**September 2023 APS TARC Podcast Transcript**

# Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative and the MDT Resource Center

## Introduction

**Andrew Capehart:** Welcome to the Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center podcast. We come to you with the goal of sharing promising practices and innovations from the APS field, and to highlight what is achievable with new ideas and partnerships to help you envision what may be replicated in your program. Let's join our host, Jennifer Spoeri APS TARC subject matter expert and guests in conversation.

## Discussion

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Welcome to the APS TARC podcast. Today we're going to discuss the Department of Justice, Elder Justice Initiative, Multidisciplinary Team Resource Center with Shelly Jackson and Talitha Guinn-Shaver. Shelly Jackson is with the Elder Justice Initiative at the US Department of Justice. She was previously a Visiting Fellow with the Office for Victims of Crime at the U.S. Department of Justice. And prior to that, she worked in academia. Talitha Guinn-Shaver serves as the Elder Abuse Multidisciplinary Team Technical Advisor for the Elder Justice Initiative at the U.S. Department of Justice. Her experience with MDTs includes her prior role as Director of the Elder Abuse Prevention Program at the Institute of Aging. Where she served as the Director of the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center and the Chair of the San Francisco Elder Abuse MDT.

Shelly let's begin with the 10-thousand-foot view of what the Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative is working on. Can you fill us in on the latest and greatest?

**Shelly Jackson:** Sure, Jennifer. So, some people aren't aware that there are multiple components within the Department of Justice that have elder justice programming. But we have about 13 components. They typically cover areas like enforcement, public awareness, capacity building, research, and victim services. So, the mission of the Elder Justice Initiative is to support and coordinate the Department of Justice's enforcement and programmatic efforts to combat elder abuse, neglect, financial fraud and scams that target older adults, and the initiative does this by promoting justice for older adults by helping older victims and their families by enhancing state and local efforts through training and resources.

And supporting research to improve elder abuse policy and practice. So, all of our resources are available on the Elder Justice website, and that's at elderjustice.gov, where you'll find lots of information for the general public, community outreach materials, and other kinds of materials that will help you in your practice.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** And again, that, that website is elderjustice.gov?

**Shelly Jackson:** Dot gov, yes.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Okay, I just wanted to make sure, so our listeners had it. So, what are some other initiatives currently going on at the Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative?

**Shelly Jackson:** Well, recently we launched SAFE training, and that's Safe Accessible Forensic Interviewing for Elders, so the acronym is SAFE training, and this was developed to meet the growing need for victim centered interview techniques for use with older adults in criminal contexts. We're all familiar with the child forensic interviewing, and so we borrowed some of those principles and applied them to interviewing older adults. And so, we have a four-day advanced certificate training, and we actually have a number of states right now that are going to be offering that to their APS caseworkers in their states.

There's a two-day version that introduces the concept of forensic interviewing, more so in the context of multidisciplinary team. So, it introduces the concept, but it's really for a broader audience of your MDT members. And then there's a one-day training, which is really more communicating with older adults. There's much less emphasis on the forensic interviewing and more on communicating with older adults. So, we are in the process of rolling this out now. We're contracting with Modell Consulting Group, and they provide the training, but we're going into 14 states and we have, I think 11 of those already filled. So.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Wow, so do you have capacity for additional states if they're interested and grab the information offline?

**Shelly Jackson:** We do have a few slots left, yes. Now there's only one slot left for the four-day advanced certificate. But I'm really pleased, APS is really interested in this, and we've got a number of states that are gonna be taking the training.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Wonderful. So, anything else going on? I hear there's something about law enforcement and APS in the near future?

**Shelly Jackson:** Yes, we are planning the National Elder Justice Law Enforcement Summit that's scheduled for February 7 and 8, 2024, in Washington D.C. and we're going to be bringing in Law Enforcement Trainers, Chiefs of Police and, Officers from State Training Academies to educate the attendees on the latest trends in elder justice, we're going to be highlighting available resources, tools, and sharing best practices from investigations and collaborations. We'll hear from Talitha in a minute, but we're going to have a panel, of course, on multidisciplinary teams. But importantly, while we're bringing in law enforcement from across the country, one of our primary emphases is on the collaboration between Law Enforcement and Adult Protective Services.

