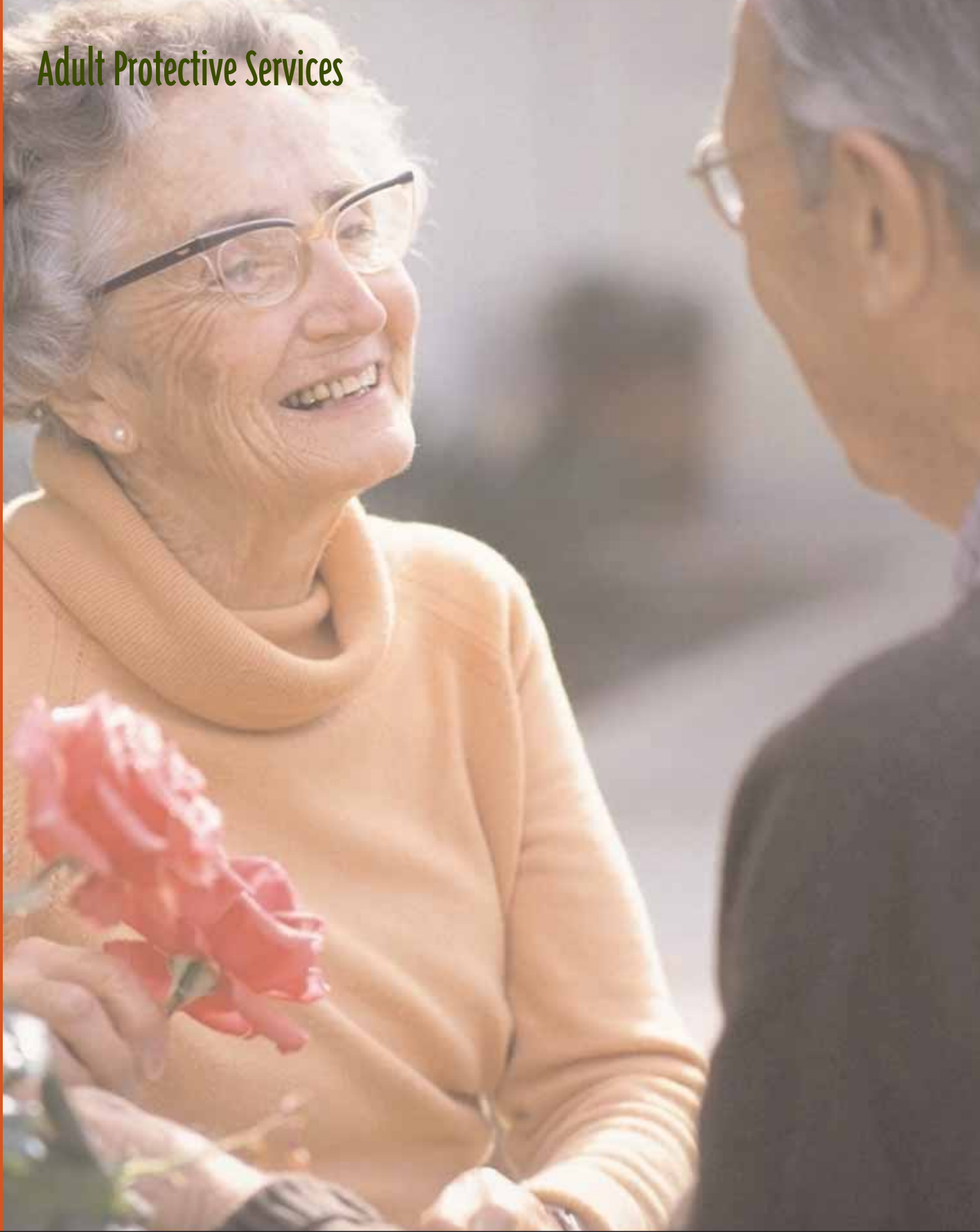


Adult Protective Services



Adult Protective Services



Improving Investigations and Service Delivery

APS staff updated its policies to clearly articulate the involvement of supervisors at specific points during investigations and delivery of services. The increased supervisor involvement offers additional safeguards to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The policy includes a checkpoint system, which ensures cases are assigned appropriately and staff receive additional guidance in difficult or complex cases. The system also ensures thorough investigations of all allegations in a timely manner, assists staff to develop long-term plans to prevent recurring abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and requires a mandatory review by supervisors on all cases prior to their closure.

APS also added specialized staff in each region with expertise in financial exploitation and self-neglect cases. These subject matter experts provide a critical resource for staff in gathering key evidence that may lead to legal action and in addressing complex medical and social factors to ensure the safety of clients. APS also developed special units to monitor complex investigations in counties with populations greater than 250,000.

