



EVALUATION OF THE ELDER ABUSE RESPONSE TEAM: PROJECT SUMMARY

The Elder Abuse Response Team

The Elder Abuse Response Team, established in 2011, is a partnership between Calgary Police Service, Carya (formerly Calgary Family Services) and the Kerby Centre. Kerby Centre provided EART coordination while Carya and the Calgary Police Service provided the front-line response to elder abuse. The goal of EART is to reduce the victimization of older adults by providing a multidisciplinary range of services and supports. The team responds to situations in which older adults living in the community may be experiencing physical, financial, sexual or emotional abuse or may be neglected by a person in a position of trust or power. The team works in a tandem model, with a police officer and a social worker assigned to a case. EART is limited to taking cases involving a criminal component as determined by the assigned officer.

EART was a fully funded pilot project of the Safe Communities Innovation Fund between 2011 and 2014. The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family was contracted to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the project. The Institute provided annual evaluation reports with recommendations in order to enhance the services being provided by EART. Our evaluation shows that the project has successfully fulfilled its mandate and met its objectives.

EART has continued to operate past the pilot stage and is actively seeking core funding. EART is currently working with the City of Calgary to support its new Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy.

Community Involvement

An important component of the EART model is education and awareness about the program, its mandate and elder abuse in general. EART members have been very active in educational initiatives. In 2013 and 2014, EART members presented at or took part in at least 121 events. Over 6,700 professionals and members of the public attended these events. Carya has recently developed an online Elder Abuse Education Training program for the community and professionals working with elders.

EART is very connected to the community and the EART management team wanted to make sure that community stakeholders informed the project's development. Community stakeholders were surveyed each year of the program and their feedback was taken into consideration for the annual recommendations the Institute prepared for EART. Survey respondents included representatives from senior-serving agencies in the community and were contacted via email through the Action Group on Elder Abuse, the Kerby Centre email distribution list, the Way In Network, Alberta Health Services Home Care and Social Work networks, EART partnership members and other contacts.

Project Outcomes

Identifying Clients

The Elder Abuse Resource Line (EARL), established in the fall of 2011 and based at the Kerby Centre, is an integral part of EART's referral process. Anyone who has a concern about elder abuse may call the EARL and receive information, referrals to community services or a referral to EART. Every phone call received by the EARL is responded to: the EARL operator completes an intake form, determines if the case is appropriate for EART and, if so, refers the case to the team. EARL calls steadily increased between 2012 and 2014, with the line receiving a total of 4,636 calls and 453 of those calls being referred to EART; see Figure 1.

EART clients may enter the program through one of three referral sources: the EARL; the Calgary Police Service, through 911 calls, the Domestic Conflict Unit and other services; or Carya, via direct contact with professionals in the community. The entry points of closed files are shown in Figure 2 by the year in which the files were opened. Calgary Police Service referrals were the most common entry point over the span of the project, with the exception of EARL referrals in 2012.

Figure 1:
Number of Referrals to EART from EARL, Relative to the Total Calls to EARL