And we see these as really critical partnerships in responding to elder abuse. And we want to talk about how each complements the other, not that they're doing each other's work, but that they complement one another again for the safety of the community and the older adults that live in the community.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** That's great. It's an invaluable relationship for both. I know that from experience, Law Enforcement and APS. So, could you tell us a little bit about the needs assessment?

**Shelly Jackson:** Yeah, I wanted to mention a couple other things. So, we have contracted with ICF to undertake a National Elder Abuse Victim Services Needs Assessment.

And this is the first ever such needs assessment. And it's going to be thinking about the service needs of older adults from the initial incident, investigation and prosecution, and throughout recovery. So, it's really covering the gambit of what older adults might need in terms of services. They're also going to be looking specifically at each type of abuse. We know services differ by what type of abuse people are experiencing. And then we'll be thinking about gender, culture, and other important factors.

So, this is going through OMB right now, so it hasn't actually started, but we are going to be reaching out to a range of elder justice professionals, including Adult Protective Services, and importantly, we're really going to be focused on getting, ensuring that we have the voices of older adults in the needs assessment, so there will be focus groups and interviews with older adults to make sure that the recommendations reflect what older adults need, but importantly, getting the perspective of professionals as well. So, we're expecting that that'll be out in August 2024, but you can check back on our Elder Justice website for that.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Great, thank you for that sneak peek. And finally, could you tell us a little bit about the Elder Fraud Hotline before we go to Talitha about the MDT Resource Center?

**Shelly Jackson:** Yes, I wanted to make sure everybody was aware of this incredible national resource. It's the National Elder Fraud Hotline that anybody can call. Older adults can call, APS can call, Law Enforcement can call for help. There is a phone number, 833 - FRAUD - 11, and it is open Monday through Friday, 10:00 to 6:00 PM but, there is somebody on the other end who can take that initial intake call if a warm referral is needed to another state, they can do that if some case management is required. There are case managers on board that can do that in addition to the hotline intake workers. So, people who have questions about whether they're experiencing fraud, or they think they might be, they can call and consult with the hotline operators.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Can it be anonymous?

**Shelly Jackson:** It can be anonymous.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** That's something people always wonder. Well, thank you Shelly for all of that information. The Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative is certainly busy these days. So, let's shift over to Talitha. Can you enlighten us about the Multidisciplinary Team Resource Center and the wonderful support coming out of it?

**Talitha Guinn-Shaver:** Sure, I'd be happy to. So, the MDT Technical Assistance Center was established in 2016, and our mission is to provide the tools, resources, and individualized consultations that MDTs across the country might need. The main service that I provide are free consultations, and this can be for any multidisciplinary team that is engaged in case review at any stage of formation. So, it can be from getting a great idea that you'd like to start an MDT in your community, and you don't know where to begin to, we've been established here for 16 years, and we are having dwindling participation, and we don't know where to go from here.

Any problems or challenges that you have in establishing or running your MDT, you have a real person that you can reach out to and have a conversation with. I might not have all of the answers, but we can definitely discuss the challenges that you have. One of the things I like to do is connect teams with other teams to see ways that they have overcome similar challenges to learn from their best practices and what worked in their communities, and so we just really want to be here to support the work and to have, sometimes I now used to do this work myself and I just wanted to call somebody who had some experience in doing this and say, am I crazy? Or have you ever experienced something like this?

So you just it's nice to have a voice at the end of the line, who's done the work before that can help you when you're experiencing some challenges and every team will experience some challenges at some point in their development. That's completely normal. There's nothing wrong with your teams because you bumped your head against a wall, or you've hit a barrier. This is something that all teams experience and we can just think together about how to resolve challenges that teams are having. Another part of the connecting teams to other teams is that we have a network locator map and if your team isn't currently on the map, we invite you to come and participate.

The goal is twofold, one to get a nice sense nationally of the elder abuse MDT work that's happening. We know lots of great work is happening, and we want the work that is happening locally to be accessible to everyone, and then also to facilitate collaboration. So, if you realize that there's a similar team in your community and your state and the neighboring state, that you have some contact information to get in touch and to have some communication collaboration and learn from one another. In addition to the map, we are facilitating that sort of peer support through our MDT Peer Support Community.

