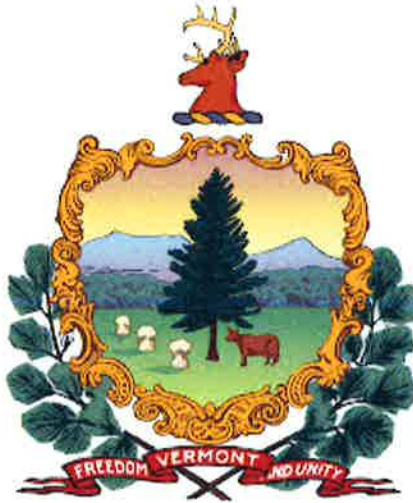


State of Vermont



Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team

2018 Report

Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team

2018 Annual Report

Dedication

This year we would like to dedicate this report to the agencies and departments that work to improve the lives of our vulnerable population. This includes both state and local agencies and organizations along with the many volunteers that dedicate their time to help their fellow Vermonters. Collectively, we can make a difference and work together to reduce preventable deaths in our vulnerable population.

Introduction

The Vermont General Assembly enacted legislation establishing the Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team in May 2016. Pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 6961, the Team functions under the auspices of the Office of the Attorney General.

The purpose of the team is to examine select cases of abuse and neglect related fatalities and preventable deaths of vulnerable adults in Vermont to:

- Identify system gaps and risk factors associated with the deaths
- Educate the public, service providers, and policy makers about abuse and neglect related fatalities and preventable deaths of vulnerable adults and strategies for interventions; and
- Recommend legislation, rules, policies, procedures, practices, training and coordination of services to promote interagency collaboration and prevent future abuse and neglect related fatalities

The Team achieves this purpose by bringing together members from multiple disciplines, who work with vulnerable adults, to share their experience and expertise. Together, the team reviews cases. The Teams purpose is not to place blame on one agency or department but to work together to identify deficiencies and make future recommendations.

The multidisciplinary team consists of members representing State and private entities and associations. The team is comprised by the following members:

- A) Linda Purdy, Office of the Attorney General (Vice-chair)
- B) Virginia Merriam, Office of the Attorney General (Vice-chair)
- C) Clayton Clark, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living
- D) Joy Barrett, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living

- E) Dan Trudeau, Department of Public Safety
- F) Lauri McGivern, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (Chair)
- G) Andre Courcelle, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living -Adult Protective Services
- H) Shawna Mead, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living -Adult Protective Services
- I) Chris Bell, Office of Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention
- J) Sean Londergan, Long-Term Care Ombudsman
- K) Nietra Panagoulis, Victim Advocate, Chittenden Co. States Attorney
- L) Rose Hill, MD, University of Vermont Medical Center
- M) Ed Paquin, Disability Rights Vermont
- N) AJ Ruben, Disability Rights Vermont
- O) Devon Green, Association of Hospitals and Health Systems
- P) Jill Olson, Visiting Nurses Association

This is the second report for the Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team. The Team is new, and still refining procedures and the review process. Along with reviewing individual cases, the Team focuses on specific issues and preventable deaths in the vulnerable population. The Team recognizes that its work will overlap from year to year which will help build a knowledge base for recommendations in future reports.

Last year the Team focused on hypothermia deaths in vulnerable adults. Following several reviews, the Team created a public health message on prevention of hypothermia and cold weather emergencies. Working with the Vermont Department of Health, the message was sent out to media outlets and is currently posted on the Health Department website. The Team will continue to work with other agencies and advocacy groups to increase awareness of hypothermia in the vulnerable population and work on education and prevention strategies. On average, Vermont has four to five hypothermia deaths a year. In 2018, Vermont had fourteen hypothermia deaths, most of whom were vulnerable adults. We will continue through 2019 focusing on these preventable deaths.

In 2018 and continuing through 2019, the Team will focus on deaths related to pressure wounds. The Team has identified four cases and has begun to gather information related to circumstances leading to death, services in place prior to death and agencies involved with the individuals. The Team invited two wound care nurses, one working in a hospital setting and one working in a residential (hospice) setting. They provided us insight into wound staging, care and prevention. They also discussed risk factors and provided resources to be used in our upcoming reviews. The nurses, along with a healthcare ethics professional, will be invited to assist us in the reviews.

During the first year of the Team's existence, we recognized the need for administrative assistance to help with scheduling, coordinating meetings, communication, dissemination of information and organization of case reviews. The team reached out to the Vermont Department of Health who provided us with an administrative assistant to assist with the Team's needs. We are grateful to have Karen Lapan on board with us. This has provided us the opportunity to focus on our cases reviews without being tied to administrative duties.

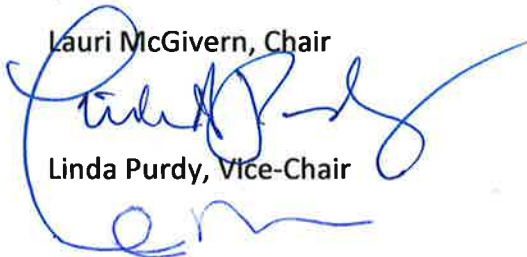
In summary, the Team will be continuing its work reviewing hypothermia deaths. The Team will work with state and local agencies to increase awareness and education and make recommendations for the prevention of these deaths. In addition, the Team will review individual cases and will focus on deaths due to pressure wounds. The Team has identified four cases for this review with additional cases pending completion of litigation. The Team has agreed to meet every other month to accomplish this work. The schedule of meetings has been set through December of 2019.

Thank you for the opportunity to have a team who is dedicated to improving the lives and deaths of our vulnerable population.

Respectfully submitted,



Lauri McGivern, Chair



Linda Purdy, Vice-Chair



Virginia Merriam, Vice-Chair