OLDER PERSONS RIGHTS, PROTECTION, CARE AND SUPPORT BILL, 2026

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OLDER PERSONS RIGHTS, PROTECTION, CARE AND SUPPORT BILL, 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT TO RECOGNISE AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS, TO PROVIDE FOR THE PROTECTION, CARE AND SUPPORT OF OLDER PERSONS, AND FOR MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH

Enacted by the Parliament of The Bahamas

WHEREAS the human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of older persons are recognised by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations;

AND WHEREAS the United Nations Principles for Older Persons emphasize the right to independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment; respect, dignity and non-discrimination;

AND WHEREAS globally, there is a recognised shift in population demographics towards an increasingly ageing population and this shift is also evidenced in The Bahamas, requiring the creation of measures to ensure adequate support systems and protections of older persons;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas has endorsed the aforesaid principles and is committed to upholding human rights and recognising older persons as contributors to society;

NOW THEREFOR:

PART I - PRELIMINARY

1. Short title and commencement.

(1) This Act may be cited as the Older Persons Rights, Protection, Care and Support Act, 2026.

(2) This Act shall come into operation on a date to be appointed by the Minister by notice published in the Gazette and different dates may be appointed by the Minister for the coming into operation of different Parts or sections of the Act.

2. Interpretation.

“abandon” or **“abandonment”** means to desert or forsake;

"abuse" includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse;

“benefit” includes any benefit under the National Insurance Act or other benefit given by the Department of Social Services;

"care" means physical, psychological, social or material assistance and includes services aimed at promoting quality of life and general well-being;

"caregiver" means any person who provides care as defined in section 29;

“day care services” means services provided to an older person during specified hours of the day at a facility or other designated place, for the purpose of meeting the older person’s health, personal care, social, recreational, nutritional or other support needs, including —

(a) supervision and personal assistance;

(b) assistance with activities of daily living;

(c) health monitoring and access to health-care services;

(d) meals and nutritional support;

(e) social, recreational and therapeutic activities; and

(f) respite support for caregivers,

but does not include overnight accommodation or permanent or residential care;

"Department" means the Department of Social Services;

"economic abuse" means —

(a) the deprivation of economic and financial resources entitled to under any law;

(b) the unreasonable deprivation of economic and financial resources; or

(c) the disposal of household effects or other property without consent;

"**Minister**" means the Minister responsible for social services;

"**older person**" means an individual 65 years or older who, as a result of the natural course of ageing, may encounter limitations in physical ability, social involvement or financial autonomy, requiring greater protection and support;

"**physical abuse**" means any act or threat of physical violence towards an older person;

"psychological abuse" means a pattern of behaviour whereby a person uses threats, insults, manipulation, intimidation or control to harm another person's emotional and mental well being;

"rehabilitation" means a process by which a person is enabled to reach and maintain optimal physical, sensory, intellectual, psychiatric or social functional levels, and includes measures to restore functions or compensate for the loss or absence of a function, but excludes medical care;

"residential care establishment" has the same meaning assigned to it in section 2 of the Residential Care Establishments Act;

"**sexual abuse"** means any conduct that violates the sexual integrity of a person;

"shelter" means any building or premises maintained or used for the reception, protection and temporary care of an older person in need of care and protection;

"social worker" means an officer employed in a department or agency under the control of the Minister.

3. Objectives of Act.

(1) The objectives of this Act are to adhere to the guiding principles with relevant international conventions respect to the rights and protection of older persons, including —

(a) ensuring that older persons enjoy the same rights and protections as all citizens, free from discrimination or marginalization;

(b) promoting dignity, inclusion, and active participation in society by older persons;

(c) providing for the care, protection and support of older persons from abuse of any kind; and

(d) strengthening the capacity of older persons to exercise financial self-management and responsibility.

(2) The Minister shall, in carrying out the objectives of this Act, advance awareness, implement programmes and take such other measures as he considers necessary to promote —

(a) the care, protection and support of older persons;

(b) the respect, dignity and autonomy of older persons;

(c) independent decision-making by older persons;

(d) the social participation of older persons in the community; and

(e) the assistance of, and services and benefits for, older persons.

(3) The Minister may, by order published in the Gazette, prescribe national standards to define —

(a) standardized levels of service that may be provided to older persons; and

(b) how such services shall be monitored and evaluated,

and any person who provides a service to older persons for which a standardized level has been prescribed, must comply with such standards.

PART II – ADMINISTRATION OF ACT

4. Act to be primarily administered by Social Services.

(1) The Minister charged with responsibility for social services shall oversee the implementation and administration of this Act through the departments and agencies under the control of the Minister.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), certain functions, powers, and responsibilities may be performed by such other relevant authority as may be expressly conferred by this Act or any regulations made hereunder or by some other law, and such functions shall be exercised within the limits of the statutory mandate and in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(3) The Minister shall have responsibility for collaborating with and reporting to any international body concerned with the human rights of older persons, to which The Bahamas is a member state.

(4) For the purposes of this section, **"such other relevant authority"** includes some other ministry or department or division thereunder, a statutory body or other recognised authority.

5. Minister to establish National Older Persons Policy.

(1) The Minister shall —

(a) within twelve months of the commencement of this Act cause a National Older Persons Policy to be developed, to establish the national strategic framework for matters relating to older persons and shall accord priority to the development and implementation of a National Dementia Strategy;

(b) commence the development of the National Dementia Strategy and ensure implementation, review and annual monitoring of the Strategy at least every five years.

(2) The Strategy shall be developed through meaningful consultation with persons living with dementia, caregivers, relevant professional bodies, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

6. Minister to establish working group to administer Act.

(1) The Minister shall cause a co-ordinated case management working group of persons to be established which shall have responsibility for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

(2) The persons to comprise the group referred to under subsection (1) shall consist of individuals from various ministries and departments who are actively involved in the day to day operations of caring for, protecting, assisting and attending to older persons.

(3) It shall be incumbent for the working group to collaborate in a coordinated manner, ensuring the harmonization of their respective functions, data and the creation of synergy in the execution of their duties.

(4) The working group referred to under subsection (1) shall meet not less than once a month.

7. Minister to coordinate overall administration of Act.

(1) Pursuant to section 4, it shall be duty of the Minister to coordinate the activities of the persons referred to in section 4(1) and (2) and to ensure consistency, efficiency, and accountability in the implementation and administration of this Act.

(2) The Minister may issue written directives or make regulations —

(a) to clarify the division of responsibilities; and

(b) to facilitate coordination and cooperation for the activities of persons with responsibility for implementation and administration of this Act.

8. Minister to secure support of other relevant ministers.

It shall be the duty of the Minister to secure the active cooperation, advice or technical assistance of all other relevant Ministers, who must act jointly in furtherance of the objectives of this Act.

PART III - RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

GENERAL RIGHTS

9. General human rights of older persons.

Every older person shall have the right to equality before the law, to live with dignity and security, to protection of privacy including confidentiality to personal information, to participate fully in social, economic and cultural life, and to exercise autonomy in decisions affecting their personal, financial, and health matters, including the right —

(a) to exercise choice and make decisions in relation to —

(i) any funded aged care services for which the older person has been approved to access; and

(ii) how, when and by whom those services are delivered to the older person,

and to be supported, if necessary, and respected in making such decisions;

(b) to take personal risks, in pursuit of social participation, intimate and sexual relationships.

10. Other rights of older persons.

(1) In addition to the general rights outlined in subsection (1), every older person shall have the right to —

(a) protection of property, income, pension, benefits, assets and financial affairs from abuse, exploitation, fraud, coercion and improper interference;

(b) protection from degrading or inhumane treatment or neglect;

(c) protection from any form of abuse or exploitation as specified in this Act; and

(d) financial self-management as outlined in section 19,

as provided for under this Act.

(2) The Minister shall ensure opportunities for participation by older persons in policy and other decisions affecting older persons in the community are made available.

11. Minister to cause public education of rights of older persons.

(1) To promote awareness, respect, dignity, equality, and protection of older persons, the Minister shall cause public education campaigns to be carried out on the general and other rights of older persons.

(2) The Minister shall ensure that all information provided during a public education campaign, is available in plain language and accessible formats and is responsive to the diverse needs of older persons.

ACCESS TO PLACES AND SERVICES

12. Prohibition against restricting older persons access to places or services.

No person shall unfairly restrict the right of an older person to access a place or service on the basis of that person's age, unless such restriction is motivated by a genuine concern for the safety and welfare of that older person.

