

## **STEP #4: KNOW WHAT TO DO**

### **SENIORS AND DISASTERS**

During an emergency, seniors previously living on their own may find they have to depend on others for food, shelter and the necessities of daily living. Those used to assisted living may face upheaval in their normal routines or a change in their usual caregivers. Add to that the stress of the disaster itself, and the elderly may find it difficult to cope.

#### **Symptoms of Stress Unique to the Elderly**

- Reliving events in their lives when they were traumatized or suffered severe losses.
- Fear of losing their independence or lack of self-sufficiency.
- Worry about limited financial resources and time to rebuild.
- Fear of being put in an institution.
- Fear of a decline in health and limitations on mobility and ability to rebuild.
- Withdrawal and isolation from family and friends.

#### **How to Help**

- Provide consistent verbal reassurance.
- Assist them in recovering their physical possessions.
- Return them to familiar surroundings with friends and acquaintances as soon as possible.
- Make sure they have needed medical and financial assistance.
- Help them re-establish social networks.
- Monitor their nutritional and medication needs.

The City of Greater Sudbury has many senior citizen groups and organizations that could assist in providing services to seniors during and after an emergency.