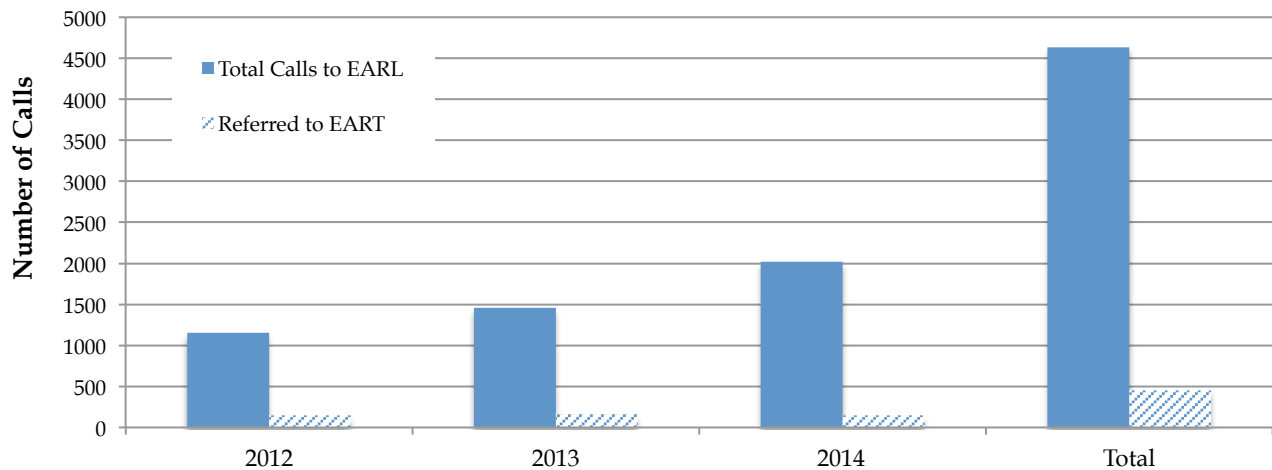
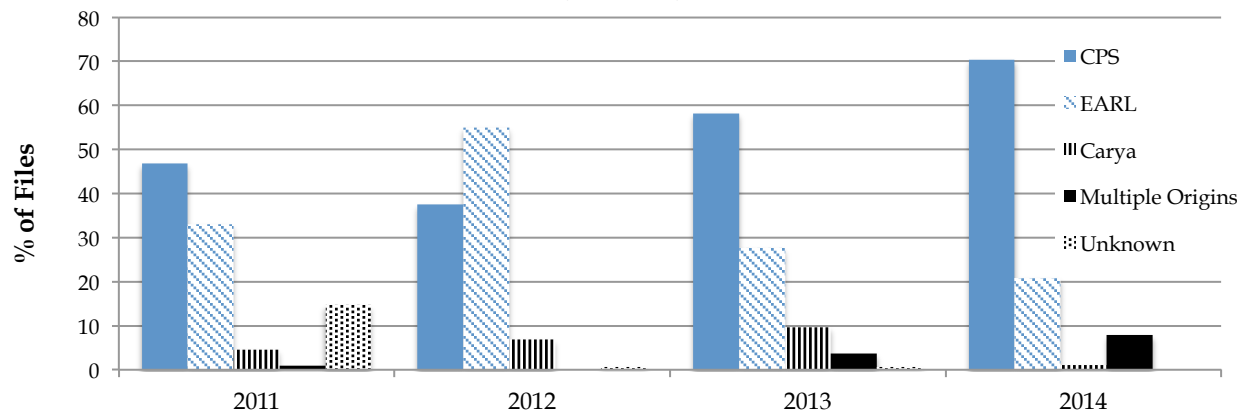


Figure 2:
Case Entry Point by File Year



Client Demographics

From the beginning of the pilot project through to December 31, 2014, 488 client files were closed by EART. Demographic information was gathered at intake, including data on clients' mental and physical health as both physical and mental health characteristics have the potential of increasing risk and/or vulnerability to abuse. The following client characteristics were identified:

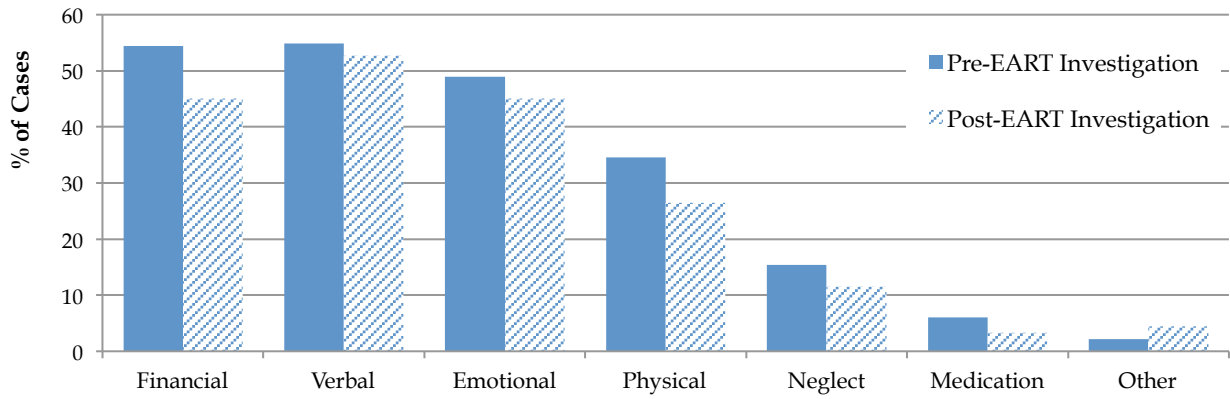
- Nearly three-quarters of the identified victims in the closed cases examined were women.
- The average age of clients was 79 years.
- Clients were most commonly married or widowed.
- Over two-thirds of clients lived with their alleged abusers.
- Nearly one-third of clients had a mobility issue. Physical disabilities, health conditions, and hearing impairment were also common among the sample.
- Suspected and confirmed dementia and depression/anxiety were the most common mental health issues present among the clients.
- Nearly half of the clients had community supports in place at the time of EART's intervention. The most common community supports were Home Care, social workers, care homes or outreach services.

