Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) & Coordinated Community Response (CCR):
A Toolkit to Support Communities Across Tennessee

Prepared by:
State Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to Protect Older and Vulnerable Adults Across Tennessee
2021

Committee Agencies

Tennessee Department of Human Services
Tennessee Department of Health
Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Tennessee Finance and Administration - Office of Criminal Justice Programs
Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability
Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance
Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions
Disability Rights Tennessee
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities
Tennessee Public Utility Commission
Tennessee Bureau of Investigation
Office of the Attorney General
District Attorney Conference
Tennessee Housing and Development Agency
TennCare
Tennessee Department of Transportation
Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disability
Chiefs of Police
Administrative Office of the Courts

The State CCR is comprised of approximately 20 state and local agencies that meet monthly to improve the investigation, response and delivery of services to older and vulnerable adults.

The State CCR addresses gaps in the system and communicates with local communities to develop innovative and efficient approaches to streamline the effectives of services in order to better protect older and vulnerable adults across the state.

For more information about the State CCR, please feel free to contact Patti Tosti, APS Director of Interagency Collaboration and Research at patti.tosti@tn.gov or 901.229.0836

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Purpose

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist communities across Tennessee develop or improve their meetings focused on abuse of older adults and people with disabilities. In addition, a list of resources and services will be provided because the needs of this population are complex and usually involves a number of providers. One agency, alone, cannot address all the issues associated with abuse or neglect of an older or vulnerable adult. A variety of agencies must come together and work jointly in order to best protect this potentially vulnerable population.

It is not only good for the older or vulnerable adult to work in coordination, but it is also beneficial for providers. It can result in a more client-centered approach and save time and money. The opposite is also true. An uncoordinated system can be challenging and result in less optimal outcomes for victims. It can also result in:

- Duplication of interviews and services
- A bureaucratized "one-size-fits-all" adversarial investigation
- Lack of communication between systems
- Conflicting recommendations
- Inadequate and fragmented service delivery that fails to address the underlying problems
- Responding to the presenting problem without exploring other possible victimizations [i]

In Tennessee, there is a State CCR team meets monthly and coordinated with many state-level agencies to address system issues and support the efforts at the localized, community level. Because of the increase in the older adult population and reports made, the State CCR team understands the importance for professionals to meet on a regular basis to improve communication, coordination, and understanding of the issues to increase safety to the individual. In addition to the State CCR team, there are many other meetings held in Tennessee that are designed to review cases, provide services and coordinate efforts to better protect older and vulnerable adults.

The State CCR team created this toolkit to support communities that do not currently have meetings or assist already established teams review their practices. It can be a resource and technical assistance tool which will provide information regarding recommended team members, sample agendas, confidentiality forms and a list of current resources in West, Middle, East and Southeast Tennessee. In addition, there is information for local communities to access support when risk factors are unable to be reduced or resolved at the local level.

Tennessee has invested much time and effort over the years by developing statutes, policies and protocols to enhance the investigation and protection of older and vulnerable adults. The

hope is that this toolkit aids in coordinating these aspects to reduce duplication, provide valuable information, support communities and most importantly, better protect vulnerable Tennesseans.

Types of Meetings and Members

When working collaboratively and with a variety of agencies/professionals, there are various meetings that are held. Three main meeting types to consider are a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), a Coordinated Community Response (a CCR) and a Vulnerable Adult Protective Investigative Team (VAPIT). These three, along with a Hybrid, are described in further detail below, along with recommended team members.

- A *Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)* reviews case specific situations. Examples of an MDT include Financial Abuse Specialized Teams (FAST), Sexual Assault Review Teams (SART), Elder Fatality Review Teams, Hospital-Based Teams, Mental Illness Teams, Hoarding Teams, etc. An MDT usually includes representatives from Adult Protectives Services, Law Enforcement, District Attorney, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Aging Services Personnel, Domestic Violence Shelters, Community Based Programs such as a food bank, utility and transportation providers, Health Care workers including a geriatrician or physician, Psychologists or Neuropsychologists, Forensic Accountants and Victim witness advocates/providers.

