



# Vulnerable Adult Fatalities in Vermont

## H.46 Testimony

# Goal of Fatality Review Teams



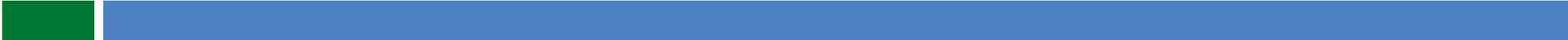
- Identify system gaps and risk factors associated with deaths in a particular population and recommend changes in policy, practices and regulations that improve coordination of services
- Ultimate goal is to decrease the number of preventable deaths

# Roles



- Retrospective reviews after an investigation closes
- Members sign confidentiality clause
- Agencies share information
- The team compiles annual reports each year that is made available to the Governor and the General Assembly.

# Current Fatality Teams in Vermont



- Child Fatality Review Team
- Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team
- Maternal Mortality Review Team
- Elder Justice Working Group
  - Issues surrounding the elderly population
    - Over prescribing of psychotropic drugs in nursing homes
  - Subcommittees formed
    - Financial exploitation of vulnerable adults
    - Fatality review of vulnerable adults

## H.46



(1) The proposed Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team shall develop and implement policies to ensure that the deaths of vulnerable adults in Vermont are analyzed using uniform procedures established by the Team. The Team may review the death of any person who meets the definition of a vulnerable adult in title 6902 and:

- (A) was the subject of an adult protective services investigation; or
- (B) **whose death came under the jurisdiction of, or was investigated by, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner; or**
- (C) whose death was due to abuse or neglect or acts suggesting abuse or neglect.

# Vermont Medical Examiner Law

## Statutes Annotated Title 18, Chapter 107

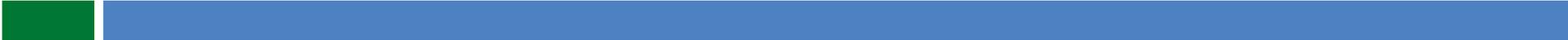
- Medical Examiner's office has jurisdiction over deaths from the following causes:
  - ▣ from violence
  - ▣ suddenly when in apparent good health
  - ▣ when unattended by a physician
  - ▣ by casualty
  - ▣ by suicide
  - ▣ as a result of injury
  - ▣ when in jail or prison, or any mental institution
  - ▣ in any unusual, unnatural or suspicious manner
  - ▣ in circumstances involving a hazard to public health welfare or safety

# Vulnerable adult



- Definition under Vermont law (33 V.S.A. 6902)
  - Is 18 or older **and**
  - Is a resident of a licensed facility such as a nursing or community care home **or**
  - Is a patient of a psychiatric unit or hospital **or**
  - Has received personal care services for > 1 month **or**

# Vulnerable adult



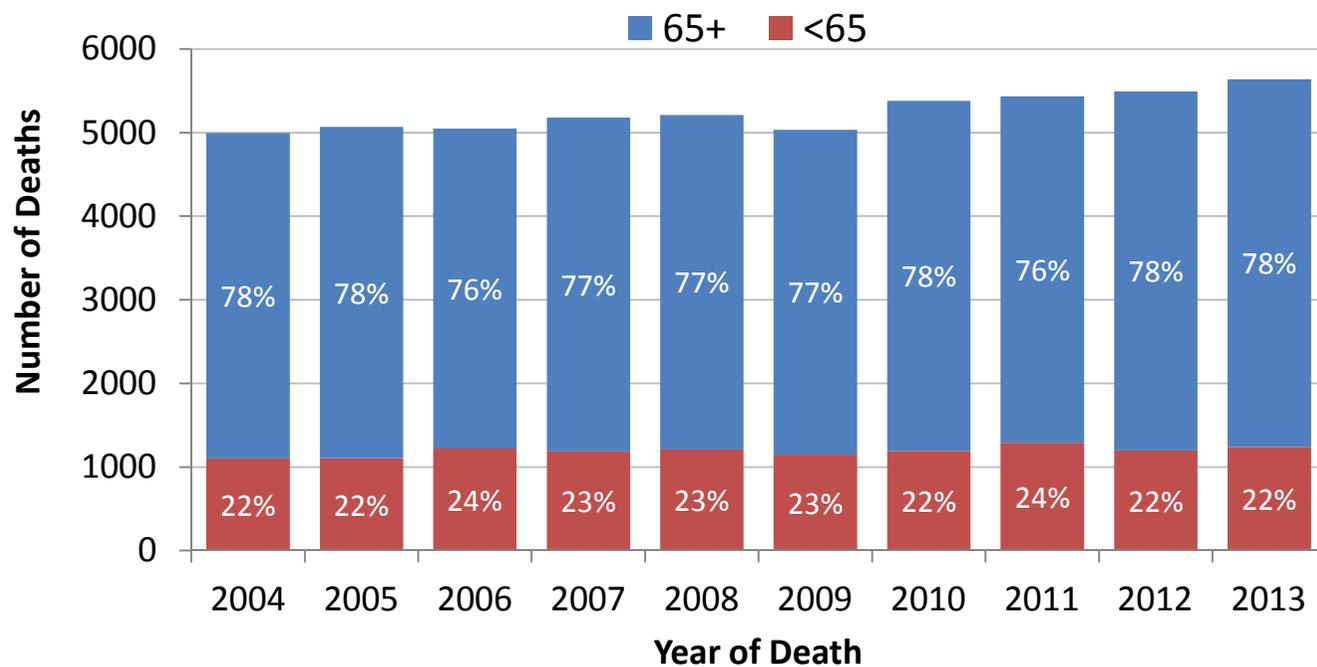
- Is impaired due to brain damage, infirmities of aging, or a physical, mental or developmental disability
- Impairment of the ability to provide care without assistance including provision of food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, supervision or management of finances **or**

