

Vulnerable Adult Justice Project

Profile and Purposes

2010-2011

Background

The Vulnerable Adult Justice Project (VAJP) began in 2007 as a broad stakeholder group committed to reform of MN's Vulnerable Adult Act and related laws. Its initial legislative effort, the product of months of consensus building, resulted in Chapter 119, Laws of Minnesota, 2009. The legislation, which took effect August 1, 2009, tackled the growing problem of financial exploitation, supports community notification when vulnerable adults are missing, and established the model for a streamlined reporting and response system. The group began related efforts that year to raise public awareness of protecting vulnerable adults by wide distribution of information, posters and pocket cards, to improve the detection and reporting of suspected vulnerable adult abuse.

Current Profile

The Vulnerable Adult Justice Project is a collaboration that brings together expertise from the perspectives and professions whose mission includes safeguarding and advocating for vulnerable adults. These include public advocacy organizations (Ombudsman for Long-Term Care, Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Disability Law Center, the federal Protection and Advocacy agency), elder and disability organizations (AARP, Alzheimer's Association, ElderCare Rights Alliance, Mental Health Association, The ARC), Health Care Providers (Care Providers of MN, Aging Services of MN, MN Home Care Association, MN Hospital Association, Volunteers of America-MN), the Metro Area Agency on Aging, MN Association for Guardianship and Conservatorship, Labor unions, City prosecutors, County Adult Protection and prosecutors, the Office of Attorney General, Department of Health and the Department of Human Services, the private bar (attorneys in elder law), and law schools (University of St. Thomas School of Law and William Mitchell College of Law). The VAJP is administratively housed and supported by the Center for Elder Justice and Policy at the William Mitchell College of Law. Students in the Center have opportunities to do supervised legal research on policy issues for the VAJP. The Center's Associate Director, Iris C. Freeman, serves as Coordinator.

Purpose

"Multidisciplinary collaboration" conveys a picture, not a purpose. The shared purpose of the VAJP is to maintain a regular forum where front line, supervisory, and policy specialists in vulnerable adult protection can meet to

- Identify service gaps in the protection of vulnerable adults,
- Identify gaps and flaws in the underlying public policies,
- Identify, weigh, debate, and advocate for proposed solutions,

- Educate public officials about current and emerging issues through presentations and publications,
- Invite public officials to present data, updates on current policy, and proposals for policy change at stakeholder meetings,
- Actively promote changes in Minnesota laws, rules, and policies to protect vulnerable adults and seek redress for victims,
- Identify issues where additional research is necessary and engage Center for Elder Justice and Policy students in the research,
- Foster good working relationships and information about initiatives across jurisdictions and agencies,
- Conduct and cooperate in professional education and public awareness efforts.

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