- A *Coordinated Community Response (CCR)* addresses over-arching systemic issues. A CCR team shares a broad vision of community responsibility for enhancing safety to victims. A CCR holds its members accountable, identifies gaps and coordinates member efforts to create a victim-centered approach. CCR meetings should include any of the aforementioned members from an MDT as well as local assisted living facilities, nursing homes, local hospitals, local home health organizations, and policy makers.

- A *Vulnerable Adult Protective Investigative Team (*VAPIT) is specific to Tennessee. VAPITs were created in a law that was enacted in January 2017 and requires each District Attorney's Office across Tennessee to review all abuse, neglect and financial exploitation cases referred by Adult Protective Services (APS). Although VAPIT meetings are also an MDT, the focus is on cases related to abuse, neglect and exploitation rather than self-neglect where there is no perpetrator. A VAPIT Toolkit has also been developed by the State CCR Team and can be accessed on the APS website located here https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/adults/adult-protective-services.html.

- A *Hybrid MDT/CCR/VAPIT* is a mixture of reviewing cases and addressing systemic issues. A discussion of a case situation can become an opportunity to address a systemic or pervasive issue. Many communities may choose this approach to save time and reduce duplicative meetings. A Hybrid Meeting could be set up two ways – there could be one big meeting with all team members to address the case specific situations and

tackle ongoing challenges or schedule back to back meetings on the same day/location to allow some members to be part of their segment of the meeting. A hybrid meeting can be an efficient process especially when resources and time are limited.

Each community should decide the best course of action, depending on the needs, focus and interest. Per Vander Vegt & Bunderson (2005)[ii], there may be a time when it is important to limit membership. If the size of your meeting becomes too large or if the intention of the member is self-serving (such as an attorney recruiting clients), it is important to consider the characteristics needed for a well-functioning team.

Meeting Process and Agenda

Once you have your team formed, there should be a lead assigned to help organize, schedule and remind members of the meeting dates/times. When scheduling a meeting, it is also important for members to understand the purpose of the meeting, how often it will occur and what will be discussed. One way to do this is to send out an agenda in advance of the meeting. An example of a meeting agenda is below:

I. Introductions
II. Ground Rules for Collaboration and/or Ethical Considerations to be reviewed
III. Objectives of the Meeting
IV. Prior Meeting Follow Up
V. Specific topics to be covered (for instance, if it is an MDT, case specific situations or if a CCR, generic topics)
   a. If you can, assign individuals/agencies to address areas of focus
VI. Action Plan for the next meeting
VII. Adjourn

