

Curtailing Abuse Related to Elders: The C.A.R.E. Team

Program Abstract (200 words)

The Riverside County C.A.R.E. (Curtailing Abuse Related to the Elderly) Team is a multidisciplinary team comprised of professionals from an array of disciplines. The C.A.R.E. Team strives to improve coordination and cooperation among service providers and public safety organizations to prevent and mitigate the abuse of elder and dependent adults. The C.A.R.E. Team discusses complex Adult Protective Services (APS) cases, troubleshooting obstacles and identifying resources to increase client safety and stabilize the client's living environment. The C.A.R.E. Team also functions as an advocacy group coordinating efforts to facilitate the prosecution of offenders under Penal Code 368, California's Elder Abuse Law. Riverside County's C.A.R.E. team has facilitated efficiencies in case outcomes through enhanced collaboration between agencies, and the team's ability to quickly identify and overcome service barriers.

THE PROBLEM OR NEED FOR THE PROGRAM (1/4 PAGE)

Elder or dependent adult victims of abuse are typically subjected to systems that are neither victim-centered, nor responsive to the myriad of victim needs. The traditional response is uncoordinated resulting in victims being exposed to multiple agencies throughout the investigation, fragmented service delivery, an inability to effectively explore other possible victimizations, system overload, undue stress for the victim and his/her family, and duplication of services.

Additionally, Riverside County is a rapidly growing, large geographic region stretching from the outskirts of the Greater Los Angeles area to the Arizona border. Thus, efficient and consistent delivery of public services is often challenging, especially to the vast rural, desert areas of the county. In addition to its expansive geography, compared to its major surrounding counties including San Bernardino, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Orange, Riverside County has the highest estimated growth rate in the general; aged 65 and over; disabled; and unemployed populations.¹ Significant challenges in geography coupled with substantial increases in population growth, requires the county to identify unique strategies to meet the needs of its residents.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM (2 ½ PAGES)

The Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Adult Services Division (ASD) coordinates five (5) monthly multidisciplinary C.A.R.E. team meetings throughout the county. Four (4) of the five (5) meetings are based on geographic area, spanning from the metro Riverside area of the county, to the far-east end of the county in Blythe. The fifth meeting is one that specifically focuses on complex cases involving clients experiencing housing instability or

¹ www.census.gov, American Community Survey, 5-Yr, 2010-2014

homelessness. The C.A.R.E. Team also provides continuing education to agency participants and collectively pursues solutions for identified service or policy gaps.

Case Consultations/Multidisciplinary Discussions

The C.A.R.E. Team offers a forum for social workers and other partner agencies to present a complex case to a multidisciplinary team to consult, seek assistance, and identify additional resources and support for their clients. The multidisciplinary team meetings also allow for collaboration and the coordination of services amongst partner agencies.

Team Composition

The Riverside County C.A.R.E. Team is composed of service providers throughout Riverside County involved in the treatment and prevention of elder and dependent adult abuse, including but not limited to representatives from Riverside County Adult Protective Services (APS), all law enforcement jurisdictions, the District Attorney's office, Behavioral Health, Public Guardian, Social Security, Office on Aging, Community Care Licensing, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Veteran's Affairs, the Regional Center, health care facilities, health plans, and other community based organizations. The team composition allows for a rich assessment of the cases presented, a discussion that considers all areas of client need and areas of potential victimization, and results in a broader range of strategies and solutions to resolve cases. The team composition also significantly contributes to partner agencies gaining a better understanding of one another's mandates, scope of practice, priorities, and limitations.

Meeting Location

The C.A.R.E. MDT meetings take place monthly in the cities of Riverside, Perris, Palm Desert and Blythe. The meeting locations strive to make collaboration and MDT participation more accessible for all throughout the County. The meeting locations also successfully foster stronger relationships between local partner agencies, which contribute to ongoing collaboration outside of the regularly scheduled meetings.

Specialized Focus

When partner agencies meet on a regular basis to discuss complex cases typically impacting all agencies involved, it can become evident that there are service gaps and/or needs that require a specialized intervention. As such, the C.A.R.E. Team identified the need to develop a specialized MDT to better address the needs of homeless elder and dependent adults throughout the county.

The Homeless-Focused C.A.R.E. Team was established as a specialized MDT in November 2018, the Homeless-Focused C.A.R.E. Team invites the presentation of complex cases throughout the county involving clients who are experiencing housing instability or homelessness. The C.A.R.E. Team recognized that the agencies needed to quickly intervene in these types of cases were different than those agencies typically attending the general C.A.R.E. Team meetings.