13. Access to places and services.

(1) Subject to section 12, an older person shall be granted —

(a) admission into any premises to which members of the public are ordinarily admitted;

(b) access to any service or amenity ordinarily provided to members of the public;

(c) access to social and legal services to enhance his autonomy, protection and care to which members of the public are ordinarily granted access;

(d) access to schemes, projects or income-generating opportunities to which members of the public are generally granted access.

(2) A person who fails to comply with subsection (1) commits an offence.

14. Access to healthcare.

Every older person shall have the right to access health care services in a public hospital or facility including —

(a) support care for individuals living with dementia or other cognitive impairment or disability; and

(b) palliative and end-of-life care, where state funded assistance is deemed necessary.

PART IV – PROVISION OF CARE AND PROTECTION OF OLDER PERSONS

OLDER PERSONS IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION

15. Older persons deemed to be in need of care and protection.

For the purposes of this Act, an older person is deemed to be in need of care and protection where that person —

(a) is suffering, has suffered or is likely to suffer abuse of any kind;

(b) has his income, assets or any grant to which he is entitled —

(i) taken away against his wishes or without his consent; or

(ii) used by another person in a manner inconsistent with his best interests;

(c) has been removed from his property or has been unlawfully evicted from any property he occupies;

(d) has been abandoned at a hospital, nursing home or clinic;

(e) engages in self-neglect or is unable to care for himself;

(f) lives in circumstances likely to cause or to be conducive to seduction, abduction or sexual exploitation; or

(g) lives in or is exposed to circumstances which may cause physical, emotional or mental harm to the older person.

16. Anonymous reports of suspected or potential abuse of older person.

(1) Where a person has knowledge or reasonable grounds to suspect that an older person is experiencing, has experienced or is at risk of abuse, neglect or self-neglect, he may anonymously report to the relevant authority the suspected or potential abuse and the circumstances under which the suspicion is based.

(2) A person who makes a notification pursuant to subsection (1), shall not, by virtue of doing so, be regarded in any proceedings before any court, tribunal or in any other respect, to have breached any code of professional ethics or to have departed from any accepted form of professional conduct.

(3) Where a person under subsection (1) has acted with reasonable care and in good faith, he shall not incur any civil or criminal liability in respect of the notification or the provision of any information contained in the notification.

PROTECTION AGAINST PHYSICAL AND OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE

17. Prohibition against physical, and other forms of abuse.

(1) No person shall —

(a) physically or sexually abuse or allow to be physically or sexually abused an older person whether or not that older person is under his care;

(b) psychologically or emotionally abuse or cause psychological or emotionally abuse to an older person whether or not that older person is under his care; or

(c) neglect or abandon an older person for whom he has the responsibility to care for,

(2) A person who contravenes any of the provisions of this section commits an offence.

18. Protection against physical, and other forms of abuse.

Where an older person is found to have been subjected to —

(a) physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse; or

(b) neglect or abandonment,

an application may be made for an appropriate order under Part IX.

SAFEGUARDING FINANCIAL SELF-MANAGEMENT

19. Right to financial self-management.

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, every older person shall have the right to manage their own financial affairs, including the receipt, control, and expenditure of their —

(a) pension benefits;

(b) savings; and

(c) any other form of income.

(2) The Minister shall promote financial literacy programs and advisory services to strengthen the capacity of older persons to exercise financial self-management responsibly.

20. Ensuring self-management in meeting utility charges.

(1) Every older person may retain the right to independently manage and discharge their own utility obligations and shall in accordance with their personal financial capacity and choice, remain personally liable for the payment of such utility charges including

but not limited to electricity, water, gas, and telecommunications charges.

(2) The Minister shall, in consultation with public authorities and other relevant stakeholders, take such measures as may be necessary to encourage the implementation in respect of older persons of —

(a) the creation of concessions or discounts for timely settlement;

(b) the adoption of measures to facilitate the timely, accessible and ease of payment options,

while ensuring that older persons are not disadvantaged in exercising financial self-management.

21. Older person may authorize automatic deduction by authority or other entity.

(1) Where an authority or other entity adopts measures to facilitate timely, accessible and ease of payment options, an older person may, in writing, authorize a direct payment from their bank, credit union or other financial account, provided such authorization is voluntary and revocable.

(2) No person shall deduct, divert, or apply financial resources of an older person without the older person's express written consent, except as otherwise provided by law.

22. Older person may authorize payment of benefit by National Insurance Board to a public or private hospital or other residential care establishment.

Where an older person is required to physically remain in a public or private hospital or other residential care establishment for long term care and that person is in receipt of benefits from the National Insurance Board, the Board may, with the appropriate legal authority, pay the benefit due to the older person to the facility where the older person is being cared in.

PROTECTION AGAINST FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

23. Prohibition against financial exploitation of older persons.

(1) No person shall for his own benefit improperly, unlawfully or dishonestly use, obtain, control, withhold, convert, misuse or benefit from or financially exploit the money, property, assets,

pension, social protection benefits or other resources of an older person.

(2) For the purposes of this section, financial exploitation includes —

(a) theft, fraud or embezzlement;

(b) forgery or falsification of documents;

(c) coercing or unduly influencing an older person to execute a will, transfer property, alter a beneficiary designation, grant a power of attorney, incur debt or make gifts;

(d) unauthorized withdrawals or transfers from bank accounts;

(e) misuse of debit cards, credit cards or electronic payment instruments;

(f) retaining possession of an older person's pension, National Insurance benefit, social assistance payment or other public benefit without applying it for the older person's welfare;

(g) preventing an older person from accessing his or her own financial resources;

(h) selling, mortgaging or otherwise disposing of an older person's property without lawful authority;

(i) charging excessive or unreasonable fees for care giving or related services; and

(j) using deception, intimidation, coercion or manipulation to obtain financial benefit.

24. Protection against financial exploitation.

(1) Where a person is suspected of financial exploitation of an older person that person may be —

(a) required to produce receipts, records or other documents demonstrating how funds have been used;

(b) interviewed by relevant authorities to ascertain certain information; and

(c) subject to investigation by the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the National Insurance Board or another authority for further investigation.

(2) Where it is proven that a person has financially exploited an older person that person commits an offence and shall be liable to a fine of fifty thousand dollars or to a term of imprisonment of five years or to both such fine and imprisonment.

(3) Nothing in subsection (2) shall prevent an older person from pursuing any other remedy available in law, including restitution, recovery or forfeiture.

PROTECTION AGAINST COERCION

25. Prohibition against compulsion or coercion.

(1) No person shall compel or coerce an older person —

(a) to independently enter into any agreement, contract, arrangement or other undertaking without proper legal or other professional advisement;

(b) to perform any act referred to in section 23(2)(b);

(c) to execute any document of any kind, whereby the older person may be exposed to liability;

(d) to make any decision regarding his finances, property, healthcare or legal matters; or

(e) to do or to refrain from doing any act,

which is likely to have an unfavourable or detrimental impact on the older person or any likely beneficiary.

(2) A person who contravenes any of the provisions of subsection (1) commits an offence.

(3) Any agreement, contract, arrangement or other undertaking entered into due to compulsion or coercion shall be null and void.

(4) It shall be a defence where coercion on the part of any person is done in good faith to legitimately protect the older person from financial detriment or exploitation or possible civil or criminal liability.

PROTECTION IN RESPECT OF PERSONS AUTHORISED TO ACT ON BEHALF OF OLDER PERSONS

26. Older person to authorise another to assist or act on one's behalf.

(1) An older person may authorize another person to assist the older person in the administration of the older person's affairs or, in relation to a particular matter, to act on the older person's behalf.

(2) An authorization under subsection (1) may be given by—

(a) a power of attorney or other instrument or authority required by law; or

(b) a written or oral authorization, or in such other manner as may reasonably demonstrate the older person's intention to authorize the person concerned, where no particular form of instrument or authority is required by law for the matter concerned.

(3) An authorization under subsection (2)(b) shall be recognized as a valid authorization for the purposes of this Act and shall not be invalid solely because it is not made by way of a power of attorney or other formal legal instrument.

(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed as —

(a) creating, varying or extending a power of attorney;

(b) dispensing with any formality or requirement prescribed by any other written law for a particular transaction, proceeding or act; or

(c) authorizing a person to do anything which that person is prohibited by law from doing without a power of attorney, court order or other prescribed authority.

27. Duties of person authorised to assist or act on behalf of an older person.

(1) Every person who has been authorised to assist or act on behalf of an older person shall do so with honesty and transparency.

