An Elder Abuse Fatality Review Team (EAFRT) examines deaths of individuals that may be caused by or related to elder or adult abuse with the goal of identifying system gaps and improving victim services.

The American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston collected information about EAFRT accomplishments from team leaders and coordinators and by analyzing team documents. The project identified 30 EAFRTs and five domestic violence fatality review teams that review elder deaths. (Other teams may exist or be in development.)

Those 35 teams are in 13 states: California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia.

Some EAFRTs review cases from their entire state, region, or county. See Chart: Team Locations for details about team locations and case jurisdiction.

Teams differ in the types of cases they review, criteria for conducting a review, and who selects cases to review. For specifics, see the four case reviews charts here.

EAFRTs have members from an array of agencies and services. See Chart: Team Members. The four largest categories of members are adult protective services, the medical examiner’s or coroner’s office, law enforcement, and prosecutors.
Team leaders and coordinators reported that the most significant barriers to team functioning are, in order, insufficient member time to participate, lack of key agency representation, and team member turnover.

Most teams receive no funding from local, state, or federal government agencies. No teams reported charity or foundation funding.

Open and honest discussion of system gaps and ideas for bridging them requires EAFRTs to have: (a) a culture of avoiding “blame and shame”; and (b) legal protections that treat team discussions and records as confidential and limit or prohibit their disclosure outside the team. Teams employ one or more practices to fulfill these principles. See Chart: Preventing Blame and Shame and Chart: Confidentiality Practices.

EAFRTs can benefit their members, the members’ colleagues, and the community in which they operate. See Elder Abuse Fatality Review Teams: Outcomes for details.

See other topics and documents on the ABA’s Elder Abuse Fatality Review Team web page https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law_aging/resources/elder_abuse/elder-abuse-fatality-review-team-projects-and-resources/.

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