In addition to an agenda, meeting notes are also recommended. Meetings have a purpose and in order for them to be valuable, they have to offer more than just people coming together. Being consistent, honoring time and following through with suggestions are important characteristics with establishing a strong foundation. Each member can have very different personalities, ideas and agency needs and developing a strong foundation is necessary for the meetings to sustain through the years.
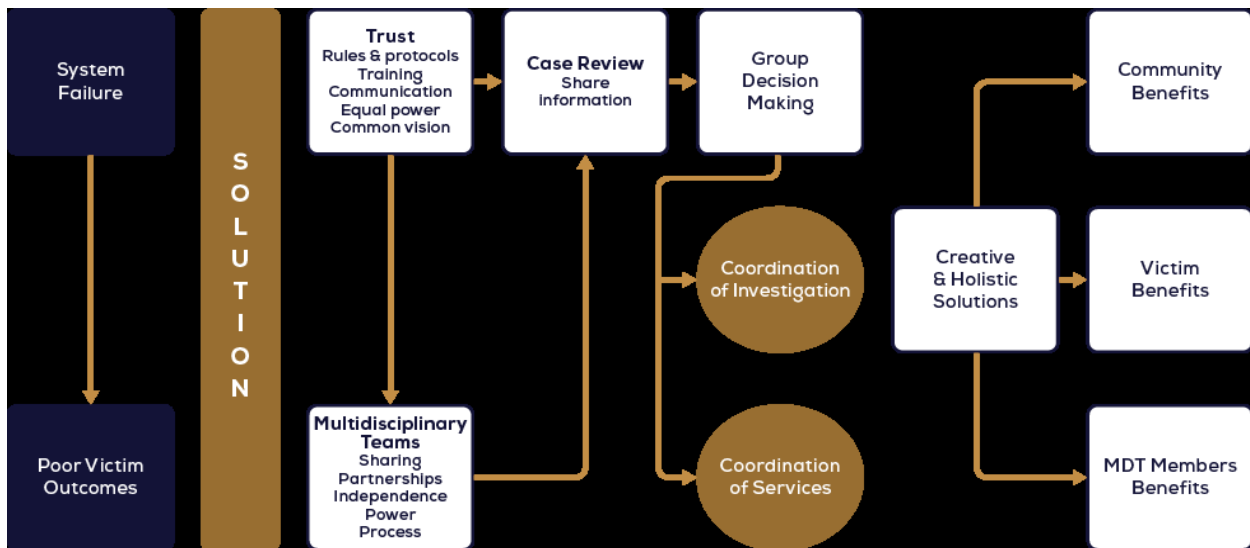
Creating a system for sharing information, showing respect and having the team decide an avenue for ongoing communication is also important; however, the work is truly in the consistency because that builds trust. Trust is how relationships are built, how differences can be overcome and how the team can truly work in coordination. And, trust takes time. And, it is

especially important the first year the team meets. Here are some recommendations to consider for the first year:

- Schedule meetings on a consistent basis, such as once a month, for one year.
- Provide brief meeting notes to all members.
- Follow up with what was discussed.
- Allow time for introductions and connection between members. Make sure to introduce new members and make them feel welcome.
- Have agencies write up a paragraph about their role and responsibility to the team as well as what they hope to get from the meetings.
- Realize team members change and stay the course through it.
- Be flexible and adjust to the current needs and climate of the team

This is not an exhaustive list and some of the suggestions may seem trivial. The value for the first year is to create a culture of trust and understanding that will endure for future years as team members come and go. The purpose of people coming together is to improve outcomes for clients and processes for professionals and a strong structure and purpose will prevail through the changes.

A description of the process– to avoid system failure and poor victim outcomes – is referenced via the Department of Justice Elder Abuse MDT Logic Model located below[iii]:

System Failure

Poor Victim Outcomes

SOLUTION

Trust
Rules & protocols
Training
Communication
Equal power
Common vision

Multidisciplinary Teams
Sharing
Partnerships
Independence
Power
Process

Case Review
Share Information

Group Decision Making

Coordination of Investigation

Coordination of Services

Creative & Holistic Solutions

Community Benefits

Victim Benefits

MDT Members Benefits

Confidentiality

The statute in Tennessee regarding Confidentiality (T.C.A. 71-6-118) states that all records and documents, and information contained therein, concerning adults receiving protective services and reports and resulting investigations of abuse/neglect/exploitation of a vulnerable adult are

confidential. Release of confidential information from APS records should follow the principle that only the amount of information necessary to obtain services or other assistance for the adult or to obtain information necessary for the investigation of A/N/E (Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation) allegations and for the provision of protective services should not be released. Release of all, or substantial portions of a record, are not appropriate except in circumstances where it is absolutely necessary to do so and with approval from TDHS (Tennessee Department of Human Services) Office of General Counsel.