(2) From the date of the commencement of this Act, every person who receives, administers or controls a benefit on behalf of an older person, shall —

(a) hold and administer those funds solely for the benefit and welfare of the older person;

(b) apply the funds primarily toward food, accommodation, clothing, medical care, personal care, assistive devices, transportation and other reasonable needs of the older person; and

(c) keep proper records and receipts and give a true and accurate account of all transactions conducted on behalf of the older person —

(i) if called upon to do so during the lifetime of the older person; and

(ii) to the executor or other legal representative of the estate of the older person, upon the demise of the older person.

(3) A person acting on behalf of an older person in accordance with subsection (1) shall not convert any part of those funds for personal use except where expressly authorized by law or by the older person while possessing decision-making capacity.

(4) A person who contravenes any of the provisions of this section commits an offence.

(5) For the purposes of this section, **"benefit"** includes any benefit under the National Insurance Act, private pensions, rental income, or any other source of income.

PROTECTION OF OLDER PERSONS DURING NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

28. Protection of older persons during national emergencies.

The Minister shall, in collaboration with the agency responsible for disaster risk management and other relevant public bodies, take reasonable measures to ensure that the particular needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of older persons are incorporated into national and local arrangements for disaster preparedness, response, relief, recovery and other national emergencies.

PART V - STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS OF CAREGIVERS, HEALTHCARE AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS AND RESIDENTIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS

29. Interpretation of Part.

For the purposes of this Part —

"caregiver" means an informal or a professional caregiver;

"home-based care" means care or services rendered at the place where an older person resides, excluding at a residential care establishment;

"**informal caregiver**" means an non-professional person who provides home-based care or services to an older person, whether remunerated or not;

"next of kin" means the closest living relatives who assumes responsibility for the care, support or decision making of another when that other is unable to do so themselves, including a spouse, children, grandchildren or siblings;

"**professional caregiver**" means a qualified health professional who performs the service of caring for older persons for a limited period of time.

30. Categories of caregivers.

This Part shall apply to all individuals who provide home-based care to an older person, including —

(a) next of kins;

(b) informal caregivers; and

(c) professional caregivers.

NEXT OF KIN

31. General duty of next of kin.

(1) It shall be the general duty of the next of kin (whether or not the next of kin is the older person's caregiver) to assist older persons in achieving a standard of living consistent with the principles stated in this Act.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the next of kin of an older person is obligated to ensure that the older person they are responsible for is ensured a safe living environment and is provided with —

(a) adequate food and water; and

(b) clothing and other essentials.

32. Obligation of next of kin with respect to health care.

(1) In addition to the responsibilities set out in section 31, the next of kin of an older person shall, where the older person requires care, make or facilitate arrangements for the provision of appropriate care, having regard to —

(a) any valid advance directive, medical directive or other lawful direction made by the older person;

(b) the care and support needs of the older person;

(c) the advice, recommendations or directions of the attending physician or other appropriately qualified health-care professional; and

(d) the circumstances and best interests of the older person.

(2) The next of kin shall arrange or facilitate the provision of the care required by the older person and shall be responsible for meeting the reasonable costs of that care and in so discharging such responsibility, the next of kin shall, to the extent applicable and available, take reasonable steps to —

(a) access and utilize any pension, benefit, allowance, insurance coverage or other financial benefit to which the older person is entitled;

(b) apply for and utilize any public assistance, social protection benefit, subsidy or other financial support available to the older person; and

(c) utilize any other financial resources of the older person that may lawfully be applied towards the cost of the care.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1), care may include —

(a) supportive health care;

(b) preventive and curative care;

(c) long-term care;

(d) palliative care; and

(e) accommodation, personal care, nursing care, medication, medical equipment and other services reasonably necessary for the care and well-being of the older person.

(4) The responsibility of the next of kin under this section is a responsibility to arrange, facilitate and, where applicable, fund the care of the older person and does not, by itself, confer on the next of kin authority to make medical or other health-care decisions on behalf of the older person.

(5) A decision concerning the medical treatment or health care of an older person shall be made in accordance with—

(a) any valid enduring power of attorney, advance directive, health proxy or other lawful direction given by the older person;

(b) any applicable law governing decision-making on behalf of an older person; and

(c) where applicable, the advice or recommendations of the attending physician or other appropriately qualified health-care professional.

33. Obligation of next of kin to collect or receive older person discharged from a public hospital or facility.

(1) Where an older person has been discharged from a public hospital or other public medical facility, the next of kin shall upon notification of discharge by the hospital or facility make reasonable arrangements —

(a) within seventy-two hours for the pick up and collection of the older person from the appropriate ward or other designated area; or

(b) where the hospital or facility has arranged for the older person to be medically transported, to receive the older

person at the residential address provided or such other appropriate place of care agreed upon.

(2) Where the next of kin is unable to comply with the provisions of (2), or where compliance would be inconsistent with —

(a) any care and protection order made under this Act; or

(b) the safety or care needs of the older person,

the next of kin shall take reasonable steps to arrange an alternative safe and appropriate discharge or care arrangement.

(3) Any person who wilfully fails to comply with the provisions of subsection (1) commits an offence.

34. Agreement for older person to remain in care of State in exceptional circumstances.

(1) Where a next of kin has proven to the satisfaction of the Minister that he is unable, whether by reason of financial circumstances, physical or other incapacity, or other circumstances, to provide for the care of an older person discharged in accordance with subsection (1), the next of kin may request in writing that an agreement be entered into for the older person to remain in the care of the State.

(2) Any such agreement entered into pursuant to subsection (1) may provide for the reasonable costs of the care and maintenance of the older person to be borne, in whole or in part, by the older person, the next of kin, or both, having regard to the financial means and circumstances of the older person and the next of kin.

(3) Where an older person or his next of kin defaults on the terms of the agreement entered into pursuant to subsection (1), the state can pursue the sums due and owing pursuant to section 71.

INFORMAL CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS

35. General duties of caregivers.

(1) Every caregiver of an older person has both a moral and legal responsibility to that older person and must —

(a) provide reasonable care and act in the best interest of the older person in accordance with section 9;

(b) avoid neglect or abuse, so as to prevent injury or harm of any kind;

(c) administer any medication or treatment as may be prescribed or directed by a medical practitioner or other healthcare professional;

(d) only act within the authority legally granted to him; and

(e) maintain transparency at all times.

(2) No caregiver shall make any medical or financial decisions on behalf of an older person unless properly and legally authorized to do so, or except where authorised by law.

36. Legal responsibility of professional care providers.

Nothing in this Act shall derogate from the duties and obligations imposed under any law governing —

(a) the ethics and standards for the professional conduct of a professional care provider;

(b) the standards and other legal requirements of a healthcare facility or establishment in which the duties of a professional care provider are carried out; or

(c) any reporting obligations required of a professional care provider in carrying out his professional duties.

HEALTH CARE AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

37. Obligation to report person in need of care and protection.

This sub-Part shall apply to —

(a) a medical, health, dental or mental health practitioner;

(b) a nurse or patient care technician;

(c) an administrator of a hospital or medical facility;

(d) a social worker or other social service professional;

(e) a law enforcement officer;

(f) a person who provides health care, welfare, education, religious care or law enforcement services, wholly or partly to an older person; and

(g) any other person who by virtue of the nature of their work, owes a duty of care to an older person.

38. Duty to report need for care and protection.

(1) Any person specified in paragraphs (a) – (g) of section 37, who has knowledge or has reasonable grounds to suspect that an older person is in need of care and protection shall be under a duty to —

(a) immediately report or cause to be reported the circumstances to the relevant authority; and

(b) provide the relevant authority, with such additional information as is known or available to the person.

(2) Where a person otherwise makes a report to a social worker, a police officer or the manager of a residential facility, the social worker, police officer or the manager of the residential facility shall transmit the report to the relevant authority within twenty-four hours of receiving the report.

(3) Subsection (2) shall apply notwithstanding the confidential nature of the information on which the report is based.

(4) A person who fails to make a report in accordance with subsection (1) or (2) commits an offence.

(5) A person who intentionally makes a false report or provides false or misleading information commits an offence.

RESIDENTIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS

39. Duty of registered Residential Care Establishments.

(1) In addition to the statutory obligations imposed by the Residential Care Establishments Act, the operator of every residential care establishment shall ensure compliance in respect of older persons in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(2) The operator of every residential care establishment shall ensure that it provides adequate education and training for its staff with respect to—

(a) the general care for older persons;

(b) nutrition and health diets for older persons;

(c) the proper administration of cardiopulmonary resuscitation for older persons, guided by established medical protocols;

(d) proper bedding for older persons; and

(e) the management of wound care for older persons.

