and 2021, the overall population of Hamilton grew by 13%. The population of those 65 and older in Hamilton grew by 38%. As the senior population continues to increase, so do the needs for preventative and reactive policing initiatives. (See Appendix "A")

Community Relationships

The Hamilton Police Service believes strongly in fostering effective relationships with all of our community members. In 2022, members of CASU were engaged with the following community groups:

- Hamilton Council on Aging
- Catholic Family Services
- City of Hamilton Older Adults Working Group
- City of Hamilton Housing
- Regional Geriatric Program Advisory Group
- Thrive Group

Education and Awareness

CASU realizes that with the continued growth of an aging population, there is a need to educate and inform the community in regards to crimes affecting seniors. In 2022, CASU

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performed 24 community presentations. Some of the groups that participated in CASU presentations are as follows:

- Jamaican Foundation
- Dundas Community Services
- Afro Caribbean Canadian Association Seniors
- St. Elizabeth Village
- Retired Teachers Association
- St. John's United Church
- Dundas Legion
- United Steelworkers
- Hindu Samaj Temple
- HPS Citizen's Police College

CASU members capitalized on local media to educate and inform the community by participating in media engagements with CHCH, The Hamilton Spectator and numerous radio stations.

CASU members placed an emphasis on educating and increasing awareness of issues affecting seniors within the HPS and its law enforcement partners. CASU provided training to every HPS recruit class in 2022 as well as members from the Communications Branch and the Social Navigator program. CASU members also teach police officers on the Elder Abuse Course conducted by the Ontario Police College.

Caseload

In 2022, CASU investigated 203 cases, which was a 27% increase from 2021.

CASU investigations are generated by:

- Follow up reports taken by frontline officers
- Referral forms sent by outside agencies (Long Term Care Homes, Residential Homes, Care Facilities)
- Communication Branch Generated Incidents (E-mailed CAD reports)

Investigations referred by Uniform Patrol

Initially, a call for service is generated by the Communications Branch prompting a uniform patrol response to the concerning issue. When these calls involve seniors or vulnerable adults further follow up is often required. The responding uniform patrol officer will then complete a police report. The uniform patrol officer's supervisor will review the report and

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task it to the Detective Sergeant of CASU for case re-assignment. This is the primary source of calls created for Detectives and SSO to investigate.

Referral Forms

Changes to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (LTCHA) in 2010 made reporting to police mandatory (Long-Term Care Homes Act, O.Reg. 79/10, s.98) for any alleged, suspected or witnessed incident of abuse or neglect of a resident. In response to these legislative changes, CASU developed a standardized referral form for all Long-Term Care Home Facilities within the City of Hamilton. When an incident of abuse, assault or neglect occurs within a Long-Term Care facility, the administration staff of that facility must complete the referral form as mandated, and email it to the HPS CASU mailbox for further investigation.

In 2022, 43 referrals were received from Long Term Care Homes. These referrals were down from 2021 numbers by 48%. This decrease might be attributed to a lack of familiarization with the new reporting process.

In late 2022, an online reporting portal (Cop Logic) was utilized and an online form was created. This enabled a more efficient and streamlined reporting process for LTC homes. An HPS occurrence number is auto-generated. The early results have been positive with 50 referrals received by CASU since January 1, 2023.

Emailed CAD (Computer Automated Dispatch) Reports

Any police call involving a senior or vulnerable person is automatically flagged and sent to the CASU inbox for review. Officers in CASU (including the Senior Support Officer) will review all the flagged incidents daily, to ensure that no victim or investigative lead has been neglected. In 2022, a total of 857 calls were reviewed. This was up from 718 calls in 2021. Some calls are successfully dealt with by dispatchers, while others require a uniform patrol response and further follow up by CASU or the SSO office.

Current Trends

The Grandparent Scam uses urgency and the manipulation of emotions to extort money from victims. In these scams, fraudster's will cold-call seniors on landline phones, claiming to be a grandchild, family member, law enforcement officer or lawyer calling on behalf of their loved one. They will say that the person's loved one was involved in an emergency situation, such as a collision, charged by law enforcement, legal peril, being sick or injured, etc. They demand the senior provide payment immediately for supposed bail, legal fees,

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finances or other amounts "owed" to stop the family member from going to jail or to get them released from custody.

The fraudsters isolate the victims by informing them that there is a court-imposed gag order, and they are forbidden from discussing the matter. The victims are directed to attend their financial institution to withdraw the requested amount in cash. The fraudsters will then send someone to pick it up from the victim's home or have the victim send the money via courier services. There have also been reports of victims paying with cryptocurrency.

In 2022, HPS received 89 reports of the grandparent scam. The reported financial loss was \$478,000. Offenders involved in these scams often reside outside of the city of Hamilton, and recruit couriers to pick-up and transport these stolen funds. Offenders typically insulate themselves from detection by use of these couriers, and prey on the reporting barriers experienced by vulnerable and senior victims. In 2022, officers were able to successfully mitigate the impact of some of these crimes by freezing transactions or seizing proceeds found in possession of offenders. Sadly, unless caregivers or family members intervene, many of these crimes go unreported or unsolved. Numerous media releases and media segments were conducted in 2022 to educate the public and HPS has worked closely with our law enforcement partners, both provincially and federally. These efforts continue in earnest in 2023.

Conclusion

The Hamilton Police Service's Crimes against Seniors Unit will continue to be a leader in the Province for its advocacy and investigative expertise dealing with persons 60+ and vulnerable adults. Investigators will continue to strive to adapt and work on innovative methods to educate both the public and police, and investigate the crimes affecting Seniors and Vulnerable Adults living within our community.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A – City of Hamilton Population Growth Change

FB/M.Schulenberg

c: Ryan Diodati, Deputy Chief – Operations
Marty Schulenberg, Superintendent – Investigative Services Division
Andrea Torrie, Inspector – Investigative Services Division

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