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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

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To: Aging Services Access Points
Protective Services Agencies
Elder at Risk Agencies
Elder Abuse Hotline

From: Lillian Glickman

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Subject: Responsibilities of Protective Services and Elder at Risk Supervisors

The purpose of this PI is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Protective Services (PS) and Elder-at Risk (EAR) supervisors. It is intended to promote consistency in how the job of a PS (EAR) supervisor is perceived and performed throughout the system without undermining the management structure of out contract agencies. The need for this PI was identified through the PS Supervisors training, meetings involving members of the PS Unit of Elder Affairs, the Regional Coordinators and the PS (EAR) supervisors, and record reviews and audits. In addition to identifying the responsibilities of PS/EAR supervisors, this PI sets forth recommended practices for implementing many of these responsibilities.

A. Staffing

PS/EAR Supervisors must work with senior management staff of their agency to ensure the recruitment and hiring of qualified PS/EAR staff.

Recommended Practice: At a minimum, a PS/EAR supervisor should review the resumes and writing samples of applicants, participating in the interview process, and make recommendations to the Executive Director and other senior management staff in accordance with agency policy. In addition, the PS (EAR) Supervisor should be involved in the development of the agency's PS back-up system to ensure that this program will be able to operate during times of high volume or unexpected staff vacancies.

B. Staff Development

1. Training PS/EAR staff: PS (EAR) supervisors are responsible for assessing the initial and on-going training needs of their staff and working with senior management to ensure that these needs are met. Some training needs, such as providing basic orientation and initial training to new workers, must be met by the supervisor or other agency sources. Other needs must be met through required training and meetings sponsored by Elder Affairs, training scheduled by the Regional Coordinator Host Agencies or other sources.

2. Training Intake and Back-up Staff: Another staff development function of a PS (EAR) supervisor is working with senior management staff to ensure that generic intake staff who are responsible for taking elder abuse and EAR reports are adequately trained to perform this function. It is also important for the PS (EAR) supervisor to work with other management staff to develop a process for the training of assigned back-up staff.

3. Training Other Agency Staff: It is also essential for a PS (EAR) supervisor to work with senior management to ensure that all agency staff receive basic information about PS and EAR and understand their responsibilities related to taking and making elder abuse and neglect reports pursuant to PI-89-36.

C. Supervision

In order to provide necessary support and direction to staff, weekly supervision meetings must be held with individual PS (EAR) workers.

Recommended Practice: The primary focus of supervision meetings should be to review the overall status of the worker's caseload, to discuss specific cases, and to provide direction and encouragement to the worker. Supervision meetings periodically should be used to discuss worker's overall job performance, strengths and training needs and other issues that could be impacting his/her performance. As supervision **is** a daily responsibility, supervisory initiated follow-up contact with workers in between weekly meetings often will be required on specific cases or other matters.

It is also important for supervisors to be accessible to their workers when they require further direction or clarification on an issue, especially if they are encountering a crisis in one of their cases. It is important for supervisors to clearly define for their workers what constitutes a crisis and to set reasonable parameters regarding worker initiated contact on more routine matters. This will ensure that a supervisor's valuable time is not wasted on matters that could be handled during regularly scheduled supervision meetings.

To ensure that all cases receive good supervision, a balance is recommended between the review of cases during supervision, record reviews, as discussed in section E below, and follow-up discussion of cases with workers. The supervisor can ensure that all of a worker's cases are discussed on a regular basis by establishing a rotating list of cases to be reviewed at supervision

meetings. It is recommended that all of a worker's cases be reviewed at least monthly during supervision meetings. It is also recommended that workers be required to bring the records for the cases to be discussed at the meeting. This will enable the supervisor to review those portions of the record he/she determines necessary.