Investigation Outcomes

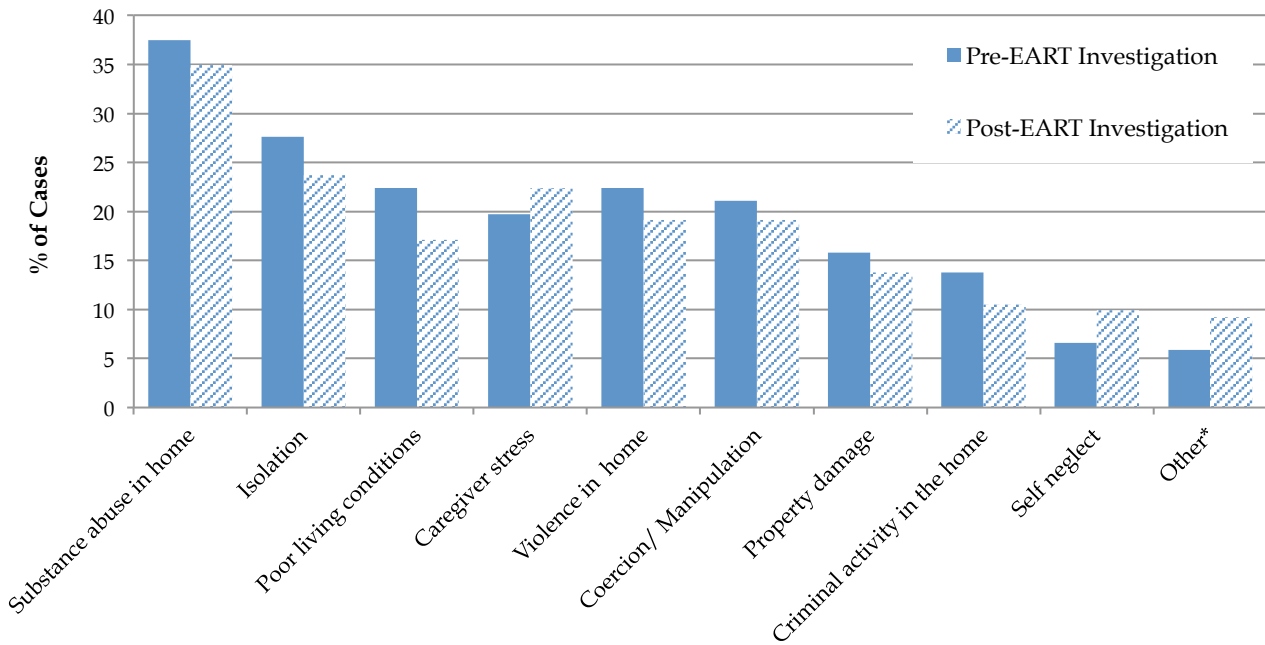
Data were collected on the types of abuse reported at intake, as shown in Figure 3. In addition to the reported types of abuse, EART also recorded any risk factors alleged at referral; see Figure 4. Highlights of the investigation outcomes included:

- Abuse was confirmed in 61% of the cases examined. Verbal abuse was the most common type of abuse confirmed, followed by financial abuse and emotional abuse.
- The most common alleged abusers were adult children, followed by a spouse or partner.
- In some cases, more risk factors were confirmed following the investigation than had been initially alleged.
- The presence of risk factors were confirmed in 47% of cases. The most common risk factors were substance abuse in the home, isolation, caregiver stress and violence in the home.
- Nearly two-thirds of clients had services in place at the time of file closure, compared to 53.1% at the time of referral. The most common types of services in place at file closure were Home Care and social workers.
- Police and social workers agreed that, in the majority of files, the client was living in a safer and more stable environment at the time of file closure.

**Figure 3:
Types of Abuse Alleged at Referral and
Types of Abuse Confirmed by EART Investigation
2011 - 2014**



**Figure 4:
Types of Risk Factors Alleged and
Types of Alleged Risk Factors Confirmed by EART Investigation**



Program and Team Activities

During the term of the project, EART team members engaged in various types of tasks, including investigation, assessment, safety planning and service referrals, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Case Activities Performed by EART, by Staff Type