40. Rights of older persons in residential care establishments.

An older person residing in a residential care establishment has, in addition to all other rights specified herein, the right to —

(a) appoint, where the older person has the capacity to do so, a representative of his or her choice to act on the older person's behalf in relation to such matters as the older person may authorize;

(b) have reasonable access to assistance and visitation;

(c) keep and use personal possessions;

(d) be informed about the financial status of the establishment and any changes in management as and when it occurs;

(e) participate in social, religious and community activities of one's choice;

(f) private communications;

(g) a private physician at one's own expense; and

(h) be given at least thirty days notice of a proposed transfer or discharge, except in cases where a person is a danger to one's self, others or the establishment.

41. Abuse by manager or employee of a residential care establishment.

Where a manager or other employee of a residential care establishment abuses, neglects or exposes an older person to abuse or neglect, that person commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of $50,000.00, or to a term of imprisonment of five years or to both.

PART VI - SOCIAL SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DIGITAL AND INTEGRATED PORTAL

42. Maintenance of digital and integrated portal.

(1) The Minister may cause a digital portal to be established and maintained for the purposes of —

(a) facilitating various applications for forms of social assistance referred to hereinafter; and

(b) promoting and providing such other services and information the Minister may deem necessary.

(2) The Minister shall cause digital solutions to be put in place for the integration of information within the Ministry of Social Services in respect of older persons.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

43. Social support and assistance by Minister and wider community.

(1) The Minister shall in providing social support to older persons, commit to —

(a) promoting education and awareness with respect to older persons;

(b) promoting productive ageing of older persons; and

(c) engaging the wider community to aid in the support of older persons generally, through various initiatives outlined under this Part.

44. Commitment to education and awareness.

In pursuit of promoting health, safety, and respect for older persons, the Minister shall —

(a) cause to be conducted, public education and awareness campaigns, to educate the public on —

(i) the warning signs and recognition of neglect, physical and emotional abuse or financial exploitation; and

(ii) the reporting channels of such abuse;

(b) strengthen and garner community support to —

(i) facilitate peer support groups and community participation by older persons;

(ii) aid in counselling and other support needs;

(c) empower older persons through education on —

(i) financial literacy, fraud prevention, avoiding scams, online safety and safe banking practices;

(ii) legal safeguards, such as a living will, power of attorney and a healthcare proxy;

(iii) trusted community resources;

(d) promote evidence-based measures to —

(i) reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia across the life course;

(ii) integrate dementia risk reduction with national programmes addressing noncommunicable diseases, physical activity, nutrition, tobacco, alcohol, cardiovascular health, hypertension, diabetes, hearing health, social connection and other relevant modifiable risk factors; and

(e) promote education on the link between hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular health, physical activity, healthy diet, tobacco, alcohol, hearing health, social connection, cognitive stimulation and reduction of air-pollution exposure and dementia.

45. Minister to promote productive ageing.

The Minister shall, in collaboration with the minister responsible for labour affairs, employers, educational institutions and other stakeholders, promote programmes and initiatives that —

(a) facilitate opportunities for older persons to remain in or re-enter the workforce;

(b) encourage flexible, part-time and age-friendly employment arrangements;

(c) support lifelong learning, skills development, digital literacy and retraining;

(d) facilitate mentoring, coaching and knowledge transfer between generations;

(e) encourage volunteerism and community leadership by older persons;

(f) recognise and promote the value of unpaid care giving and community service performed by older persons; and

(g) support any other initiative that advances active and productive ageing.

46. Application for social support and assistance.

(1) An older person who is in need of financial and other assistance or services as specified in subsection (2) may make application in the prescribed form by way of the virtual platform maintained by the Department.

(2) Assistance rendered pursuant to subsection (1) may be in the form of —

(a) food assistance in circumstances when the person is unable to provide food for themselves;

(b) access to medical supplies and health related procedures;

(c) rental assistance or home repair assistance;

(d) assistance with the payment of utility bills to avoid disconnection or to enable reconnection;

(e) referral services for assistance with temporary shelter;

(f) social assistance; or

(g) any other service as specified under this Part.

(3) An application for assistance shall be considered and upon conclusion of an interview and home visit of the applicant, the relevant authority shall complete a report and make recommendation as to the applicant's eligibility.

(4) Upon satisfaction that an older person is in need of the assistance applied for, the relevant authority shall notify the individual and direct the individual as to the steps to be taken to obtain the assistance.

OLDER PERSONS DAY CARE SERVICES

47. Minister to promote and facilitate older persons day care services.

(1) The Minister shall promote the establishment of day care services for older persons by private operators through various measures that include —

(a) providing financial assistance and grants;

(b) in consultation with the Minister of Finance, tax incentives for the establishment and operation of facilities to provide such services;

(c) offering technical guidance and training programs for caregivers and administrative personnel;

(d) encouraging private participation by assisting with streamlining licensing and regulatory procedures;

(e) fostering partnerships between public health institutions, community organizations, and private operators to ensure integrated support for older persons; and

(f) lending assistance to operators through the assignment of persons engaged under any government temporary work program, to work along with operators.

(2) The minister may, in consultation with relevant agencies, make regulations to prescribe the standards for the operation of older persons day care services to ensure quality, safety, and accessibility.

COMMUNITY NURSING AND HOME-BASED SERVICES

48. Minister to facilitate community nursing services to older persons in need.

The Minister shall liaise and coordinate with the minister responsible for health the facilitation of community nursing services to older persons in need.

49. Minister to facilitate home-base services for older persons.

(1) In an effort to maintain independence and reduce hospital visits by older persons, the Minister shall in conjunction with the minister responsible for health, promote and facilitate home-based services by private operators to facilitate services for older persons including but not limited to —

(a) diagnostic support, including portable lab tests for blood glucose, cholesterol and urine;

(b) including basic clinical care such as the monitoring of vital signs for blood pressure, temperature, pulse rate and oxygen levels;

(c) wound and skin care, including dressing changes, pressure sore prevention and minor wound cleaning;

(d) rehabilitation assistance including guided physical therapy exercises and mobility support;

(e) respiratory care, including oxygen therapy, use of a nebulizer and the monitoring of respiratory function;

(f) preventive health checks, including routine wellness assessments and fall-risk evaluations.

(2) Every professional caregiver rendering home-based services pursuant to this section, must be registered in accordance with the Health Professionals Act and operate in accordance with any protocols or law governing standards, qualifications, conduct or otherwise.

(3) The Minister may, by regulations, prescribe the standards and procedures governing the establishment, management, and delivery of home-based services.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

50. Caregiver support and development.

(1) The Minister shall cause support to be made available to caregivers, with particular emphasis on training in the general care and well-being of older persons.

(2) Training conducted pursuant to this section shall be in respect of—

(a) older persons, with focus on —

(i) the care of handling frail older persons;

(ii) the administration of medication;

(iii) bed and wound care; and

(iv) nutrition and consumption of a healthy diet;

(b) caregivers, with focus on —

(i) good hygiene practices;

(ii) the use of personal protective equipment;

(iii) protection against contracting any contagious or communicable disease;

(iv) dementia awareness and appropriate training and competency standards; and

(v) coping mechanisms for bereavement and self post-care support; and

(c) family members, with focus on —

(i) how to handle of frail older persons;

(ii) identifying initial signs of bed sores and the need for wound care; and

(iii) dementia awareness and appropriate training and competency standards.

(3) Training conducted pursuant to this section may be conducted —

(a) via workshops;

(b) by the distribution of informational packages or brochures;

(c) via television advertisements; or

(d) in any other manner deemed suitable.

(4) Assessments shall be conducted as to the capacity of caregivers in the course of training.

COORDINATION AND LIAISON SUPPORT FOR OLDER PERSONS

51. Designated liaison officer to assist older persons.

(1) The Minister shall designate a public officer within the Ministry or such other public authority as the Minister may determine, with responsibility, for managing a liaison service for older persons residing in New Providence and the Family Islands.

(2) The officer designated pursuant to subsection (1) shall facilitate access by older persons to health, social and other public services, particularly where services require travel between islands, services including but not limited to —

(a) coordinating and facilitating appointments, referrals and access to services for older persons;

(b) verifying, before travel where reasonably practicable, that scheduled medical consultations, diagnostic procedures, surgeries or other appointments remain confirmed;

(c) promptly notifying an older person, or the person's caregiver or authorised representative, of any cancellation, postponement or material change affecting a scheduled appointment or procedure;

(d) facilitating the rescheduling of appointments cancelled by a public authority or public healthcare provider;

(e) coordinating communication between healthcare providers and older persons to minimise unnecessary travel and delays;

(f) facilitating access to telehealth or virtual consultations where clinically appropriate;

(g) assisting older persons in navigating public services relating to health, social assistance, pensions, long-term care and other prescribed services;

(h) providing information regarding available transportation, accommodation and financial assistance programmes where applicable;

(i) coordinating referrals among government agencies and public institutions providing services to older persons; and

(j) performing such other functions as may be determined by the Minister.