When discussing cases, the PS/EAR supervisor should ask probing questions and solicit information to ensure that the following issues are addressed at the appropriate time during the course of a case:

- any emergency or rapid response needs that have been identified and how to address them;
- all allegations of abuse or at-risk conditions to the elder;
- worker safety issues;
- issues related to contacting and effectively engaging the elder;
- the causes, nature, extent, immediacy and severity of the abuse or at-risk condition(s);
- how to prioritize the investigation/assessment of the allegations of abuse and at-risk conditions based on their impact on the elder;
- the collateral sources to be contacted, including other professionals, service providers, family members and others with knowledge of the elder's situation;
- the reliability of the verbal and written information gathered from the elder and collateral sources;
- the health and psycho-social status of the elder and their implications on the elder's situation;
- the cognitive status of the elder, including his/her ability to give informed consent and its implications for the completion of the investigation/assessment and the provision of necessary services;
- the need for additional evaluations of an elder's health and cognitive status;
- the rationale for decisions made regarding an investigation/assessment;
- the service needs of the elder and family members, as identified during the investigation/assessment and on-going casework;
- the actions that need to be taken to address the identified service needs, including the use of legal interventions when appropriate; and,
- other factors that impact on the risk to the elder.

As indicated above, PS/EAR supervisors often will need to follow-up on cases or certain aspects of cases with their workers in between regularly scheduled supervision meetings. The extent and frequency of follow-up on a particular case will depend on the complexity of the case, the severity of risk or potential risk to the elder, and the experience and skill of the worker.

At the conclusion of supervisory meetings and follow-up contacts between PS/FAR supervisors and workers, it is important that both parties have a clear understanding of:

- the issues that were discussed;
- the actions to be taken by each party in response to these issues;
- the time frames for completing these actions;
- any issues that are unresolved or require further clarification;
- the actions to be taken by each party to resolve or clarify these issues; and, *the time frame for resolving or clarifying these issues.

In addition to supervision meetings with individual workers, the scheduling of periodic unit meetings is highly recommended. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen unit cohesiveness, to provide learning opportunities for all workers and to share pertinent information with staff.

Finally, a PS/EAR supervisor must know when to discuss issues or problems that are identified at supervision or unit meetings with the Executive Director or other senior management staff of the agency. Generally, these are issues or problems that impact on the performance of a worker or the unit, which cannot be addressed by the supervisor alone.

D. Screening Intakes

Screening elder abuse and EAR reports is the responsibility of the PS (EAR) supervisor and trained back up supervisors. As the first part of the PS (EAR) service delivery process, it is essential that elder abuse and EAR reports are correctly screened.

In screening intakes, the PS (EAR) supervisor must ensure that there is enough information available to:

- make a correct screening decision;
- assess the immediacy and severity of risk to the elder;
- determine if there are any barriers to seeing or communicating with the elder; and,
- identify potential worker safety issues.

Recommended Practice: It is recommended that a PS/EAR supervisor not be responsible for taking elder abuse and EAR reports, except on an intermittent or emergency basis. We believe that it is better for this function to either be rotated among PS (EAR) casework staff or performed by generic intake staff of the agency. This will enable the supervisor to spend more time on essential supervisory functions.

If a PS/EAR supervisor or a trained back-up supervisor determines that necessary intake information is missing or insufficient, appropriate direction should be provided to the worker so he/she can obtain the required information. This course of action is preferred over the practice of having the screener follow-up with the reporter or collateral sources in order to obtain the necessary information.

E. Record Reviews

A PS (EAR) supervisor must conduct record reviews at key milestones in the casework process in order to provide appropriate direction to workers on specific cases and to evaluate their overall performance. When conducting record reviews, PS (EAR) supervisors must use the criteria set forth in the PS/EAR audit procedure.

Recommended Practice: As record reviews require a significant period of uninterrupted time, it is essential for a PS (EAR) supervisor to build time for this function into his/her weekly schedule.

