Vulnerable Adult Linked Organizational Response (V.A.L.O.R.)

A Cross-Disciplinary Response to Vulnerable Adult Victimization in Spokane, Washington

Motto

To Protect and to Preserve the Tranquility of Life for Our Vulnerable Adult Community

Detective Kirk Kimberly M.A.
Spokane Police Department
Spokane, Wa.
509-625-4069
Mission Statement

The mission of the VALOR Unit is to work in coordinated collaboration with all of the City, County, State, and Federal resources available to ensure the safety and well being of our vulnerable adult community to include all people over 65 years of age and those with developmental disabilities over 18 years of age. Through teamwork, we will find vulnerable adult abuse and exploitation wherever it is occurring, stop it immediately, and prosecute those who are responsible for it, to the fullest extent of the law. We pledge to work tirelessly to ensure the safety, comfort, and peace of mind of our vulnerable adult community. The future happiness of this population is our current responsibility. We will strive to make their remaining days free from worry and incidence of crime so they can live through their golden years with serenity.

What is VALOR:

The Vulnerable Adult Linked Organizational Response (V.A.L.O.R.) unit is an interdisciplinary group of community organizations, both public and private, which work together in a prepared and structured response to issues surrounding people 65 years and older or developmentally disabled people 18 years and older. The goals of this group include:
1. Educate the vulnerable adult population and those whom work with this population in order to recognize and prevent victimization.
2. Quickly respond to and triage an emergent situation in order to initially stem further victimization.
3. Develop various long-term remedies to assure no further victimization and repair the harm done by previous victimization.

Who is VALOR:
VALOR’s primary core membership includes the Spokane Police Department, Washington State Adult Protective Services (APS- Region 1), the Spokane County Prosecuting Attorney's office, Spokane Elder Services, the Spokane YWCA Domestic Violence program, and the Gonzaga University Elder Law program. VALOR further utilizes links it has forged with other associated community organizations such as Aging and Long term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW), the Washington State Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Ombudsman program, Meals on Wheels, Gate Keeper’s, the V.A.L.U. (Vulnerable Adults Links United networking group) and others that contribute to the continued well-being of the vulnerable adult population.

Goals and Responses:

1) Educate and Prevent: The VALOR unit has identified that prevention through community education is of paramount importance. This education must not focus solely on the vulnerable adult population, but on law enforcement, prosecutor’s, judges, and businesses and organizations as well. Current and potential victims as well as those working around this potential victim population must gain knowledge of the various types of victimization, including self-victimization. This is done in order to recognize and thus reduce the severity of or avoid victimization altogether as well as develop and teach better systemic responses to the problem.

2) Emergent Response: It is important to be able to respond quickly to a specific incident of victimization and bring an immediate end to the crisis. Whether the crisis is financial exploitation, physical or sexual abuse or neglect, the faster a situation is stopped, the faster the victim can start the healing process. The working belief for this stage is “stop the bleeding” whether it is physical or financial in nature.

3) Tertiary Response: This response involves continued follow-up by the prosecutor and victim advocacy to keep the victim informed on what is happening. Further, APS should evaluate the vulnerability of the victim and perform their “protective” duties such as changing or creating a guardian, obtain orders of protection, etc… Elder Services and/or APS provide for temporary housing and food or other necessary services.

4) Long Term Response: Due to the increasing nature of this population’s level of vulnerability as they age, it is important to structure long term responses to their victimization to prevent further suffering. These remedies must include quality of life issues such as permanent housing, meals, hygiene, and finances. Further, preventive measures such as increases in social networks and activities must be implemented. The more people a vulnerable adult has contact with, the less likely they are to be victimized.

---Research has indicated that stress and depression from victimization of elderly people potentially leads to a serious increase in mortality rates (of those victimized). Therefore, long term remedies should include a voluntary mental health component in order to help reduce the stress and depression levels of victims in an attempt to reduce the mortality rate.
**Cross-disciplinarity**

Stokols et al. (2008) described a varied-disciplinary collaboration as *cross-disciplinary* and defined it as teams striving to "combine and, in some cases, to integrate concepts, methods, and theories drawn from two or more fields". Rosenfield (1992) further subdivided cross-disciplinarity into *multidisciplinary*, *interdisciplinary*, and *transdisciplinary* response levels.