When reviewing case specific situations, it is important to consider the issue of confidentiality. It is best practice to not use any personally identifying information about the client when discussing the needs or problems unless a Release of Information is signed by the adult allowing the specifics of what should be shared. Each agency has different policies and statutes they need to follow and this is the responsibility of each agency to determine this. For instance, agencies who receive a Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women Act funding are prohibited from sharing specific information, but a district attorney does not have these constraints. Because confidentiality applies differently to the various team members/agencies within a team meeting, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Never use a client's name in a group setting.
- Use initials and/or a case number so that certain members that are working on the case are able to connect the recommendations.
- Each member/attended sign a Confidentiality Form before each meeting as a reminder of the impact. Examples are located under Appendix A. Each team should determine what confidentiality form is acceptable for you team and these are not exclusive.
- Agencies should be aware of best practices for Release of Information forms. The National Network to End Domestic Violence Fund provides an overview that can be accessed at this link:
  https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/finance/ocjp/nnedv_releases_ataglance.pdf

Victims of Crime are protected for additional trauma by requiring advocates and supportive service agencies to strictly adhere to confidentiality standards. Those social service agencies that are working with crime victims must remember that victims have a right to privacy, a right to choose how, when and to whom their information will be shared and have a right to revoke their signed release of information at anytime.

Nondisclosure of confidential or private information:

a.   **In general**: In order to ensure the safety of victims and their families, service providers shall protect the confidentiality and privacy of persons receiving services.

b.   **Nondisclosure**: Subject to subparagraphs (c) and (d) below, service providers shall not:

- disclose, reveal, or release any personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied through the provider's programs, regardless of whether the information has been encoded, encrypted, hashed, or otherwise protected; or

- disclose, reveal, or release individual client information **without the informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person** (or in the case of an unemancipated minor, the minor and the parent or guardian or in the case of legal incapacity, a court-appointed guardian) about whom information is sought, except that consent for release may not be given by the abuser of the minor, incapacitated person, or the abuser of the other parent of the minor.

c.   **Release**: If release of information described in subparagraph (B) is compelled by statutory or court mandate:

- service providers shall make reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of information; and

- service providers shall take steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of the information.

d.   **In no circumstances may-** An adult, youth, or child victim of crime be required to provide a consent to release his or her personally identifying information as a condition of eligibility for the services provided by the service provider.

Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Team Meetings and Local Resources

There are a myriad of meetings focused on older and vulnerable adults across the state including, but not limited to, those that are led by Adult Protective Services (APS), the TN Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD) and the District Attorney General's Office (DAG). Although these meetings are held regionally, each location decides when and if these meetings occur. The general purpose of these meetings are described below.

> *TN Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD):* TCAD has nine Area Agencies on Aging and Disability (AAAD) located across the state. Each AAAD has a Coordinated Response to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse (CREVAA) program that typically assists in a multi-disciplinary team. In addition, CREVAA coordinates resources to ensure the provision of emergency services, referrals for long-term and other services on behalf of elder and vulnerable adult victims of crime in Tennessee.

> *Adult Protective Services (APS):* The purpose of the APS Multidisciplinary Case Consultation Team (or M-Team) is to provide suggestions, recommendations and problem solving for those customers who have been determined to be in need of protection. (TCA 71-6-101(b)(2). The M-Team consists of internal and external

professionals to assist the APS Investigative Specialist with reducing risk and/or locating resources to meet the customer's needs.

District Attorney General's Office (DAG): On January 1, 2017, the DAG of each judicial district in Tennessee was to establish the Vulnerable Adult Protective Investigative Team or VAPIT Team meeting (TCA 71-6-125). The purpose of a VAPIT team was to coordinate the investigation of suspected instances of abuse, neglect or exploitation of an adult and receive/review the information by the 1215 notification form received from Adult Protective Services.