Increasing Capacity

Staff Qualifications

To increase program effectiveness and the protection of vulnerable adults, APS hired new staff with professional credentials, while building the skills of current staff and encouraging them to pursue formal education relevant to their jobs. In 2006, DFPS employed hiring specialists to expedite filling new positions, instituted a pre-screening process to select applicants most likely to succeed as caseworkers, standardized the interview process for direct delivery staff, and began an educational

stipend program for existing staff. APS also worked with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to design and distribute a survey to all Texas colleges and universities offering degrees in social work and psychology, outlining the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in APS.

Caseload Reduction

In FY 2006, APS continued to focus efforts on establishing reasonable workloads that enabled caseworkers to provide adequate time and energy to individual clients and ensure positive outcomes. In response to a significant increase in intakes, approval was granted in FY 2006 for emergency funding to add 155 additional APS caseworkers in FY 2007. These caseworkers will be phased-in between September and April 2007.

Training

In 2006, APS introduced a new basic curriculum that includes web-based, classroom, and on-the-job training components. The training for new staff was expanded from 3 weeks to 11 weeks. APS hired additional field trainers in each region to provide new employees with intensive coaching during the on-the-job training phase. The program now requires 18 hours per year of continuing education for all direct delivery staff and supervisors. APS also established a system for tracking the delivery of training on new policy, as well as training for supervisors on case management.

Technology

Innovations in technology have increased caseworker efficiency and improved outcomes for clients through effective assessment and documentation. As of December 2005, all APS caseworkers received new tablet computers. APS caseworkers became a mobile workforce, using tablet PCs and digital cameras as key support tools in the field. These tools eliminated the boundary between the field and the office. Caseworkers in



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the field are now able to access case information, resources, and support from supervisors. This mobile technology has improved efficiency by enabling caseworkers to document case activities outside of their office, reducing travel time and increasing time interacting with clients.

- ◆ In May 2006, the Tablet PC and its related Mobile Protective Services software received an award for the “Best Application Serving the Public” in the “Business Evolution Through Mobilizing Field Workers” category at the Mobile & Wireless World Conference hosted by Computerworld Magazine.

Working Effectively With Community Partners

Public Awareness

APS launched a new robust year-round public awareness campaign called “It’s Everyone’s Business” to help enhance public awareness about the problems of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Built around community engagement activities with APS partners across the state, the campaign focused on elder maltreatment, as well as specialized topics featured during the year related to summer heat and financial exploitation. Public service announcements about adult abuse prevention were created and distributed to TV stations across Texas. The campaign also generated newspaper and broadcast media news stories on all the topics of the campaign. DFPS also created an adult abuse prevention kit, which included a variety of educational materials, and was made available to individuals and groups in Texas communities. The materials focused on local information and efforts to help educate people about the problems faced by the elderly and adults with disabilities and how to prevent adult maltreatment. The kit included sections on: APS responsibilities; key definitions about types of abuse, exploitation, and neglect; publicity,

Partnering with Law Enforcement



In February 2006, the El Paso Police Department partnered with Adult Protective Services (APS), and the El Paso District Attorney and County Attorney offices to create the Elder Abuse Task Force. A special victims unit within the El Paso Police Department was formed to work with the task force and is notified of suspected criminal activity by APS staff. According to El Paso Police Chief Richard Wiles, it is the first such police unit in a large Texas city.

Thanks to the task force, APS caseworkers and police detectives have a closer working relationship to ensure the safety of people who are elderly. This effort has resulted in an increased number of referrals and prosecutions. The majority of cases handled by the Special Victims Unit involve people who are elderly and in a state of self-neglect and the second most common problem involves financial exploitation. In its first year, the Special Victims Unit worked on 64 cases, including one that led to the arrest of an alleged perpetrator on El Paso’s “10 Most Wanted List” for felony charges of abuse of a person who is elderly.

“Our staff call the Special Victims Unit on a regular basis to obtain information, to do combined interviews, and to discuss difficult APS cases” said Elizabeth Mariscal, the APS resource and external relations specialist in El Paso. “They are a great asset to our agency because they are always willing to work with us to provide valuable information that is crucial for us to assist APS clients.”

From left to right: APS Investigator Ruben Villegas, APS Investigator Susana Saldaña, APS Specialist Liz Hinojosa, Detective Pete Natera of the El Paso Police Department (Special Victims Unit), APS Investigator Felix Cabrera, and Detective Ramon Torres of El Paso Police Department (Special Victims Unit).



presentation and media tips (including sample materials); issues facing vulnerable adults; how to get involved; and, caregiver resources and other valuable resources. All these materials are available at www.everyonesbusiness.org

Special Task Units

Senate Bill 6 instructed DFPS to work with county governments to create special task units in counties with populations of 250,000 or more. These units provide additional support for complex APS cases by engaging other disciplines to effectively solve problems, identify resources, make recommendations on cases, and serve as catalysts for additional services from the local community. In FY 2006, APS developed a curriculum and manual for the counties and worked with county governments to identify persons to serve on the special task units. Members from the private and public sector may include mental health professionals, attorneys, law enforcement agencies, physicians, and clergy. In 2006, commissioners' courts across the state approved creation of the special task units in 19 counties.

