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Best Practices for Vulnerable Adult Investigation Policies and Procedures at Blue Earth County

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Best Practices for Vulnerable Adult Investigation Policies and Procedures at Blue Earth County

By: Anna Stindt

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to update the policies and procedures for conducting vulnerable adult investigations in Blue Earth County to reflect changes in the statute and to incorporate current best practices for conducting investigations.

Problem

The policies and procedures in BEC were last updated in 2003. The policy does not reflect the current practice of adult protection investigations that the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) recommends.

Definition of Vulnerable Adult

Vulnerable Adult means any person 18 years of age or older who: (1) a resident or inpatient in a facility; (2) receives services at or from a licensed facility required to serve adults; (3) receives services from a licensed home care provider; (4) regardless of residence or whether any type of services is received, (4a) poses a physical or mental infirmity or other physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction that impairs the individual's ability to provide adequately for the individual's own care without assistance, including the provision of food, shelter, clothing, health care, or supervision and (4b) because of the dysfunction or infirmity and the need for assistance, the individual has an impaired ability to protect the individual from maltreatment

Methodology

The methodology used to complete the revisions to the policy and procedures are:

- Consultation with supervisor and another adult protection social service worker at Blue Earth County
- Literature Review of articles related to policy change in adult protection
 - Consultation with Department of Human Services Adult Protection Unit: Deb Siebenaler and Jennifer Kirchen
 - Review of current Adult Protection Policy and Procedures at Blue Earth County and guidelines from Department of Human Services

Literature Review

- The literature review examined 15 different articles relating to:
- 1) Problems with the Adult Protection System
 - 2) Best Practice for Conducting Vulnerable Adult Investigations
 - 3) Model Policies and Protocol for respond to reports of vulnerable adult abuse

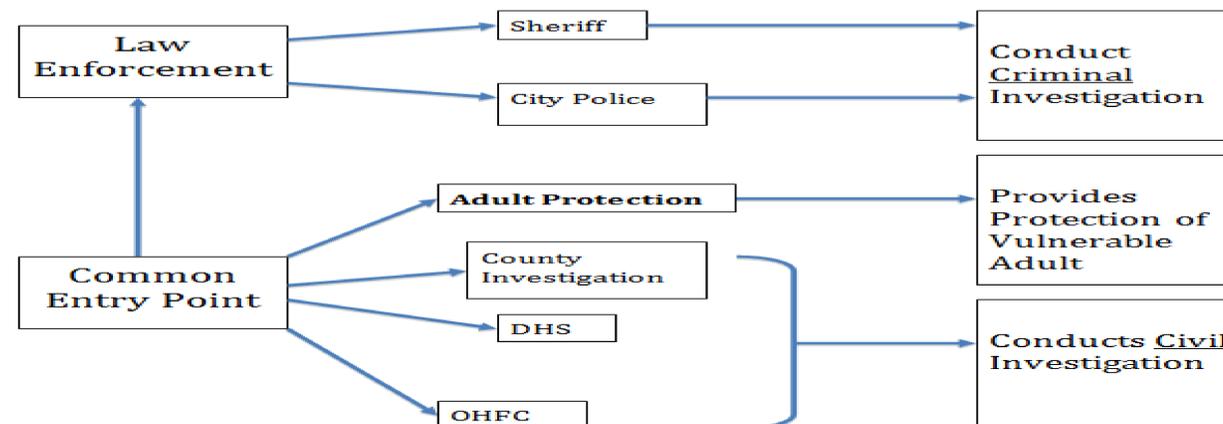


Minnesota Department of Human Services

Minnesota Statute 626.557 (Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adult)
 Minnesota Rule 95555.7100-9555.7700 (Vulnerable Adult Protective Services- Rule 221)

