

Empowering Faith Communities: Joining Forces with Adult Protection Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs)

Many communities have adult protection multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). These teams, comprised of community members and professionals engaged in the field of aging and adult services, work to address issues related to protecting vulnerable adults in their communities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The involvement of the faith community in local adult protection MDTs can be valuable for many reasons.

Early Detection and Reporting

Members of the faith community have regular interactions with vulnerable adults, making them well-placed to notice signs of abuse or neglect. By participating in MDTs, they can contribute to the early detection and reporting of potential issues, which is important for the protection of adults at risk.

Broad Support Network

Faith communities often serve as strong support networks for individuals in need. They can provide emotional, spiritual, and practical support to vulnerable adults who may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Their involvement can expand the safety net for these vulnerable adults.

Cultural Sensitivity

Faith communities traditionally have a deep understanding of the cultural and religious backgrounds of their members. This knowledge can be essential in ensuring interventions and protective services are culturally sensitive and respectful of the individual's beliefs and values.

Community Outreach

Faith-based organizations are deeply rooted in their communities and have the means to reach out to a wide range of individuals. They can assist in raising awareness about adult protection issues, educating their members, and helping to destigmatize discussions around abuse and neglect.

Resources and Services

Many faith communities offer various resources and services, such as counseling, support groups, or referrals to social services. Their involvement in MDTs can facilitate access to these resources for vulnerable adults and their families.

Collaboration and Expertise

By working alongside professionals from different fields, such as social workers, law enforcement, and healthcare providers, faith community representatives can bring their unique perspectives and expertise to the team. This collaborative approach can lead to more comprehensive and effective solutions for the vulnerable adults served by the team.

Prevention and Education

Faith communities can play a role in prevention efforts by providing educational programs and workshops on topics related to adult protection, healthy relationships, and financial literacy. This proactive approach can reduce the risk of abuse and exploitation.

Advocacy and Support

Faith community members can advocate for policy changes and better support systems for vulnerable adults within their faith-based organizations and in the broader community. Their collective voice can contribute to positive changes in the field of adult protection.

Involving the faith community in adult protection MDTs can enhance the team's effectiveness, broaden the reach of support services, and ensure that the unique needs and cultural sensitivities of vulnerable adults are considered and respected. It can foster a more holistic and compassionate approach to cases of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

To find out if your county has an MDT, visit the North Carolina Adult Protection Network website at <https://protectadults.sog.unc.edu/find-your-peers> or contact your local department of social services.