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February 17, 2026

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Shapiro Administration Highlights First Local Aging Agencies to Develop New, Regional Teams Designed to Protect Older Adults from Abuse

“...the Commonwealth’s commitment to statewide availability of this vital resource is unprecedented.” - Dr. Mark Lachs, professor of medicine at Weill Cornell School of Medicine

Since taking office in 2023, Governor Josh Shapiro has invested more than \$20 million to help older Pennsylvanians stay safe, healthy, and engaged in their communities as they age.



Mohnton, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Aging Secretary Jason Kavulich today touted how regional teams created under the Shapiro Administration and backed by the

U.S. Department of Justice will help keep older Pennsylvanians safe and protected from abuse.

These regional coalitions are called Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and are designed specifically to address complex older adult protective services cases in their respective counties and regions. Secretary Kavulich today visited with leaders from the Berks, Lancaster, and Lehigh County Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to see how their teams are benefitting from individualized, tailored support from outside experts and the Department.

The AAAs joining the Secretary today were among the first in Pennsylvania to receive this customized support and guidance.

“We are doing groundbreaking collaborative work at the state level to ensure the protection of older adults at the community level,” said **Secretary Kavulich**. “One of our Administration’s priorities is to continuously advance and modernize our practices while supporting the AAAs, District Attorney’s Offices, and our community partners to ensure older adults are cared for and safe in their chosen community. We are deploying national level expertise and proven practical approaches to help AAAs and community partners build teams that are person-centered and able to move quickly to get the right resources for the victim.”

MDTs are community-based groups that support the Department’s commitment to protecting older Pennsylvanians from abuse by bringing together professionals from various fields like social services, criminal and civil justice, mental health, medicine, finance, and public health to improve collaboration and outcomes for protective services cases. Under the leadership of Secretary Kavulich, the Department [has been working](#) to bring this collaborative approach, which is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice and utilized by several other states including New York and California, to Pennsylvania.

Five applications were selected through a competitive process to receive consulting from Weill Cornell Medicine. These include three individual counties – Bucks, Cumberland and Indiana – and two multi-county collaborations or “MDT Hubs,” one consisting of Lehigh, Lancaster, and Berks counties; and the second consisting of Clearfield, Jefferson, Potter, Cameron, Elk, and McKean counties.

Governor Josh Shapiro’s [proposed 2026-27 budget](#) calls for **more than \$6 million** in additional investments in Department of Aging services, including continuing to provide more transparency and accountability of the AAA network with [the Comprehensive Agency Performance Evaluation, or CAPE](#). In his budget address earlier this month, Governor Shapiro also called for long-overdue updates to the **Older Adults Protective Services Act (OAPSA)**, including adding financial exploitation as a crime, and expanding background

check requirements for caregivers. **Governor Shapiro's** proposal also calls for the creation of older adult fatality review teams to identify gaps in the system when the death and the investigation are connected. The proposal would better align OAPSA with the Adult Protective Services Act. Together, these reforms will improve OAPSA and further protect Pennsylvania's older adults.

Since taking office in 2023, Governor Shapiro has invested **more than \$20 million** to help older Pennsylvanians stay safe, healthy and engaged in their communities and to continue building community supports so all Pennsylvanians can keep thriving as they age.

Through its partnership to develop MDTs with the Department, Weill Cornell Medicine will provide key technical support to help the selected AAAs establish, formalize, and enhance MDT structures. This effort works to improve cross-sector coordination, decision-making, and system effectiveness to better protect older adults. Weill Cornell Medicine will also support MDTs through evidence-based frameworks, advanced data analysis, and subject-matter consultation to ensure rigor, consistency, and measurable outcomes across all the participating AAAs and AAA hubs. The geographic diversity of the participating AAAs also enables the Department to test, refine, and scale the MDT model across rural, suburban, and regional settings.

"Lehigh, Berks, and Lancaster Counties share a strong commitment to elder justice. The MDT Hub builds on existing partnerships and creates a structured framework for collaboration that allows us to address complex cases more effectively and consistently across the region," said **JR Reed, Lehigh County Office of Aging and Adult Services (AAA) executive director.**

"Berks County Area Agency on Aging is excited to collaborate with Lancaster and Lehigh County aging services in this regional partnership. Through this multidisciplinary team approach, we seek to enhance our capacity to promote elder justice, address complex situations, improve outcomes for the older adults we serve, and ensure that the least restrictive options are always considered," said **Jessica Jones, Berks County Office on Aging (AAA) director.**

"As someone who has created and supported elder abuse teams around the country and internationally, I can say that the Commonwealth's commitment to statewide availability of this vital resource is unprecedented," said **Dr. Mark Lachs, professor of medicine at Weill Cornell School of Medicine.** "Kudos to Secretary Kavulich and his team for protecting the rights and dignity of older Pennsylvanians."

The Department works with a network of [52 AAAs covering Pennsylvania's 67 counties](#) to deliver services to older adults that help them stay healthy, live safely and thrive in their

homes of choice as they age. Launched in March 2025, [CAPE](#) is the Department's overhauled approach to monitoring the performance of AAAs, including protective services for older adults. In April 2025, for the first time ever, The Department began posting performance results on its website for AAAs monitored under CAPE. [There are results for 18 AAAs currently on the Department's website with more to follow in the coming months.](#)

Editor's Note: Photos and video from the event will be available at [PACast.com](#).

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