Ideally, record reviews should be conducted on every case at the completion of an investigation, after the development of a service plan, at each service plan update, and at case closing. Cases screened in as emergencies or rapid response situations should be reviewed early in the investigation process to ensure that the emergency or rapid response needs are adequately assessed and addressed. In complex or difficult cases, or in cases being handled by less skilled workers, a record review also should be conducted no later than the mid-point of the investigation. As required by regulation and applicable PI's, the input of the supervisor must be reflected in the case record at the various stages of the casework process. If this requirement is met, it should be unnecessary to read previously reviewed portions of the record during subsequent milestone reviews.

Given the busy schedules of PS (EAR) supervisors, especially when caseloads are high, it may not be possible to review all cases at each key milestone. In these situations, it is essential for PS (EAR) supervisors to prioritize the records they review. In setting record review priorities, PS (EAR) supervisors must distinguish between skilled and less skilled workers. As a rule, all of the records of inexperienced and less skilled workers should be reviewed at the previously identified case milestones. For more skilled workers, a review their high-risk cases, plus a randomly selected sample of between one third and one half of their other cases, should be sufficient. As part of the record review prioritization process, a PS (EAR) supervisor also may decide not to review every case at each service plan update. A PS (EAR) supervisor must use his/her discretion in determining those cases that do not require review at each plan update. These decisions should be based on the identified risks to the elder, skill of the worker, complexity of the case and other relevant factors.

F. Evaluation

A PS (EAR) supervisor must evaluate the performance of his/her workers in accordance with the agency's employee evaluation system.

Recommended Practice: As the core responsibilities of PS and EAR workers are taking intakes, conducting investigation/assessments, developing and implementing service plans and meeting related documentation requirements, these tasks should make up the bulk of their performance program. In evaluating a worker's performance, a PS (EAR) supervisor should rely on record review results, observations of the worker in the field, how s/he interacts with other unit and agency staff, input from other professionals, and on his/her receptiveness to supervision and training. In agencies where generic intake staff are responsible for taking elder abuse and EAR reports, the PS (EAR) supervisor should be able to provide relevant input on the performance of these workers to the manager responsible for evaluating them.

G. Discipline

A PS (EAR) supervisor must be prepared to recommend disciplinary action against a worker(s) when such action is warranted by the agency's policies and procedures in this area. Therefore, it is essential for a PS/EAR supervisor to understand the agency's policies and procedures regarding employee disciplinary actions.

H. Community Education and Outreach

As elder abuse and EAR cases continue to be hidden and difficult to detect, consistent and well-targeted community education initiatives are critical to a responsive PS (EAR) program. Therefore, a major responsibility of PS (EAR) supervisors is to develop and implement a community education and outreach plan that is responsive to the needs of mandated reporters, other professionals and organizations that have regular contact with elders and the public at large, including elders themselves. For more information on the PS (EAR) community education requirements, please consult PI-99-36.

1. Program Operations

PS/EAR supervisors must work within the administrative structure of their agency to develop, evaluate and, when necessary, revise procedures to ensure the effective operation of these programs. These procedures must address the following areas:

- ensuring that there is after hours coverage and that the on-call worker schedule is shared with the Elder Abuse Hotline in accordance with established procedures; *assigning and tracking cases and managing the workload of the unit; *identifying and ensuring appropriate agency management of high risk cases, as defined below;
- releasing information and records;
- accessing the agency's legal counsel for cases that may require court intervention; *reviewing cases that are being closed or that involve an elder who is refusing an investigation or assessment or services;
- identifying cases to be reported to the District Attorney;
- compiling and submitting statistics and required reports to Elder Affairs timely and accurately; and,
- accessing your agency's Regional Coordinator and the PS Unit staff of Elder Affairs.

High risk cases are those in which an elder is at imminent risk of serious harm and there are factors present that make an appropriate and timely intervention extremely difficult, if not impossible. These factors include, but are not limited to, insurmountable resistance by the elder, uncooperative or hostile caregivers or family members, the lack of appropriate services, worker safety issues, and continuing client access or location problems.

If you have any questions about this PI, please call your Regional Manager.