STAFF TYPE						
ACTIVITY	INVESTIGATOR		SOCIAL WORKER		NURSE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Police investigation	198	60.2	-	-	-	-
Social work assessment	-	-	240	72.9	-	-
Nursing assessment	-	-	-	-	11	3.3
Threat/risk assessment	147	44.7	124	37.7	-	-
Safety planning	164	49.8	190	57.8	1	0.3
Follow-up	118	35.9	180	54.7	1	0.3
Court support	27	8.2	20	6.1	-	-
Resources provided	-	-	204	62.0	-	-
Service referrals	-	-	168	51.1	-	-
Crisis counselling	-	-	15	4.6		
Other	20	6.1	16	4.9	2	0.6

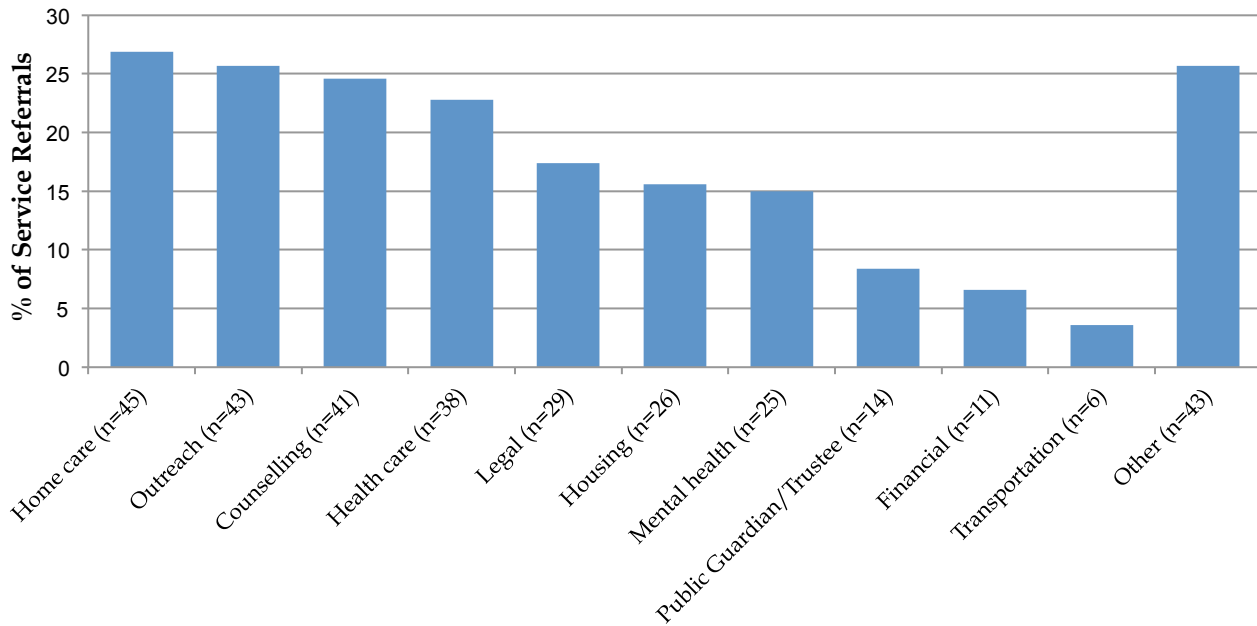
Response

EART is limited to taking cases involving a criminal component as the team works in a tandem model, with a police officer and a social worker assigned to a case. If the police officer determines that a case is not criminal in nature, the team does not investigate the case further. If the case is determined not to involve a criminal component, the case is referred to various formal and informal social service supports in the community; see Figure 5. EART members continue to refine the intake process and ensure that community stakeholders and community members receive a case-appropriate response when reports are received.

