

April 3, 2020

ND Dept of Human Svc – Aging & Adult Services Division
Guidance on Intake Practices and Conducting VAPS Home Visits

Intake Practices

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vulnerable Adult Protective Services (VAPS) will screen potential concerns at the time of intake by asking the following questions:

1. Has the victim had close contact with someone with lab-confirmed COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
2. Has the victim traveled outside of the state or country in the last 14 days?
3. Does the victim currently have any of the following symptoms: fever of 100.4 or higher, persistent cough, sore throat or shortness of breath?
4. Has the victim been tested for COVID-19 and received a lab-confirmed positive result for COVID-19?
5. In the last 30 days, has the victim had any known contact with someone who is exhibiting symptoms (fever of 100.4 or persistent cough), or who has tested positive for COVID-19?

If the **answer to any** of these questions is **YES** and:

An emergency exists:

VAPS would rely on law enforcement to complete this initial check. VAPS intake staff would also encourage the reporter to assist the victim to contact the ND Department of Health Hotline 1-866-207-2880 or their health care provider and provide appropriate referrals over the phone.

There is no emergency present:

The report will still be sent to the regional worker for follow-up; Aging Services will ask that calls be made to the victim once every two weeks until they are cleared to be visited in person.

Conducting Home Visits

Vulnerable Adult Protective Services (VAPS) policy currently requires an initial face-to-face on every investigation. However, in many cases risk of exposing the client to COVID-19 outweighs risk of not seeing the client face-to-face. To assist with social distancing and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, new procedures for face-to-face

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contact with clients and collaterals is necessary.

New Procedures

Effective immediately, face-to-face contact with clients and collaterals should only be made in cases with possible immediate danger to clients that VAPS cannot investigate or address without seeing the client in person. For example, cases involving physical or sexual abuse or severe neglect or other emergency situations where there is concern for the immediate safety of the client, face-to-face contact is likely still necessary. All reports that include possible immediate danger to clients will be staffed with supervisor or regional VAPS team to determine need for home visit. All case staffing and determinations on face-to-face contact will be documented in the file.

If a home visit is needed, VAPS will follow protocols outlined in the updated Home and Community Visit Precaution Guidelines.

- Consider completing the visit through the door, window, or on the front porch and avoid entering the home, if possible.
- Rely on law enforcement or other community partners with access to personal protective equipment to accompany the worker and request that they enter the home.
- Do not shake hands or have physical contact; avoid close contact (i.e., remain more than 6 feet).
- Do not accept food or drinks.
- Limit your contact to surfaces of the home.
- When completing paperwork, utilize a clip board and your own pen and not surfaces of the home (i.e., table, countertop).
- Clean your cell phone and/or computer after the visit if you utilized either in the home, with disinfectant wipes
- Utilize hand sanitizer after the home visit and wash your hands with soap as soon as is practical.

VAPS cases will remain open until a face-to-face meeting is completed or until safety is assured through community partners or alternative resources. VAPS staff must attempt to have a personal contact with the client by phone or other form of interactive technology (such as Skype, FaceTime, etc.) to determine the client's well-being every two weeks.

If, during a check-in call, a client expresses concerns about exposure, the worker should assist with a warm transfer to the ND Department of Health Hotline 1-866-207-2880. If medical advice is needed, they may also be encouraged to contact their health care provider.

If a worker is concerned about exposure, they should also contact the ND Department of Health Hotline and notify their supervisor.