Agencies submit case referrals in advance to the Homeless-Focused C.A.R.E. Team, allowing for the recruitment of additional agency attendance if needed for a particular case discussion, as well as for an agency's ability to research and plan prior to the MDT. With this specialized

focus, additional agency participants include the Housing Authority; the Coordinated Entry System for the County's homeless/housing-vulnerable residents; specialized law-enforcement personnel; probation; behavioral health teams that work with this population; as well as a variety of community-based programs specializing in housing-related services, including shelters and grass-roots homeless outreach teams.

Education

The C.A.R.E. Team also strives to improve professional competency in working with the elder and dependent adult population. Overall, MDT participants learn from one another while they are discussing cases and sharing best practices to combat elder and dependent adult abuse.

Additionally, at every C.A.R.E. Team meeting, participants receive a brief training on topics related to working with the elder and dependent adult populations. Examples of training topics have included: understanding the relationship between client capacity and client vulnerability; common scams impacting the elder and dependent adult population; and, services provided by the Department of Justice – Bureau of Medicare Fraud and Elder Abuse, the Social Security Administration, the Senior Medicare Patrol, and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

In addition, C.A.R.E. Team Coordinators assist in the planning of an annual Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Symposium. The symposium promotes awareness of elder and dependent adult abuse, facilitates skill-development in conducting elder and dependent adult investigations, and improves collaboration and service provision among partner agencies and organizations throughout Riverside County. The day-long symposium includes general sessions, breakout training sessions, and interagency case presentations.

Legislative Efforts

Through the coordination of services for complex cases, the C.A.R.E. Teams have identified service or policy gaps impacting the elder and dependent adult populations. When this occurs, the team will determine the most appropriate solution to address the identified gap, including an effort to leverage a change in legislative policy.

One such success of the C.A.R.E. Team occurred in 2016. The C.A.R.E. Team had experienced a number of cases where an elder victim of abuse lacked capacity and was at high-risk of continued abuse and neglect. Due to their diminished capacity they were highly dependent on others to provide care, were experiencing abuse by their caretaker but unable to intervene or protect themselves, and did not have the ability to understand their situation nor seek a protective order. In 2014, the C.A.R.E. Team submitted a legislative proposal to allow APS social workers to seek a protective order on a client's behalf if they were unable to do so because of limited/diminished capacity. In 2016, SB 196 successfully passed and has allowed APS social workers to better intervene and protect these vulnerable clients.

RESPONDING TO ECONOMIC DOWNTURN (OPTIONAL)

The C.A.R.E. Team has allowed us to better collaborate with our community partners in a creative/innovative way, directly resulting in a better coordination of effort, and the avoidance of an unnecessary duplication of services and resources in a challenging climate of extraordinary population growth and shrinking budgets/resources.

THE COST OF THE PROGRAM (3/4 TO 1 PAGE)

The total cost of the C.A.R.E. Team is \$0. The C.A.R.E. Team facilitators have other primary job responsibilities, which cover their salaries/expenses. Additionally, all the community partners who participate in the monthly multidisciplinary team meetings and coordinated response efforts do so voluntarily and therefore do not result in any additional expense.

THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM (3/4 TO 1 PAGE)

The C.A.R.E. Team has successfully strengthened partnerships, expanded the reach of community agencies, better leveraged interagency resources, and has created a sense of community responsibility for victim safety. The C.A.R.E. Team has also streamlined communication between partner agencies, ultimately reducing delays in service delivery and duplication of services. Case outcomes are achieved in less time due to the enhanced collaboration between agencies, and the team's ability to quickly identify and overcome barriers.

To date, there are 131 agencies that participate in the C.A.R.E. Team throughout the County. During 2018, the C.A.R.E. Team held a total of 49 community MDT meetings where 202 complex cases of elder and dependent adult abuse were presented and managed. Additionally, participating agencies received a total of 40 trainings during the monthly MDT meetings.

WORTHINESS OF AWARD (1/4 TO ½ PAGE)

Riverside County's C.A.R.E. Team is a cost-effective solution that can be replicated by like-agencies, facing similar challenges with an increased demand for services and a simultaneous decrease in resources. In addition to the financial benefits to an organization, a multidisciplinary approach can bolster a community's effectiveness and efficiency in serving and protecting their elder and dependent adult population, through enhanced collaboration, improved coordination, and improved outcomes.