

## UNC School of Government COVID-19 Project Proposal (updated 7/1/2020)

### Virtual Connections for Public Officials Charged with Protecting Older Adults

Older adults are particularly vulnerable during the current public health emergency. Physical health risks are compounded by the mental health challenges associated with isolation and anxiety as well as the vulnerability to scams and other types of [financial exploitation](#). Many local actors, in both the public and private sectors, are doing their best to protect and help older adults during this time. But the elder protection system in North Carolina is fragmented; communication and coordination are especially challenging for those involved, including social services agencies, law enforcement officials, financial institutions, the judicial system, health care providers, and private non-profits.

For the last two years, SOG faculty members have been working on a project to help increase connectivity among the local actors involved in elder protection. The project includes a manual, other written resources and tools, a website, and training. A key focus of this project is helping communities build [multidisciplinary teams](#) (MDTs) for elder protection. One of the greatest challenges facing these teams is coordination and resources. SOG's project includes an online shared space for each county's MDT, a forum for statewide information sharing, as well as on the various resources and tools. These virtual resources, which became available in May 2020, should improve coordination among those involved. When we launched this project, we did not expect the need for virtual connections to increase exponentially, as it has in the midst of the pandemic.

We have an excellent opportunity to help North Carolina communities build their MDTs right now – before the virus has a resurgence or changes later in the year. We have created the toolbox for them to use and are providing it to them online for free. Now we must move quickly to help them establish teams and utilize the tools. To do this, we would invite counties interested in developing MDTs to apply to the SOG for a training session. While it would be ideal to do this type of training in-person as cohort to enhance peer-to-peer learning, such large group training programs will likely not be feasible this fall. Therefore, we would select 10-12 counties offer an online team-building and training program. We piloted a multi-county version of this training in the fall of 2019 and are prepared to transition it quickly to more local, individualized, online programs. After the training, we will also provide technical assistance and facilitation to help support the teams to ensure that to work together to protect vulnerable, older adults.

**Principal Investigators:** [Margaret Henderson](#), Lecturer in Public Administration & Director, Public Intersection Project  
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**Budget:** \$90,000 for faculty/staff time, student assistance, and training-related expenses

EHRA Salary	\$48,042
SHRA Salary	\$12,064
Grad Student	\$6,000
Temps	-0-
Fringe Pool	\$19,094
Non-Personnel Expenses	\$4,800
Total	\$90,000