(3) The services offered under this section shall be conducted in collaboration with public healthcare providers, public authorities and such other entities as may be necessary.

COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS

52. Initiatives to implement priority access for older persons.

(1) The Minister shall actively promote and engage business establishments to implement initiatives to provide improved or priority access for older persons in the form of —

(a) establishing priority lines and designated seating;

(b) the installation of wheelchair-accessible ramps;

(c) the installation of grab bars to assist with mobility and stability, facilitating safe movement and transfers;

(d) ensuring priority for packing and carry-out assistance;

(e) providing designated seating on public transportation; and

(f) such other initiatives that would be conducive for the ease of doing business.

(2) The Minister after consultation with the Minister of Transport cause to be implemented a regulated transportation service designed specifically for older persons to provide safe, cost effective transport services.

53. Initiatives to enhance safety for older persons when conducting business.

Every operator of a business establishment or commercial property shall —

(a) erect proper signage and maintain visible cross walks on premises; and

(b) provide proper outdoor lighting and other safety measures,

in an effort to enhance the safety of older persons when conducting business.

54. Fund raising initiatives to support older persons.

(1) The Minister shall encourage and facilitate community-based fund raising initiatives aimed at supporting programs and services for older persons.

(2) A fund raising activity may be organized by community groups, non-governmental organizations, faith-based institutions, or private entities.

(3) All funds raised under this section shall be used exclusively for the benefit of older persons, including but not limited to —

(a) provision of health and wellness programs;

(b) support for older persons day care and home-care services;

(c) acquisition of assistive technologies and mobility aids; and

(d) community engagement and recreational and social activities.

(4) For the purposes of this section, the Minister shall cause to be established a foundation in accordance with the provisions of the Foundations Act.

(5) The Minister may lend financial support to any initiative or programme conducted pursuant to this section and shall cause for funds to be appropriated by Parliament for this purpose.

FACILITATION OF LEGAL SUPPORT

55. Minister to facilitate legal support for older persons.

(1) The Minister shall, for the support and protection of older persons, facilitate independent access to legal assistance, by appealing to legal practitioners and others to provide, on a *pro bono* basis, assistance in relation to —

(a) the preparation and execution of wills;

(b) the preparation or execution of powers of attorney;

(c) the creation of advance directives, care directives, or similar instruments;

(d) any other legal document or matter concerning the care, property, or personal affairs of the elderly person.

(2) Appeals made pursuant to subsection (1) may be made to such bodies including but not limited to —

(a) local law firms, to provide *pro bono* legal assistance to a specified number of older persons, who otherwise would not be able to afford such services, as part of a community-based support initiative;

(b) religious organizations, to conduct workshops and legal clinics to provide legal advice and assistance to older persons;

(c) local institutions providing legal education, to provide *pro bono* legal workshops and assistance to older persons in relation to the matters specified in subsection (1)(a) – (d).

(3) A counsel and attorney providing legal assistance pursuant to the provisions of this section are subject to the provisions of the Legal Profession Act.

(4) No assistance shall be rendered by a person referred to in subsection (2) to an older person who is related to or closely associated with that person.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION TO SUPPORT OLDER PERSONS

56. Integration of technology to support older persons.

(1) The Minister shall take measures to promote and integrate the use of assistive technologies to enhance the safety, health, independence, dignity and quality of life of older persons, including but not limited to —

(a) emergency alert and distress notification devices;

(b) location assistance technologies for older persons living with cognitive impairments and who are at risk of becoming lost or disoriented;

(c) remote health monitoring, medication reminder, fall detection and home safety technologies;

(d) hearing assistive devices; and

(e) such other assistive technologies as the Minister considers necessary to transmit alerts and relevant location information where necessary to emergency services, caregivers or designated family members to preserve life or prevent serious harm.

(2) Any assistive technology deployed under the provisions of this Act shall be used in a manner that respects the dignity, autonomy, privacy and human rights of older persons.

(3) The use of any location assistance technologies shall be —

(a) authorised by the informed consent of the older person and where the older person lacks decision-making capacity, be authorised by a person lawfully entitled to make decisions on the older person's behalf or otherwise in accordance with law; and

(b) limited to what is reasonably necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the older person,

and any personal information collected through assistive technologies shall be protected and used only for lawful purposes in accordance with this Act and any applicable law relating to privacy and data protection.

(4) The Minister may make regulations prescribing —

(a) standards and approved categories of assistive non-medical technologies;

(b) eligibility criteria for access to technology programmes;

(c) technical, operational and cyber security requirements;

(d) procedures governing consent, privacy and the protection of personal information;

(e) funding, maintenance and replacement of assistive technologies; and

(f) any other matter necessary for giving effect to this Part,

and in so doing, may consult with the minister responsible for innovation and technology or such other appropriate technical authority.

(5) For the purposes of this sub-Part —

"**assistive technology**" means any equipment, device, software, digital application, communication system or technological solution designed to improve the health, safety, mobility, independence, communication or quality of life;

"**emergency alert device**" includes a wearable device, pendant, bracelet, watch, mobile application or similar technology

capable of transmitting an emergency notification or distress signal;

"location assistance technology" means technology capable of assisting authorised persons to locate a person who has become lost, missing or is otherwise at risk;

"remote monitoring technology" includes systems designed to monitor health status, falls, inactivity, medication adherence or other indicators relevant to the safety and well-being of a person.

57. Measures to reduce the affordability barrier to assistive devices and technologies.

(1) The Minister may —

(a) subsidise the acquisition of approved assistive devices and technologies;

(b) establish means-tested assistance programmes to facilitate access to approved assistive devices and technologies in accordance with this Act and any regulations;

(c) provide grants or vouchers;

(d) promote the waiver or reduction of fees associated with approved monitoring services; and

(e) prescribe eligibility criteria by regulations,

and in so doing, may consult with the minister responsible for innovation and technology.

(2) The Minister may enter into bilateral, regional or international arrangements with governments, regional organisations, international organisations, development partners, academic institutions or other entities for the purpose of procuring assistive technologies for older persons.

(3) An arrangement referred to in subsection (2) may include —

(a) the procurement, donation or subsidised acquisition of assistive technologies;

(b) cooperation, technology transfer and joint research;

(c) technical assistance, training and capacity building;

(d) pilot projects, innovation and digital solutions; and

(e) such other forms of cooperation as may advance the objectives of this Act.

PART VII – COMPLAINTS AND OVERSIGHT

COMPLAINTS

58. Lodging of complaints by or on behalf of an older person.

(1) Any person may lodge a complaint, make an anonymous report or make a disclosure, where that person has reasonable grounds to believe—

(a) that professional misconduct has occurred against an older person;

(b) that the rights of an older person has been breached; or

(c) that abuse of any form has occurred against an older person.

(2) A complaint, anonymous report or disclosure may be made via the National Hotline, any law enforcement authority or to the Department of Social Services and every complaint made to a law enforcement authority shall be referred to the Department.

(3) All information received through the Hotline shall be treated as strictly confidential and any employee or officer who unlawfully discloses confidential information obtained through the hotline commits an offence.

59. Duty to investigate complaints.

(1) Upon receipt of a complaint under section 58, the party in receipt of the complaint shall —

(a) assess the particulars of the complaint received;

(b) if a law enforcement, investigate the particulars of the complaint; and

(c) if not law enforcement, refer the time, location and particulars of the complaint to the Department forthwith.

(2) Where the Department receives a complaint pursuant to subsection (1), it shall be the duty of the Department to investigate the particulars of the complaint within —

(a) twenty-four hours, where there is a need for emergency care and protection;

(b) seventy-two hours where there is a general need for care and protection.

(3) The Department may take such action as is considered necessary to protect the older person to whom the complaint relates.

OVERSIGHT

60. Continuation of National Council on Older Persons.

(1) The National Council on Older Persons, having operated prior to the commencement of this Act, without having been established by statute, is hereby recognized and continued in law as the formal advisory body for older persons.

(2) The provisions of the *Schedule* shall have effect with respect to the Council.