Literature Review	Application to Blue Earth County Policy and Procedures	Application to DHS Policy and Procedures	Application to State Policy
Cambridge & Parkes (2004) – examines decision making in adult protection based on arrangements in a local social services department.	Approach to decision making at Blue Earth County impacts the revision of the procedures. Blue Earth County uses Hierarchy model to make decisions.	DHS makes decision based off hierarchy model and provides guidelines to follow the policy implemented by the state.	The state legislation provides the vulnerable adult policy to the state.
Cambridge & Parkes (2006)- one of eight articles recommended that implementation of government policy of vulnerable adults has set expectations for the development of multi-agency policy and procedures	Blue Earth County collaborates with the local law enforcement or Sheriff's department when the investigation requires a criminal investigation. Currently, there is not multi-agency investigations. The vulnerable adult report is investigated by one lead agency.	DHS would need to amend the state policy to reflect the use of multi-agencies to investigate vulnerable adult reports.	In order to incorporate this at a county level in Minnesota, there would need to be the requirement from the State to perform multi-agency adult protection investigations.
Galpin & Parker (2007) – address the lack of knowledge of what constitutes abuse for people with mental health diagnosis. The policy allows for individual interpretation of abuse. Recommendations were made to policy makers to shape policies based on a variety of groups that maybe identified as vulnerable adults.	Current Blue Earth County practices are to follow the state policy of definition of vulnerable adult. The adult protection worker incorporates their knowledge of the incident to determine if the maltreatment meets criteria for vulnerable adult investigation.	DHS would provide guidelines on how to investigate different groups of people that identify as vulnerable adults.	The Vulnerable Adult Definition would need to be changed in order to clearly define a vulnerable adult who has a mental health diagnosis or shape the policy to reflect a variety of groups that identify as vulnerable adults.
Cambridge & Parkes (2004) –case management in adult protection can vary widely within agencies and worker roles. Collins and Walford, 2008- discussion about the importance of aftercare after the completion of a vulnerable adult investigation. Continuing case management can assist in the decreasing the rate of reoccurring vulnerable adult reports.	This is an area Blue Earth County evaluated with the procedures and policy changes. This will be an ongoing area to evaluate through economic times of the state.	DHS does not provide any guidelines on prioritizing for each county. DHS allows for each county to prioritize reports as needed and allow for aftercare as needed within the county.	Current statute states that each lead agency shall develop guidelines for prioritizing reports for investigation. This is an area Blue Earth County looked at with revision and developed guidelines. In order to be consistent throughout the state, there would need to be legislation change to address the prioritizing and case management.
Mansell, Beadle-Brown, Cambridge, Milne, and Whelton (2009) – study focuses on the incidence of adult protection referrals. This study was able to be done due to computer databases used in England. There findings illustrate the high levels of reports based off age groups and types of abuse.	The use of electronic databases impacting the records of abuse among vulnerable adults. Blue Earth County is currently using a state wide system to record all vulnerable adult investigations. This systems has shaped our procedures at Blue Earth County.	State wide system used in Minnesota allows for DHS to see the numbers of vulnerable adult investigations in Minnesota.	This state wide information can help influence policy change at the state level.

The articles highlighted in the literature review chart were the articles that had applicable information to the policy and procedure changes at Blue Earth County.



The flow chart illustrates the process of when a vulnerable adult report is received.

Key Areas Revised

The key areas revised to the Adult Protection Policies and Procedures are:

- Incorporation of SSIS computer system used for documenting Adult Protection Investigations
- Clarification of Self Neglect and Caregiver Neglect Policy
- Modifications to the procedures of investigations based off current practice methods and SSIS computer system.
- Established county policy guidelines for prioritizing investigations

Next Steps

The Policies and Procedures of Blue Earth County are not complete due to pending legislative changes. Currently, Blue Earth County is waiting on a Bulletin from the Department of Human Services to illustrate some of the recent changes in legislation for vulnerable adult investigations. The policies and procedures that were revised are a draft form, as the county maybe going through some changes due to budget. The State will dictate those changes in the upcoming years.

Conclusion

Blue Earth County Vulnerable Adult Policies and Procedures made changes to better serve our community and illustrate the guidelines that are practiced. The most significant change was to the Vulnerable Adult Procedures due to incorporation of the SSIS computer system, guidelines for prioritizing, and recommended best practices from the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The literature review help guide the direction of the revisions. The literature reviewed showed best practices for adult protection investigations. The best practices identified are the decision making process in adult protection, multi-agency investigations, aftercare when completed with the investigation, and the use of a computer database to support policy change. The changes to the procedures will benefit the population served by providing best practice guidelines for the adult protection workers to follow. Vulnerable Adult Policies and Procedures will continue to be reviewed as needed for changes that are dictated by the legislation or Department of Human Services.