# Vulnerable Adult



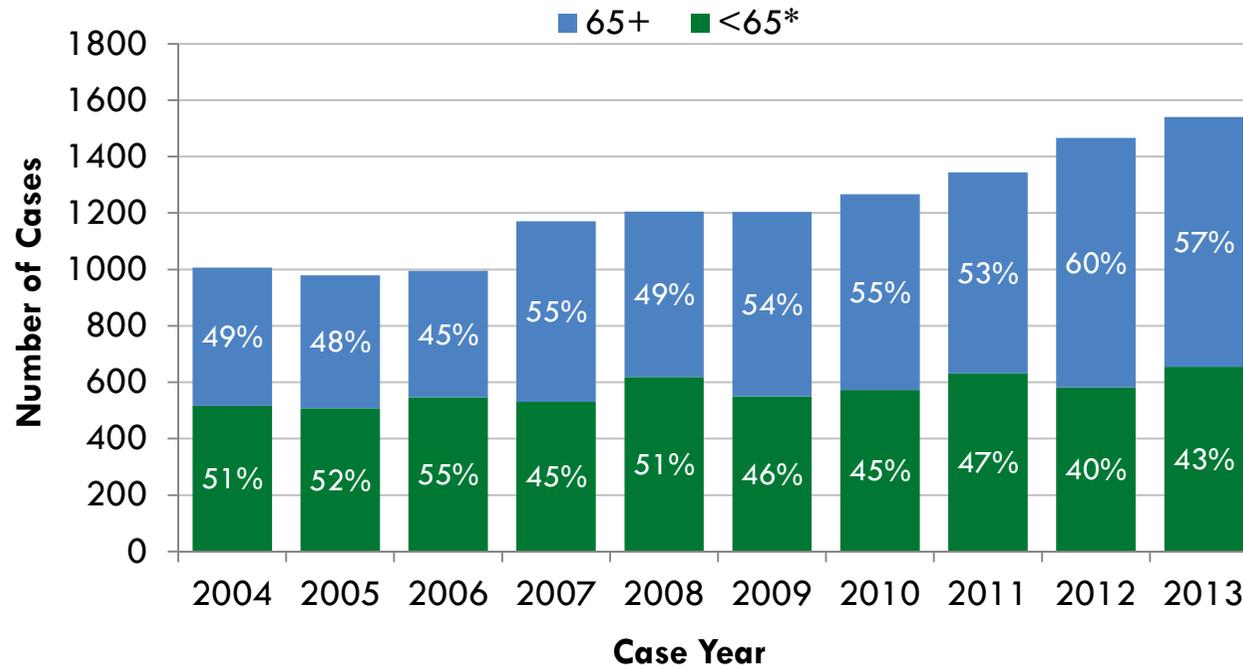
- An impairment of the individual's ability to protect him/herself from abuse, neglect or exploitation

### VT Resident Deaths by Year and Age



Source: CDC WONDER

### VT OCME Cases by Year and Age



\*Includes cases where age is not applicable (e.g. non-human remains)

## Summary of Accidental Deaths

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
<b>Total Accidental Deaths</b>	299	311	307	291	293	333	333	328	374	350
Motor Vehicle*	87	74	81	57	62	74	63	70	78	81
Drugs/Overdoses**	34	49	60	52	52	51	37	60	53	66
Falls (age $\geq$ 65)	118	100	106	137	109	134	158	132	160	151
All Other Accidental Deaths	60	88	60	45	71	74	75	66	83	52

\* Includes motorcycles; does not include pedestrians, ATVs or snowmobiles.

\*\* For more detail on Drug/Overdose deaths, please see Drug Related Deaths Table on page 15.

## What is the estimated number of vulnerable adult fatalities in Vermont?

- In 2014, 920 elderly deaths were reviewed or investigated by Health's Office of the Medical Examiner
- Number of those that are vulnerable is unknown