**Multidisciplinarity**

Rosenfield described the *multidisciplinary* level as being the most common approach, one in which members drawn from various disciplines work together within the framework of their individual disciplines in order to find solutions for common problems, with their result brought together only at the end of the effort. Stokols (2006) described multidisciplinarity as "a process in which researchers from different fields work independently or sequentially, each from his or her own disciplinary perspective, to address a particular research topic".

*Good Start*: Disis and Slattery (2010) concluded that a multidisciplinary team effort, versus individual effort (*unidisciplinarity*), is an effective mechanism for producing innovation. Goldstein (1990) noted that "communication between agencies can lead to recognition of common goals, development of mutual respect, and establishment of a working relationship" that can benefit the community and others.

**Interdisciplinarity**

Rosenfield (1992) defined *interdisciplinary* groups as those where the members work "jointly but still from a disciplinary-specific basis to address common problems''. In *interdisciplinary* projects, "different disciplines use their techniques and skills to address a common problem" and the "results are usually reported in a partial, discipline-by-discipline sequence''. Stokols et al. (2008) expanded on this idea by claiming that "*interdisciplinarity* is an interactive process in which researchers work jointly, each drawing from his or her own discipline specific perspective''.

*Getting Better*: *Interdisciplinarity* improves response to specific cases or situations, making each effort more efficient and producing better outcomes than, either a unidisciplinary or a multidisciplinary response could individually accomplish.

**Transdisciplinarity**

According to Rosenfield's (1992) cross-disciplinary taxonomy, members of *transdisciplinary* groups work together using a shared conceptual framework, drawing together disciplinary-specific theories, concepts, and approaches to address common problems. Their efforts are marked by cooperation. Stokols et al. (2008) explained that "*transdisciplinarity* is an integrative process in which researchers work jointly to develop and use a shared conceptual framework that synthesizes and extends discipline-specific theories, concepts, methods, or all three to create new models and language to address a common research problem''.

*Much Improved*: In the *transdisciplinary* level, groups modify or create policy and procedure based upon ideas and recommendations (best practices) that members have learned during the cross-disciplinary process. This is an effort which affects systemic change rather than individual or specialized case work.
Evolution of Community Policing

**Background:**
Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) claimed that PCR (Police/Community Relations), crime prevention units, and team policing ideology were evolutionary stages leading to the birth of *community policing*. They stated that there were several factors that helped bring about *community policing*:
- Isolation of officers in police cars;
- The narrowing of the police mission to crime fighting;
- A scientific approach to management that stressed efficiency more than effectiveness;
- Increased reliance on high-tech gadgetry instead of human interaction;
- Insulation of police administration from community input;
- A long-standing concern about police violation of minority civil rights; and
- Initial attempts by the police to reach the community, such as PCR, Crime Prevention, and team policing. (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990).

Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) indicated that these factors share one basic, common theme: the isolation of the police from the public at large, resulting in alienation which fostered an "us against them" mentality between the police and the community.

**Principles:**
Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) expounded on some of the guiding principles of *community policing* that are foundationally important for law enforcement to better participate in diverse community workgroups. The authors explained that community policing was “both a philosophy and an organizational strategy that allows the police and community residents to work closely together in new ways to solve the problems of crime, fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighborhood decay. The philosophy rests on the belief that law abiding people in the community deserve input into the police process, in exchange for their participation and support. This also rests on the belief that solutions to contemporary community problems demand freeing and the police to explore creative, new ways to address neighborhood concerns beyond a narrow focus on individual crime incidents”.

According to Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990, *community policing* implied a leadership shift within the department that granted more authority and independence to line officers (p. xiii), effectively changing the dynamics from the strict hierarchical leadership structures prevalent in most law enforcement agencies to a more internally participative leadership structure. Further, the Community Policing Officer (CPO) acted as a bridge between the police and community members. As the community's primary contact, CPOs linked individuals and groups in the community to the public and private agencies that offered help and developed long-term programs involving community residents. Such cooperative effort was critical for the formation of cross-disciplinary workgroups involving law enforcement.