The State CCR Team is now meeting with local/regional communities across the state on a quarterly basis and is coordinating them with their local Area Agency on Aging and Disability. The 4 APS Regions (West - blue, Middle - red , Upper East – green, and Upper Cumberland/Southeast - yellow) and 9 AAAD's which are all color coded below. If you are interested in attending any of the meetings, feel free to reach out to Patti Tosti, APS Director of Interagency Collaboration and Research at patti.tosti@tn.gov.
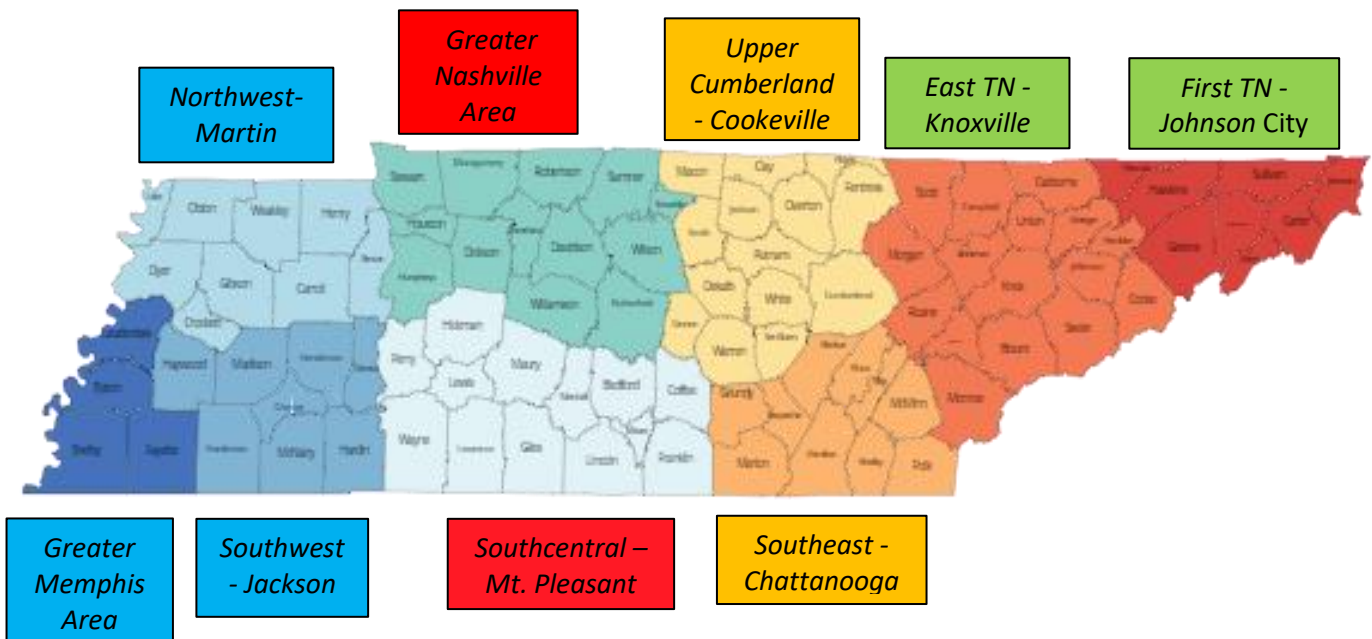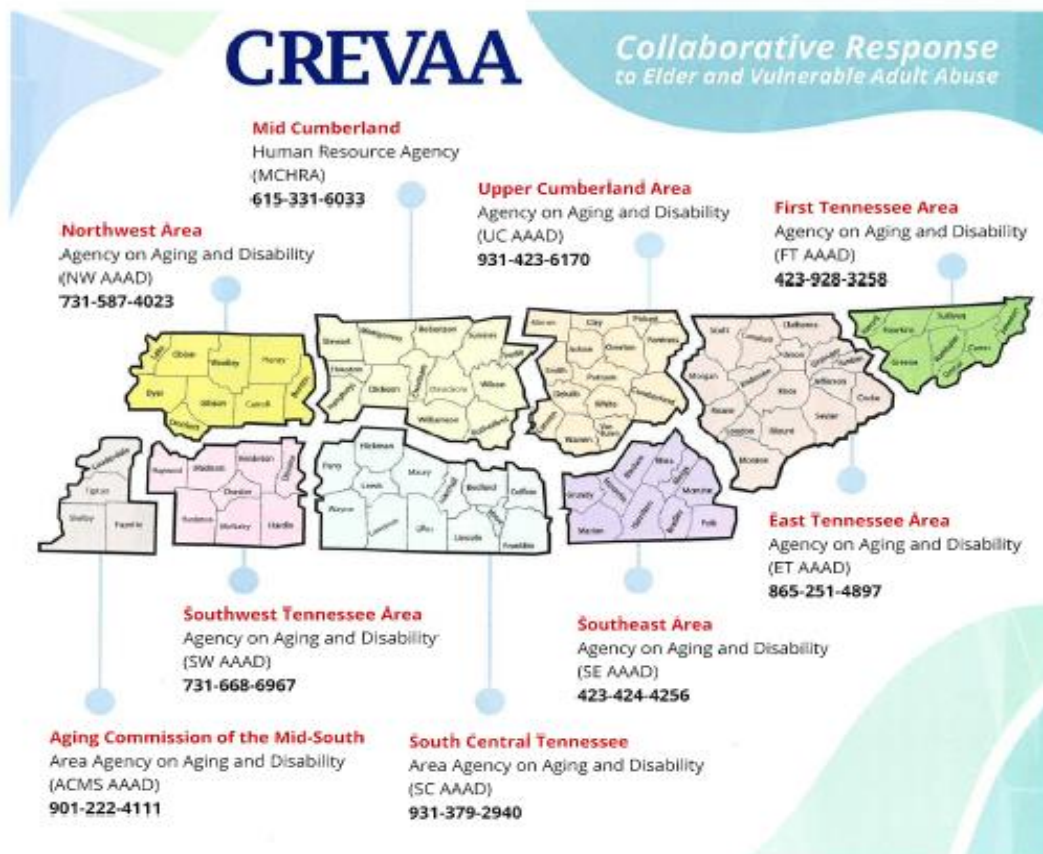