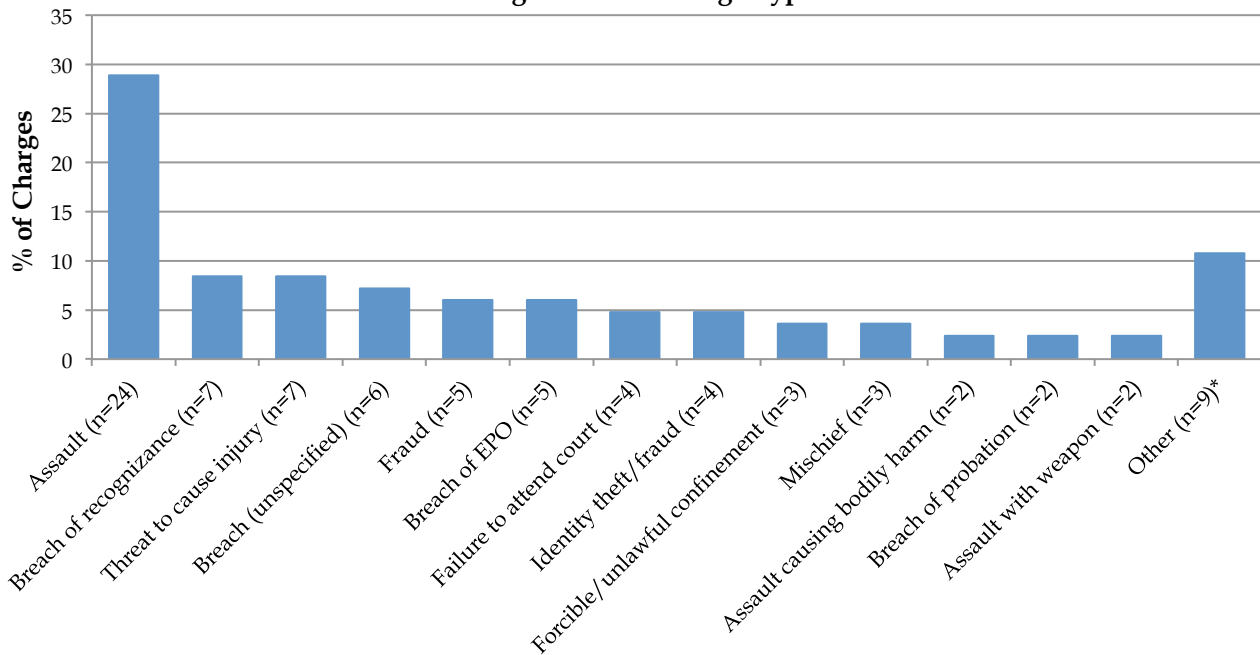
Various other activities were undertaken by EART to support and assist clients. Of the 224 cases examined, EART assisted the client in obtaining an emergency protection order in 10 cases and a restraining order in three cases. EART enlisted the support of HomeFront in nine cases. EART assisted with the relocation of the client to a safer or more suitable environment, such as a shelter or care home, in 34 cases, and supported a capacity assessment being completed in an additional nine cases. EART also assisted older adults with getting personal directives and powers of attorney in place as well as guardianship and trusteeship orders.

Alleged abusers were charged with a total of 83 offences, averaging 1.9 charges each. Figure 6 details the types of charges alleged abusers received. The most common charge was assault, representing 29% of all charges. This was followed by breach of recognizance and threat to cause injury. Unspecified breaches accounted for 79% of all charges and fraud and breach of an emergency protection order each accounted for 6% of charges. All other charges each accounted for less than 5% of the total charges.

**Figure 5:
Types of Service Referrals**



**Figure 6:
Alleged Abuser Charge Types**



Overview of the EART Program

The evaluation undertaken by the Institute shows that the EART pilot project has successfully fulfilled its mandate and met its objectives. Program data revealed that EART has provided assistance to hundreds of vulnerable seniors over the course of the project, and that this assistance has taken many forms, ranging from referrals to appropriate community resources to providing direct support in obtaining protection from abusers and laying criminal charges when the abuse has been criminal in nature.

EART members have been very active in educational initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of the program, its mandate and elder abuse in general. Carya has created an online training program regarding elder abuse that is accessible to community members and professionals. EART members have made significant strides in addressing the recommendations from the overall program evaluation and will continue to actively work with the community to establish awareness about the ongoing issue of elder abuse.

Community stakeholders were very positive about the contributions of EART to the community. Their responses support the need for ongoing communication and education regarding elder abuse and the scope and mandate of EART. Responses from community stakeholders included:

It's a needed and valuable service, and one essential piece of a strategy to combat elder abuse in Calgary. However, better legislation, more public education, and more resources to ensure a more preventative approach [are needed]...

EART is a wonderful program...thank you for all your hard work and dedication to [the] older adult population.

EART clients who participated in an interview following conclusion of their case were also very positive about the services they received from the program. Comments provided included:

I thought they did a really great job and they were very professional and handled the situation well. I was relieved to know they were there for me. I didn't know about the service before.

I would recommend them to anyone who is going through an abuse situation. It was perfect.

EART has increased its capacity to address the needs of Calgary's elder community by utilizing staff members from each partner agency and allocating resources to ensure that these positions are funded. EART is continuing to seek new funding sources.

Despite the end of formal funding for the EART pilot project, EART is continuing to operate with funding supports from its member agencies until core funding is identified. EART is currently providing support to the Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy of the City of Calgary and continues to act as a leader in addressing elder abuse in Calgary. It is the hope of the evaluators that the front-line team will continue the important work that they have accomplished over the past four years.



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