

Geriatric psychiatrists, medical professionals and neuropsychologists

Diminished capacity and mental health impairment increase the vulnerability of an older adult, which increases the risk of harm and exploitation. At the same time, an older adult's ability to understand the circumstances of their abuse and consider interventions can be impacted by their psychological health. These professionals can support a team's understanding of how the person's psychological health is impacting their behaviors. Interventions to protect an older adult can be put into place once evaluated, based on the extent to which the older adult is able to make decisions regarding their own care. The mental health and capacity assessment will inform a team's design of interventions toward ending exploitation, protecting finances, and possibly involving law enforcement.

Civil Attorneys

Many remedies available through civil law are not available through criminal prosecution. In many instances, civil remedies such as restraining orders, guardianship assistance, estate planning, housing or victim assistance, as well as links to more local-level alternative justice programs align well with the outcomes that older adults seek in situations of abuse. This is particularly so given the nature of complex relationship/family dynamics involving the alleged abuser. Most E-MDT cases do not meet the threshold for criminal prosecution and may require alternatives such as restorative justice programs that can be explored by the team. A civil attorney is best placed to help older adults understand and access these civil remedies.

Forensic accountants

Using a forensic accountant is an important intervention in financial exploitation cases. It aids in the identification of current abuse and the prevention of further abuse. E-MDT based forensic accountants can be involved in civil and criminal matters where a law enforcement agency may not otherwise be able to access forensic accounting services. After review the forensic account can provide a report explaining the flow of funds and assets derived from the documents supplied to them rather than being an investigation where the service provider has to track down financial information from outside sources.

Key Tips for Coordinators

An E-MDT coordinator leads and facilitates team discussions around the type of specialists that will be most helpful to the team, the responsibilities for each, and how to best leverage the specialist's services. For example, a team may already have access to a forensic accountant through another source. The team may focus resources on another specialist such as the geriatric psychiatrist or civil attorney so that the team can provide the most person-centered review of a case. A team might not be able to determine when a specialist is needed on a case so it is best if possible to have specialists attend each meeting to provide their insight on each case, as they may have feedback not considered by other team members based on their specialty.

In preparation for inviting a specialist onto the E-MDT, it is important to engage the team in discussion regarding the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the prospective specialists. These conversations will translate into a more clearly defined proposal for negotiating contracts, MOUs, or other types of agreements. Some areas worth considering are:

- What services would the team want the specialist to provide? What is the need that will be addressed? What services would the specialist provide the older adults served by the E-MDT?
 - What types of cases is the team most commonly reviewing? What are the case characteristics and how would the specialists be most effective in the review process?
 - What value would professionals/team members draw from having a specialist on the team? Would the team's ability to refer more cases for review increase?
 - What is the extent of the need? How much budget is available for the engagement? Should the specialist's time be secured on a retainer basis, a regular basis or an ad-hoc/as needed basis? What could the coordinator do to ensure the specialist's time is being used efficiently?
 - Would the team need a local specialist? If regions where this is not possible, is the involvement of specialists via virtual platforms sufficient?
 - Contractually, what would the scope of work involve? What deliverables are expected of the specialists? What are the timelines for these deliverables?
 - What aspects of confidentiality, ethics, conflicts of interest and professional guidance would need to be considered as a member or consultant on the team?
 - How can the coordinator support the onboarding process of specialists? This may be contingent on how familiar these specialists are with elder abuse cases. At the same time, the coordinator should work with the specialist to see if there is a need to develop unique templates that capture information that would support a specialist's role.
 - Beyond case consultations, it would be helpful to think about how specialists can also conduct training to team members to support capacity building.
 - How will the team assess the impact of the specialists' contributions? Are there evaluative measures that can support future contract extensions, if needed?
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Conclusion

The inclusion of specialists on an E-MDT provides additional depth to a team's review of complex cases of abuse and exploitation. A specialist may assist in providing the best possible outcome for an older adult who is a victim of abuse and exploitation. Admittedly, the availability of these specialists in local communities can vary widely. In situations where they are not available, a coordinator would need to get creative as to how to find a professional whose expertise can be adapted for a specific need in a case. It is critical, then, for coordinators to understand the needs of the cases that come to the E-MDT and leverage their professional relationships with agencies, experts, community service providers and volunteers to ensure that the team has everything they need to appropriately evaluate their cases and seek the best possible solutions for their clients. The specialist can have as much or as little impact as the core team members determine necessary. For more information regarding the unique roles of each specialist, please visit the following resources.

Resources

- [Role and Responsibilities of Geriatric Psychiatrists or Geropsychiatrists](https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/E-MDTs-Geriatric-Psychiatrists-Role-v5-FINAL.pdf)
 - <https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/E-MDTs-Geriatric-Psychiatrists-Role-v5-FINAL.pdf>

- The Forensic Accounting Role
 - https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/E-MDTs-The-Forensic-Accounting-Role-v8_FINAL_05jul2017.pdf
- The Role of Local Prosecutors on Elder Abuse Multidisciplinary Teams
 - https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/v.9_FINAL_The-Role-of-the-Local-Prosecutors_v9_.pdf
- The Role of Civil Attorneys on Elder Abuse Multidisciplinary Teams
 - https://nyceac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FINAL_Civil-Attorneys_v9_3.pdf

National EA MDT TTA Center 10/2023

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Betsy Ferner was previously the Technical Assistance Advisor for the National Center with over ten years of experience working as an LMSW in the field of elder abuse and exploitation. She served older adults as a victim advocate and educator and was the Coordinator for the Central New York E-MDT Hub which included 7 counties. Betsy now provides Technical Assistance with the New York State statewide E-MDT Initiative.

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The creation of this document is made possible by 15POVC-21-GK-01075-NONF, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this product are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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