"Working in isolation from others in the community who respond to elder abuse can lead to "inconsistent, overlapping and inappropriate responses and services for victims and interventions for perpetrators"[iv]

Services for Older and Vulnerable Adult Population

Although APS does not provide services directly to clients, APS can make a referral to the Coordinated Response to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse (CREVAA) program on behalf of the client, with their permission. This service is only available to alleged victims of crime since the funding is through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA); however, a police report is not required for services. It is notable that these services do not include clients who are self-neglecting, or those where there is not a crime or perpetrator involved. However, a CREVAA Advocate is able to assist a client if there was a past crime that is still impacting the client. Often a current trauma can trigger unaddressed or resolved prior traumas from previous victimizations and any services needed to address those would also be covered.

A CREVAA Advocate provides support, assessment and referrals for community services to meet the needs of the client. The CREVAA Advocate works with the client to assist them in understanding their rights as a victim and can assist the person with crisis support and counseling, homemaker services, transportation, food, shelter, etc. CREVAA is administered through the 9 Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities across the state who assign a CREVAA Advocate to support the individual. A list CREVAA locations and contact information is listed below:

CREVAA Collaborative Response to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse

Mid Cumberland
Human Resource Agency (MCHRA)
615-331-6033

Upper Cumberland Area
Agency on Aging and Disability (UC AAAD)
931-423-6170

First Tennessee Area
Agency on Aging and Disability (FT AAAD)
423-928-3258

Northwest Area
Agency on Aging and Disability (NW AAAD)
731-587-4023

East Tennessee Area
Agency on Aging and Disability (ET AAAD)
865-251-4897

Southwest Tennessee Area
Agency on Aging and Disability (SW AAAD)
731-668-6967

Southeast Area
Agency on Aging and Disability (SE AAAD)
423-424-4256

Aging Commission of the Mid-South
Area Agency on Aging and Disability (ACMS AAAD)
901-222-4111

South Central Tennessee
Area Agency on Aging and Disability (SC AAAD)
931-379-2940

Services are very much needed for the older and vulnerable adult population and although there are services available, an MDT or other meeting can assist the client in receiving needed services.