61. Appointment and power of protection officers.

(1) The Minister shall appoint such number of suitably qualified social workers to be protection officers for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Subject to the provisions of this Act and any other law, a protection officer has the power to visit and inspect a residence or a registered residential care establishment to —

(a) ensure compliance with this Act;

(b) investigate any complaint made hereunder;

(c) enquire into the welfare of an older person.

62. Minister to designate officer responsible for oversight.

(1) The Department shall —

(a) maintain records electronically or otherwise, of all complaints received;

(b) submit annual reports to the Council and the Minister providing statistical data to guide policy, resource allocation, and program evaluation.

(2) A report prepared pursuant to subsection (1)(b) shall provide details regarding —

(a) the number of persons receiving food assistance, home care, or transportation support;

(b) the number of older person residing in public and private nursing homes or assisted living facilities;

(c) level of participation of older persons in senior clubs, volunteer programs, or civic activities;

(d) the number of elder abuse reports, the types of incidence and type of abuse; and

(e) the number of persons under elder protection care.

(3) The data provided in a report prepared pursuant to subsection (2) should be disaggregated by—

(a) sex;
(b) age;
(c) geographic location;
(d) disability status; and
(e) socio-economic status.

PART VIII – LEGAL INTERVENTIONS FOR THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF OLDER PERSONS

63. Interpretation.

For the purposes of this Part, **"relevant authority"** means a social worker or a police officer.

64. Application for general or emergency care and protection order.

An application for a general or emergency care and protection order may be made in the prescribed form by —

(a) an older person;
(b) a social worker, a health care provider or professional caregiver; or
(c) such other person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that an older person is in need of care and protection.

65. General care and protection order.

(1) The court may make an order for general care and protection where it is satisfied that the older person is in need of care and services to support his health, independence, and quality of life in accordance with this Act (hereinafter referred to as a "general care and protection order") .

(2) In making a care and protection order, the court shall take into account the need to —

(a) provide the older person with access to social, cultural, religious and education activities in relation to any special need of the older person;
(b) foster an environment which allows the older person to be self-reliant as reasonably practicable;
(c) encourage the older person to actively participate in the community; and

(d) provide the older person and caregiver with the appropriate support services.

(3) The person against whom the order is sought shall be the respondent to the application.

66. Emergency care and protection order.

(1) Where circumstances warrant, the court may make an order for immediate care and protection of an older person where the court is satisfied that the older person is at risk of harm or is facing potential danger (hereinafter referred to as an "emergency care and protection order") and the court shall take into account the need to —

(a) provide the older person with —

(i) family care and special care where appropriate;

(ii) protection, as appropriate;

(ii) appropriate support services; and

(b) ensure the dignity of the older person.

(2) An emergency care and protection order may be made to —

(a) authorise the removal of an older person from any place at any time;

(b) prohibit the removal of the older person from any place at which he was being accommodated immediately before the order was made;

(c) give the applicant, where relevant, responsibility for the older person;

(d) limit the applicant to the exercise only of those powers which are specified in the order;

(e) determine the contact which is or is not allowed with any named person;

(f) exclude a named person from the domicile of an older person or prohibit a named person from having contact with both an older person and any person providing care for the older person; or

(g) require the medical, psychiatric and psychological examination of the older person.

(3) An order made under this section shall have effect for the duration specified therein and the court may at the expiration thereof, review the need for an extension or for the making of a general care and protection order.

(4) In this section **"special care"** means health care provided to meet needs which involve physical, cognitive or mental impairments which require professional support, treatment and management.

67. Removal of older person to place of safety with consent.

(1) The relevant authority shall, with the consent of an older person, or where the older person is incapable of giving consent, a person authorised to give consent for the older person, remove the older person from his place of residence and place him in a place of safety, without an order of the court, where he has knowledge or reasonable grounds to suspect that the older person is in need of immediate care and protection and that —

(a) the delay in obtaining an order of the court for the removal of the older person may jeopardise the safety and welfare of the older person; or

(b) the removal of the older person from his place of residence is necessary to secure the safety and welfare of the older person.

(2) Where a relevant authority, a social worker, or a police officer removes an older person from his residence pursuant to subsection (1), he shall within twenty-four hours of the removal—

(a) inform the family of the removal and the name of the place of safety the older person was moved to; and

(b) apply to the court for an order for the placement of the older person in a place of safety.

68. Removal of older person to place of safety without consent.

(1) Any person may apply to the court for an order to remove an older person from his place of residence to a place of safety where that person has knowledge or reasonable grounds to believe that the older person needs to be removed from his current place of residence to a place of safety.

(2) A magistrate may, on application by the Director of Social Services, make a search and production order authorising a social services officer, with or without a police officer, to enter any premises specified in the order and to search for and remove to a place of safety, any older person whom the social services officer has reasonable cause to believe is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm or is in need of care and protection.

(3) The court may order that an older person be placed in a place of safety for a period not exceeding six months and where

circumstances justify, the court may extend the period of time for the older person to remain in the place of safety.

(4) A person who acts pursuant to subsection (1) or (2) in good faith shall not be liable for prosecution.

(5) For the purposes of this section, the Minister may designate any place as a place of safety.

69. Unlawful actions involving older person and place of safety.

A person who —

(a) without lawful authority, removes a vulnerable older person without his consent from a place of safety;

(b) knowingly assists or induces, directly or indirectly, a vulnerable older person to leave or to be removed from a place of safety;

(c) knowingly —

(i) harbours or conceals a vulnerable older person who escaped from a place of safety;

(ii) prevents a vulnerable older person from returning to a place of safety;

(iii) assists any other person in doing an act referred to subparagraph (i) or (ii); or

(d) obstructs the removal from or committal of a vulnerable older person to a place of temporary safe care, place of safety or the custody of a fit person,

commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of $10,000.00 or to imprisonment for a term of twelve months or to both.

PART IX – MISCELLANEOUS

70. Voluntary registration for post retirement employment opportunities.

(1) With the aim of facilitating the continuation of financial independence and income earning capacity of retired older persons, the relevant minister shall cause to be established and maintained a voluntary register of older persons who based on their past working experience are willing to provide services in a consultancy, mentorship, technical or other capacity.

(2) The register shall be open to inspection by employers and public authorities when seeking suitably qualified persons for post retirement employment.

71. Entitlement by other to recovery for economic loss.

(1) In this section, **"economic loss"** includes loss of earnings, diminution of earning capacity, out of pocket expenses, and any other financial detriment reasonably incurred as a result of providing care.

(2) Where a person has suffered economic loss as a direct result of providing care to that older person, that person may make a claim for recovery of such loss from the estate of the deceased, whether the deceased died testate or intestate.

(3) The person referred to in subsection (2) shall be entitled to recover economic loss only where —

(a) the care provided was reasonably necessary having regard to the physical, mental, or medical condition of the elderly person;

(b) he can demonstrate that the economic loss was actually incurred and directly attributable to the provision of such care; and

(c) he did not receive adequate remuneration or compensation for providing the care,

and he shall not be entitled to recover under this section where compensation for the same care has already been provided under contract, statute, gift in a will, or any other legal entitlement.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "person" shall include the State.

72. Obstructing authorised person from discharging duties.

A person who refuses to give access to, obstructs, delays or otherwise seeks to impede any authorised person in the discharge of his duties, or in the exercise of his powers, under this Act, commits an offence.

73. Witnesses not to be compelled to disclose identity.

Any person appearing as a witness in any proceedings in any court, tribunal or before any person authorised by law to hear and take evidence shall not be compelled —

(a) to disclose the identity or any information likely to lead to the disclosure of the identity, of any person who has made a notification under subsection (1); or

(b) to produce any report, document or any part of a report or document, which is likely to identify or lead to the identity of any person who made a notification under subsection (1).

74. Restriction on publication of information leading to identification of older person, etc.

A person shall not, without the approval of the relevant authority, in writing, publish or broadcast any information, picture or thing which identifies or is likely to lead to the identification of —

(a) an older person who has been committed to a place of temporary safe care, a place of safety or the custody of a fit person in accordance with this Act;

(b) a older person who is the subject of an order of the court pursuant to this Act;

(c) a place of safety; or

(d) any person in whose care an older person has been placed or the location of the place of residence of such person.

75. Act binds Crown.

This Act shall bind the Crown.

76. General penalty.

Where a person commits an offence or contravenes any provision under this Act for which no penalty is provided he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine of $50,000.00 or to a term of imprisonment of five years or to both.

