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

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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) posses 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 related to:
1) Problems with the Adult Protection System
2) Best Practice for Conducting Vulnerable Adult Investigations
3) Model Policies and Protocol for responding to reports of vulnerable adult abuse

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.

Minnesota Statute 626.557 (Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adult)
Minnesota Rule 9555.7100-9555.7700 (Vulnerable Adult Protective Services- Rule 221)

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 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.