Addressing Challenging Situations

Even with an established MDT, CCR or VAPIT team, there may still be concerns that are not able to be addressed at the local level. In situations such as these, a situation can be referred to the State CCR, a team that has been meeting on a monthly basis since 2016. The State CCR team has four focus areas or teams that address

- Financial Exploitation
- Investigations/Abuse Registry Placements
- Coordinated Services, and
- Unlicensed Facilities.

These four teams were developed to address systemwide gaps in care, although any situation can be referred to the State CCR for further review and support. A State CCR model was developed to show the relationships between various local teams around the state, along with the goal for each team.
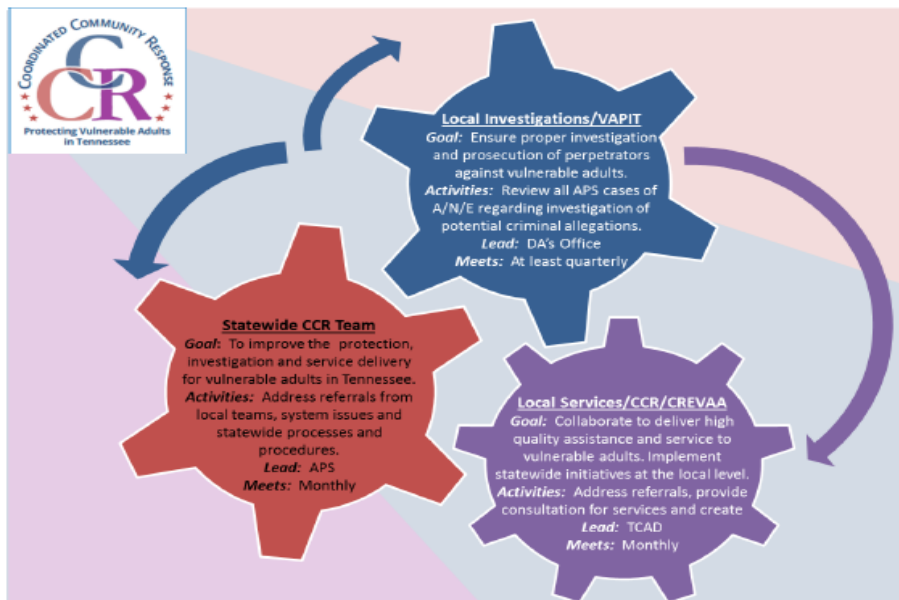
These three cogs in the wheel currently exist: Two of them are at the local level (Local Investigations and Local Services) and the State CCR Team. The Services part of the model includes an MDT or CCR where either cases are reviewed or systems impact are being

addressed. The Investigations cog ensures a proper prosecution related to victims of crime. These three areas of the cog should address any issue related to an older or vulnerable adult.

How can your Local Services or Investigations Team receive support from the State CCR Team? If there are gaps in care that cannot be resolved, concerns of safety for an older or vulnerable adult, or other issue discussed at the local level that prevents the best quality care that the client deserves, please send an email to the State CCR Lead (currently Patti.Tosti@tn.gov). In the email, share what the issue is and what the local team hopes can resolve it. The only request that we have is for to try and resolve the issue at the local level first with either your MDT, CCR, VAPIT or Hybrid Team. If you don't have access to a meeting, the State CCR can connect you, or a meeting does not exist, the State CCR can support your community in developing one.

This model is a combination of three cogs on a wheel that, when processed consistently, will produce a standardized and efficient way of communicating and relating with one another. It is important that the model be flexible enough to meet local needs and systematic enough to ensure important issues are not missed. We hope this model creates greater accountability and increased collaboration, both of which will improve the protection of our most vulnerable adults.