77. Regulations.

The Minister may make regulations generally for the welfare, dignity, and protection of older persons, including but not limited to —

(a) prescribing the forms to be used for the purposes of this Act;

(b) the establishment of reporting and protection mechanisms for older persons;

(c) standards of care, nutrition, safety, and accessibility for older persons;

(d) providing for the licensing and regulation of day care services;

(e) procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation;

(f) the collection, management, and publication of statistical data on older persons, including disaggregated data by age, sex, disability, and location;

(g) the training and certification of caregivers and social workers;

(h) the administration of social assistance, housing, and health programs for older persons;

(i) public education and awareness campaigns promoting respect and inclusion of older persons;

(j) prescribing the procedures to be followed regarding the collection, use, storage, and control of personal data obtained by the use of integrated technology;

(k) prescribing the procedures to be followed for the authorisation of automatic deductions;

(l) establishing guidelines for transparency, accountability, and reporting in respect of all community fund raising activities conducted;

(m) prescribing the standards for the provision of legal assistance; and

(n) any other matter necessary for giving effect to the objectives of this Act.

SCHEDULE

(section 60)

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON OLDER PERSONS

1. Composition of Council.

(1) The Council shall consist of —

(a) a Chairperson appointed by the Minister;

(b) not fewer than seven and not more than eleven members appointed by the Minister, drawn from public authorities, non-governmental organizations, and professional bodies with experience in gerontology, dementia, care giving, public health or otherwise concerned with the care and advancement of older persons.

(2) The Minister may designate an officer of the Ministry responsible for Social Services to serve as Secretary to the Council.

2. Tenure.

A member of the Council may be appointed for a period not exceeding three years.

3. Revocation of appointment.

The Minister may revoke the appointment of any appointed member, if satisfied that the member —

(a) has been absent from three consecutive meetings of the Council without the permission of the Council;

(b) has been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under any law in force in The Bahamas;

(c) is incapacitated by physical or mental illness;

(d) is sentenced to a term of imprisonment; or

(e) is otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions of a member of the Council.

4. Resignation.

(1) The Chairman may at any time resign his office by instrument in writing addressed to the Minister and such resignation shall take effect as from the date of the receipt by the Minister of such instrument.

(2) Any member of the Council other than the Chairman may at any time resign his office by instrument in writing addressed to the Minister and transmitted through the Chairman and, upon the date of the receipt, by the Chairman of each instrument, such member shall cease to be a member of the Council.

5. Functions of Council.

The functions of the Council shall be —

(a) to gather and compile population data specific to older persons, including older persons suffering from dementia;

(b) to advise the Minister on policies and programmes affecting older persons;

(c) to promote awareness of issues relating to ageing and elder care;

(d) to review and recommend measures for the protection and participation of older persons in society;

(e) in consultation with the Minister, to encourage collaboration among public, private, and community organizations engaged in services for older persons;

(f) to develop curricula or provide an approved listing of caregiver programmes;

(g) to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national strategies concerning older persons.

6. Meetings and procedures.

(1) The Council shall meet at least once a month and at such other times as may be necessary for the performance of its functions.

(2) The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings, and in the absence of the Chairperson, a member elected by those present shall preside.

(3) The quorum for a meeting shall be one-half of the members.

(4) The Secretary to the Council shall keep and maintain minutes of all meetings held.

(5) The Council may regulate its own procedure, subject to the approval of the Minister.

7. Reporting obligations.

The Council shall submit to the Minister an annual report on its activities, and the Minister shall cause such report to be laid before Parliament.

8. Remuneration.

The Minister may authorise the payment of a stipend to members of the Council, as the Minister deems fit.

OBJECTS AND REASONS

Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement, including commencement of different Parts or clauses on different dates by notice published in the Gazette.

Clause 2 of the Bill provides for the interpretation of terms used throughout the Act.

Clause 3 of the Bill establishes the objectives of the Act, including the protection of the rights, dignity, autonomy and participation of older persons, protection from abuse, financial self-management, and the prescription of national service standards.

Part II of the Bill (clauses 4 – 8) provides for the administration and coordinated implementation of the Act.

Clause 4 of the Bill provides for the primary administration of the Act by the Minister responsible for social services, while permitting specified functions to be performed by other relevant authorities within their statutory mandates and providing for collaboration with international bodies concerned with the human rights of older persons.

Clause 5 of the Bill requires the Minister to develop a National Older Persons Policy within twelve months of commencement and accords priority to the development, implementation, review and monitoring of a National Dementia Strategy through meaningful stakeholder consultation.

Clause 6 of the Bill requires the establishment of a coordinated case-management working group comprising persons from relevant ministries and departments involved in the care, protection and assistance of older persons.

Clause 7 of the Bill requires the Minister to coordinate the overall administration of the Act and permits written directives or regulations to clarify responsibilities and facilitate inter-agency cooperation.

Clause 8 of the Bill requires the Minister to secure the active cooperation of other relevant Ministers in furtherance of the objectives of the Act.

Part III of the Bill (clauses 9 – 14) provides for the rights of older persons, including dignity, autonomy, participation, protection and access to places, services and healthcare.

Clause 9 of the Bill affirms the general human rights of older persons, including equality before the law, dignity, security, privacy, autonomy, supported decision-making, social participation and the right to take personal risks.

Clause 10 of the Bill provides additional protections for the property, income, pension, benefits and financial affairs of older persons and requires opportunities for their participation in policy and other decisions affecting them.

Clause 11 of the Bill requires public education on the rights of older persons and requires information to be provided in plain language and accessible formats responsive to their diverse needs.

Clause 12 of the Bill prohibits the unfair restriction of an older person's access to places or services solely on the basis of age, except where reasonably justified by safety and welfare considerations.

Clause 13 of the Bill provides for equal access by older persons to public premises, services, amenities, social and legal services, and income-generating opportunities, and creates an offence for non-compliance.

Clause 14 of the Bill affirms the right of older persons to access healthcare services in public hospitals or facilities, including support for dementia or other cognitive impairment or disability, and palliative and end-of-life care where State-funded assistance is necessary.

Part IV of the Bill (clauses 15 – 28) provides for the care and protection of older persons, including safeguards against abuse, financial exploitation and coercion, protections for financial self-management and authorised decision-making, and protection during national emergencies.

Clause 15 of the Bill specifies the circumstances in which an older person is deemed to be in need of care and protection, including abuse, financial exploitation, unlawful eviction, abandonment, self-neglect and exposure to physical, emotional or sexual harm.

Clause 16 of the Bill permits anonymous report of suspected or potential abuse, neglect or self-neglect and provides legal protection for persons who make such notifications with reasonable care and in good faith.

Clause 17 of the Bill prohibits physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect and abandonment of older persons and creates offences for contravention.

Clause 18 of the Bill provides for protective intervention where an older person has been subjected to abuse, neglect or abandonment.

Clause 19 of the Bill affirms the right of older persons to manage their own financial affairs and requires the promotion of financial literacy programmes and advisory services.

Clause 20 of the Bill supports the independence of older persons in meeting utility obligations and encourages concessions, discounts and accessible payment arrangements.

Clause 21 of the Bill permits an older person voluntarily to authorise direct payment arrangements while prohibiting unauthorised deductions or diversion of the older person's financial resources.

Clause 22 of the Bill permits National Insurance benefits, where appropriate legal authority exists, to be paid directly to a public or private hospital or residential care establishment providing long-term care to an older person.

Clause 23 of the Bill prohibits financial exploitation of older persons and identifies conduct constituting exploitation, including theft, fraud, coercion, misuse of benefits, unauthorised transactions and improper disposal of property.

Clause 24 of the Bill provides for investigation of suspected financial exploitation, including production of records and investigation by relevant authorities, and establishes penalties or other remedies where exploitation is proven.

Clause 25 of the Bill prohibits compulsion or coercion of an older person in relation to agreements, documents, financial, property, healthcare or legal decisions and provides that arrangements entered into through coercion may be null and void. The provision further seeks provide for a defence in circumstances where a person legitimately seeks to protect an older person from financial detriment and exploitation or civil or criminal liability.

Clause 26 of the Bill permits an older person to authorise another person in writing to assist or act on one's behalf in the administration of his affairs, subject to specified safeguards.

Clause 27 of the Bill imposes duties of honesty, transparency, proper use and accounting on persons authorised to assist or act on behalf of an older person. The clause further imposes obligations on every person who receives, administers or controls funds or benefits on behalf of an older person.

Clause 28 of the Bill requires the particular needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of older persons to be incorporated into national and local arrangements for disaster preparedness, response, relief, recovery and other national emergencies.