So, you can sign up to be a part of this community. It is sort of like a social media group, where you'll have a listserv feed, and there's a wall that you can go onto and you can post questions, you can share resources, materials, trainings, anything that's happening in your community. And most importantly, ask questions that other people who are running MDTs around the country, we've had some really good sharing lately. We've had people post about a Prosecutor, Law Enforcement, APS training. We've had people share intake forms and other resources with one another. We've had people ask questions about ways that teams have overcome challenges. So, it's a resource that's available to people where you can connect with others doing the work.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** That's fantastic because we all need to bounce off of each other times and share and learn.

**Talitha Guinn-Shaver:** Absolutely, and speaking of sharing and learning, we also have quite a few recorded MDT webinars that are accessible on our website. You can go back and review several years of trainings that are available. And that's in addition to EJ's larger webinar library. There are lots of recorded webinars on many topics from prosecution to multidisciplinary team collaboration, we have several on tribal issues, one on tribal elder abuse teams. So, there are lots of really great webinars that are there that can be sort of watched at your convenience.

You don't have to register for that are already recorded. Sort of the crown jewel of the MDT Technical Assistance Center is the MDT Guide and Toolkit, and this was developed by Shelly Jackson, who's on the call with us today, and over the years, we've been adding to it and making improvements to it, and it's really a living document to help teams get going with their development, and in this guide, you can find everything from making this 1st community connections, doing a community needs assessment, inviting other organizations and agencies to participate on your team can get a deeper understanding of what sort of contributions, various types of professionals can lend to your teams.

You'll also find information about confidentiality, and information sharing, and state statutes that can guide your development of policies and protocols. So, we really try to make it very inclusive of every step of the development process. You can find lots of great resources and it's currently being updated, and we expect it to be out in early 2024. The updates will include information about trauma informed and person-centered practices on MDTs and an expansion of our confidentiality toolkit portion. So, I'm really looking forward to these new additions. I think they're very timely. There's lots of talk about incorporating trauma informed practices in this work.

And so, we want to be inclusive of that. Last thing I'll say is that if you just wanna go over and check out the MDT resource page, we've got lots of really great resources from around the country. Things that you can take a look at and learn more about including how to fund an MDT Coordinator using VOCA funds. We've got information on that on our webpage and other resources that are related to doing the everyday work of running a multidisciplinary team.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** Wow, I'd love to see how many clicks you get on that "how to fund an MDT" because you hear that all over the country. It's like, we want to do an MDT who has the time for it. We need at least, part time staff person to manage it, you know?

**Talitha Guinn-Shaver:** Yes, and if you're have questions like that, give me a call and we can talk about options that you have for your team.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** That's, that's the amazing thing about this is literally she means this when Talitha says, give me a call for your phone numbers on the website and you're very accessible and approachable and extremely knowledgeable. So, anything else you'd like to highlight about the Multi Disciplinary Team Resource Center, or is everything on the website?

**Talitha Guinn-Shaver:** Everything is on the website. We've got lots of great information there. And if you get lost looking through all the great information, you can call and chat with me. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have and help support you in the best way possible so that you can create and expand and grow your MDTs.

**Jennifer Spoeri:** That's fantastic because we all know we can't do this alone in APS. We need our MDT Partners and it takes a lot of different professions to get a case done at times. So, thank you both for being here, Shelly and Talitha. Shelly, for giving us the macro view and then Talitha gets in, gets her hands dirty and gets into the MDT information. So, thank you so much and I'm sure our listeners will really glean a lot of good information out of this. Have a good rest of the day.

**Talitha Guinn-Shaver:** Thank you for having me.

**Andrew Capehart:** Thanks so much for listening. The APS TARC is a project of the Office of Elder Justice and Adult Protective Services at the Administration for Community Living Administration on Aging Department of Health and Human Services, and is administered by WRMA, Incorporated a TriMetrix Company in partnership with the National Adult Protective Services Association. Contractors' findings, conclusions, and points of view do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Federal Government. To give us feedback on this podcast or reach out to us, please visit our website at apstarc.acl.gov.