

Law Enforcement:

Building Stronger Cases with Elder Abuse Multidisciplinary Teams



Elder abuse is a complex crime requiring a multidisciplinary response. Elder abuse multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) are often comprised of law enforcement, adult protective services (APS), medical professionals, prosecutors, psychologists, and other specialists who meet on a regular basis to review cases. Law enforcement builds stronger cases when working with professionals on an MDT.

How MDTs can Aid Law Enforcement's Criminal Investigations

Consent

Consent, to give permission for something to happen, plays a role in many crimes, including elder abuse. Examples may include giving someone permission to access your bank account, to have sex with you, or to refuse life-sustaining services. Consent must be given freely to be valid. There are several actions that undermine consent:

- Undue influence
- Coercion
- Misrepresentation
- Fraud
- Diminished decision-making capacity

If any of these conditions is present, consent was not freely given, and a crime may have been committed. Work with your MDT to understand how consent was given.

Decision-Making Capacity

All adults have the right to make their own decisions. Decision-making capacity refers to whether an individual has the ability to adequately make a specific decision, in this context, to consent. Decision-making capacity is complex and situational. For instance, someone who can make medical decisions may struggle to make financial decisions. MDTs often have an expert in decision-making capacity. Work with your MDT to obtain additional information needed to determine whether a crime has been committed.

Dig Deeper

When elder abuse reports come to law enforcement, they are often assumed to be civil offenses. Digging deeper may reveal that crimes have been committed. For example:

- A business dispute may turn out to be a case of fraud.
- A guardian or power of attorney may be financially exploiting an older adult.
- Real estate transactions could be completed without consent.
- A romantic relationship may involve undue influence.

Collaboration

Work with your MDT to obtain additional information needed to understand whether a crime has been committed. When law enforcement and adult protective services (APS) collaborate through an MDT, they may develop:

- stronger working relationships
- more effective communication about cases
- a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities
- more efficient and effective case resolution



FIND A LOCAL MDT

