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**STATE ATTORNEY INITIATES FIRST MEETING OF CIRCUIT TEAM
TO REVIEW ELDER ABUSE, FATALITIES**

Following the will of state leaders in the 2020 legislative session, State Attorney Melissa Nelson initiated the first meeting of the Elder Abuse Fatality Review Team for Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties.

As established by state law, the teams review closed elder cases that resulted in an individual's death found to have been caused by, or related to, abuse or neglect. The team considers facts that led to the fatal incident, including community resources, current laws and policies, and actions taken by systems or individuals.

The goal is to identify potential gaps or problems and develop approaches — including recommendations to change laws, rules, and policies — to address the causes and contributing factors of the death.

Lawmakers approved the bill creating the teams in the 2020 legislative session and Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the legislation into law in June.

"After four years in the making, it is extremely exciting that the first formal Elder Abuse Task Force will be organized in Jacksonville beginning today," said State Sen. Leader Audrey Gibson, who carried the bill. "I am grateful to all the stakeholders involved, including House bill sponsor State Rep. Fentrice Driskell, for their constant push to protect our seniors."

Like Gibson, County Court Judge Gary Flower has spent several years working on the issue. Flower said that after attending a specialized training on elder abuse issues, he was moved to work with others to conduct an elder abuse summit in Jacksonville. From that summit, he said, the group crafted the "gold standard of review in Florida."

"This is a great day for some of Florida's most vulnerable citizens," said Flower.

State attorneys for each circuit initiate a team's first meeting and refer closed cases to the team. The state attorney or his or her designee also serves on the team.

"It is an honor to launch this initiative and take part in work that can potentially save lives," said Nelson.

Like other teams, the Fourth Circuit's will meet at least once a year and submit a summary report to the Department of Elder Affairs annually by Sept. 1.

For more information on Elder Abuse Fatality Review Teams, read the legislation that established them at <https://bit.ly/2RXN3rO>.