Part V of the Bill (clauses 29 – 41) establishes statutory obligations of caregivers, next of kin, healthcare and other professionals, and residential care establishments.

Clause 29 of the Bill defines key terms applicable to this Part, including caregiver, home-based care, informal caregiver, next of kin and professional caregiver.

Clause 30 of the Bill identifies the categories of persons providing home-based care to whom the duties under this Part apply.

Clause 31 of the Bill establishes the general duty of next of kin to support the well-being of an older person and to ensure a safe living environment and provision of basic necessities.

Clause 32 of the Bill requires next of kin to make or facilitate arrangements for the healthcare needs of an older person.

Clause 33 of the Bill requires next of kin, upon notification of discharge, to make reasonable arrangements within seventy-two hours for the collection of the older person, or where the hospital has arranged for the older person to be medically transported for receipt of the older person at his residence or such other appropriate place and creates an offence for wilful non-compliance. The clause further make provision for circumstances where the next is unable to comply with the duty to collect or receive within the required time.

Clause 34 of the Bill permits, in exceptional circumstances, where a next of kin is unable due to financial circumstances, physical or other incapacity or other circumstances to provide care, to request an agreement be entered into at the expense of the older person, the next of kin, or both, for the older person to remain under the care of the State and permits recovery of sums due on default.

Clause 35 of the Bill establishes the general legal duties of caregivers to provide reasonable care, prevent abuse and neglect, administer treatment appropriately, act within lawful authority and maintain transparency.

Clause 36 of the Bill preserves the professional, ethical, facility and reporting obligations imposed on professional care providers under other applicable laws.

Clause 37 of the Bill identifies the healthcare, social service, law enforcement, religious and other professionals who are subject to mandatory reporting obligations.

Clause 38 of the Bill establishes the duty to report suspected need for care and protection, requires onward transmission of reports within twenty-four hours in specified circumstances, and creates offences for failure to report or knowingly providing false or misleading information.

Clause 39 of the Bill requires registered residential care establishments to comply with the protections under the Act and to provide appropriate education and training for staff caring for older persons.

Clause 40 of the Bill provides additional rights for older persons residing in residential care establishments, including appointing representation, visitation, personal possessions, privacy, community participation, access to a private physician and notice of transfer or discharge.

Clause 41 of the Bill creates an offence where a manager or employee of a residential care establishment abuses, neglects or exposes an older person to abuse or neglect and provides for penalties.

Part VI of the Bill (clauses 42 – 57) provides for social support, assistance and protection, including digital access to services, productive ageing, community and home-based services, caregiver support, legal assistance and assistive technologies.

Clause 42 of the Bill permits the establishment and maintenance of a digital portal to facilitate applications for social assistance and other services and requires digital solutions for the integration of information concerning older persons within the Ministry responsible for social services.

Clause 43 of the Bill requires the Minister, in providing social support, to promote education and awareness, productive ageing and wider community participation in supporting older persons.

Clause 44 of the Bill requires public education and community awareness on abuse prevention and reporting, financial literacy, legal safeguards, online safety, dementia risk reduction and other measures supporting the health, safety and respect of older persons.

Clause 45 of the Bill requires the Minister to promote productive ageing through employment opportunities, flexible work arrangements, lifelong learning, digital literacy, mentoring, volunteerism and other initiatives supporting active participation by older persons.

Clause 46 of the Bill establishes a process for older persons in need to apply for financial, social and other assistance and provides for assessment and determination of eligibility.

Clause 47 of the Bill requires the Minister to promote and facilitate older persons day-care services through financial support, incentives, training, regulatory assistance, public-private partnerships and prescribed standards.

Clause 48 of the Bill requires the Minister to coordinate with the Minister responsible for health to facilitate community nursing services for older persons in need.

Clause 49 of the Bill provides for the facilitation of home-based services intended to maintain independence, reduce unnecessary hospital visits and support appropriate standards of care.

Clause 50 of the Bill provides for caregiver support and development, including training to strengthen the safe and appropriate care of older persons.

Clause 51 of the Bill requires the designation of a liaison officer to assist older persons in accessing and coordinating health, social and other public services, including inter-island services where necessary.

Clause 52 of the Bill requires the promotion of priority access initiatives for older persons in business establishments and public transportation and facilitates transportation services responsive to their needs.

Clause 53 of the Bill requires reasonable measures to enhance the safety of older persons when conducting business, including appropriate signage, pedestrian crossings and outdoor lighting.

Clause 54 of the Bill provides for community-based fund raising initiatives to support programmes and services for older persons, including the establishment of a foundation, and provides for transparency, accountability and public financial support.

Clause 55 of the Bill requires the Minister to facilitate independent access to legal assistance for older persons, including assistance with wills, powers of attorney, advance directives and other matters affecting their care, property and personal affairs.

Clause 56 of the Bill provides for the promotion and integration of assistive technologies to enhance the safety, health, independence, dignity and quality of life of older persons, subject to safeguards for consent, privacy and human rights.

Clause 57 of the Bill provides for measures to reduce financial barriers to assistive devices and technologies through subsidies, means-tested assistance, grants, vouchers and cooperation with regional and international partners.

Part VII of the Bill (clauses 58 – 62) provides for complaints and oversight mechanisms relating to the rights, care and protection of older persons.

Clause 58 of the Bill permits complaints, anonymous reports and disclosures concerning professional misconduct, rights violations or abuse of older persons through the National Hotline, law enforcement authorities or the Department of Social Services, and protects the confidentiality of information received through the Hotline.

Clause 59 of the Bill establishes procedures for the assessment, referral and investigation of complaints and authorises necessary protective action where an older person may be in need of care and protection.

Clause 60 of the Bill continues the National Council on Older Persons as the advisory body for matters affecting older persons and gives effect to the provisions of the Schedule concerning the Council.

Clause 61 of the Bill provides for the appointment of suitably qualified social workers as protection officers and confers powers necessary to carry out protective and oversight functions under the Act.

Clause 62 of the Bill requires the Department to maintain complaint records and submit annual statistical reports to the Council and Minister, including disaggregated data to support policy development, resource allocation and programme evaluation.

Part VIII of the Bill (clauses 63 – 68) establishes court-based and emergency interventions for the care and protection of older persons.

Clause 63 of the Bill defines the term "relevant authority" for the purposes of this Part.

Clause 64 of the Bill provides for applications to the court for general or emergency care and protection orders and sets out considerations intended to promote the safety, self-reliance, participation and support of the older person.

Clause 65 of the Bill provides for general care and protection orders where the court is satisfied that the older person is in need of care and services to support his health, independence and quality of life.

Clause 66 of the Bill provides for emergency care and protection orders where the court is satisfied that the older person is at risk of harm or is facing potential danger and is in need of immediate care and protection.

Clause 67 of the Bill permits the emergency removal of an older person to a place of safety with appropriate consent where delay may jeopardise the person's safety or welfare, subject to family notification and prompt application to the court.

Clause 68 of the Bill provides for court-authorised removal of an older person to a place of safety without consent where necessary to prevent significant harm or provide care and protection, and establishes safeguards governing placement.

Clause 69 of the Bill prohibits unauthorised removal, concealment, inducement, harbouring or obstruction involving an older person placed in a place of safety and establishes penalties for such conduct.

Part IX of the Bill (clauses 70 – 77) provides for miscellaneous administrative, enforcement and regulatory matters necessary for implementation of the Act.

Clause 70 of the Bill provides for voluntary registration of skilled older persons who wish to pursue post-retirement employment and other opportunities to contribute their expertise.

Clause 71 of the Bill provides for the recovery of economic loss or sums due to another person in circumstances provided for under the Act.

Clause 72 of the Bill creates an offence for obstructing, delaying or otherwise impeding an authorised person in the lawful discharge of duties or exercise of powers under the Act.

Clause 73 of the Bill protects the identity of persons who make notifications concerning older persons by restricting compulsory disclosure of identifying information in proceedings.

Clause 74 of the Bill restricts publication or broadcast of information that may identify an older person who is subject to protective intervention, a place of safety, or a person responsible for the older person's care.

Clause 75 of the Bill provides that the Act binds the Crown.

Clause 76 of the Bill establishes a general penalty for offences or contraventions under the Act where no specific penalty is otherwise prescribed.

Clause 77 of the Bill empowers the Minister to make regulations concerning the welfare, dignity and protection of older persons and other matters necessary to give effect to the Act.

The *Schedule* provides for the composition, tenure, functions, meetings and procedures, reporting obligations and remuneration of the National Council on Older Persons.