Resources and Training

Having meetings with varied professionals is not only helpful, but a necessary component is for each team member to have or gain the knowledge and expertise regarding the protection of older and vulnerable adults. Below is a starter list of websites and relevant state laws for new professionals in this field to be aware of.

- The National Adult Protective Services Association website and Code of Ethics: https://www.napsa-now.org/about-napsa/code-of-ethics/
- TN Adult Protective Services website with videos: https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/adults/adult-protective-services.html
- Adult Protection Act (TCA.71-6-101) is to protect adults from "abuse, neglect or exploitation by requiring reporting of suspected cases by any person having cause to believe that such cases exist. It is intended that, as are result of such reports, the protective services of the state shall prevent further abuse, neglect or exploitation." https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/human-services/documents/APS_Policy_Manual_11.1.15.pdf

These websites can provide some initial understanding of a clients right to self-determination and what APS does in the state of Tennessee. There are many free resources and online trainings specific to law enforcement, prosecutors and victim advocates which are located here:

- National Center on Elder Abuse Training Videos: https://ncea.acl.gov/What-We-Do/Education/Videos.aspx

- US DOJ Office of Justice Programs Training Resources and Tools
  https://www.ojp.gov/feature/elder-abuse/training
- Training for Victim Specialists https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/victim-specialists-0
- Training for MDT's https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt
- Prosecutor Training and Resources https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/prosecutor-training-resources
- Law Enforcement Training and Resources https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/law-enforcement-1
- Dept of Justice MDT Guide and Toolkit - https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt-toolkit
- National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life Social Service Resources
  https://www.ncall.us/

Evaluation

There are several documents available to evaluate the progress of your CCR and MDT. In 2011, the National Clearinghouse for Abuse in Later Life developed a series of self-assessment workbooks for five key interveners – domestic violence and sexual assault victim services, adult protective services, law enforcement, prosecution, and courts. In addition to these five, there is also a workbook that addresses a coordinated community response (CCR). There can be located on this website: https://vawnet.org/material/response-elder-abuse-self-assessment-workbooks

At the 2019 National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) conference, the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California and the University of Denver provided information to consider when evaluating an MDT. "The reason to evaluate an MDT is to

- Tell a story
- Justify collaboration across organizations
- Improve effectiveness and functioning
- Often needed for funding and sustainability and
- Offers guidance throughout the development of an MDT including:
  - Needs Assessment (why it is needed)
  - Formative Evaluation (how it is developed)
  - Process Evaluation (how it was done)
  - Outcome Evaluation (what is the impact)
  - Implementation Evaluation (how others may do this)" [v](Gassoumis, Hasche, Deprince)

There are different kinds of evaluation and different aspects that show impact such as: the functioning of the MDT, MDT team performance, MDT satisfaction, Client satisfaction, and

Board survey (if applicable). For more information related to survey topics, review pages 53-33 of the report found here https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt-toolkit.

Final Thoughts

This document is meant to initiate an understanding what is available nationally, statewide and locally to assist those who are working with older and vulnerable adults. This is not an exhaustive list of programs and services. It is a general overview to get started and to coordinate with others locally and across the state of Tennessee.

If there is incorrect information listed or information that has changed, please inform Patti.Tosti@tn.gov and the document will be updated. It is expected that these resources will change over time and communities will increase their understanding and coordination, so be on the lookout in the coming years for updates and additional information to be added.

Appendix A: Confidentiality Form

Sample Release of Information Form

[i] https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/mdt-toolkit
[ii] The Role of Context in Work Team Diversity Research: A Meta-Analytic Review on JSTOR

[iii] https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/file/938921/download page 51

[iv] Brandl, C. Bitondo Dyer, C. Heisler, J. Marlatt Otto, L. Stiegel & R. Thomas, *Elder abuse detection and intervention: A collaborative approach,* 2007
[v] A randomized-control trial testing the impact of a multidisciplinary team response to older adult maltreatment - PubMed (nih.gov)