Community Engagement

Also as a result of Senate Bill 6, DFPS developed an APS customer satisfaction survey to send annually to stakeholders, protective services agencies, and probate courts. In May 2006, DFPS sent the survey to 2,300 stakeholders and will publish the survey results in FY 2007. This builds on efforts begun in 2005, when APS hired community initiative staff to focus on enhancing civic and volunteer initiatives, building the base of APS volunteers, and encouraging the development of diverse community boards. APS also hired resource and external relations staff to focus on building relationships with the service and provider communities in order to increase access to services such as home repair and payment assistance for medication and utilities. DFPS staff identified priorities in Texas communities and cre-

ated community action plans to address education and resource development. DFPS also strengthened collaborations with law enforcement agencies, created new extreme weather task forces, financial exploitation education campaigns, and other critical community partnerships.

Additional Accomplishments

- ◆ APS staff coordinated the 22nd Annual APS Conference in San Antonio in November 2005. The conference was successful, drawing 413 participants, including 50 out-of-state participants, and representatives from outside the U.S. The Texas APS conference is a major training event for APS practitioners and related professionals nationally and offered continuing education credits to social workers.
- ◆ Staff across Texas continued to help survivors of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. Although the disasters struck in late FY 2005 and early FY 2006, respectively, there were still many follow-up issues throughout FY 2006, such as finding housing or more suitable living arrangements, providing clothing, furniture and other necessities, and reuniting families. Some workers even made use of recently issued tablet PCs to help assist evacuees at various shelters in Texas.



Regional Vignettes

Region 1 (Lubbock Region)

Thanks to APS renewal efforts in 2005, DFPS funded two positions to help build community partnerships in each region. With community support, APS could create resource rooms for workers to provide clients with goods such as adult diapers, nutritional supplements, toiletries, cleaning supplies, non-perishable groceries, and medical equipment. The new staff located concerned citizens willing to serve on advisory boards, resulting in the formation of Silver Star advisory boards in Lubbock and Plainview. Both boards held their first meetings in 2006. Through various fundraisers, newspaper articles, assistance of churches, and contributions by local businesses, both boards successfully stocked the once empty Silver Star resource rooms. The two boards continue to thrive and their members are enthusiastic in meeting the needs of clients who are elderly or have disabilities.

Region 2 (Abilene Region)

In 2006, APS initiated the APS Honors program to emphasize the importance of partnerships and to recognize individuals and agencies that provided extraordinary care and service to people who are elderly or have disabilities. In collaboration with regional boards, APS Honors presented 19 awards to individuals and agencies throughout the region. Honorees included physicians, sheriffs, volunteers, and service providers. APS staff also increased awareness through presentations to law enforcement academies in Abilene, Wichita Falls, and west central Texas.

Region 3 (Arlington Region)

In 2006, two APS workers were placed in Dallas hospitals. This effort increased communication and understanding of roles and responsibilities between the two organizations. The on-site APS workers are now able to see clients quickly and begin investiga-

New Homes for Hurricane Katrina Victims



Although Hurricane Katrina struck in late FY 2005, Adult Protective Services still had many follow-up issues throughout FY 2006, such as finding housing or more suitable living arrangements, providing clothing, furniture and other necessities, and reuniting families.

One group of New Orleans residents actually found themselves evacuated all the way to El Paso and eventually ended up living at the same apartment complex. Thanks to APS, they were able to locate housing, get their pension and Social Security checks transferred, find medical care, get assistance with transportation, and more.

Ruby Eason and Samuel and Bessie Schoby were waist deep in water when their neighbor Ron Hall helped pull them from Ms. Eason's house. They were all eventually taken by helicopter to the New Orleans airport. It wasn't until they got on a plane that they found out they were going to El Paso.

"I blanked out a lot of what happened during Hurricane Katrina," said Mrs. Schoby. "I can't put it into words. We left with just the clothes on our backs. But we stuck together as neighbors. I miss New Orleans, where I had lived for 50 years, but everyone in Texas has been very nice and courteous. Cyndy, Liz, and a couple others from your agency have been like our guardian angels. They're beautiful people and I will always appreciate them."

From left to right: Elizabeth Morales, APS specialist-self neglect, Cynthia Vizacarra, APS specialist-exploitation, Ruby Hall (sitting) and grandson Jaylen Collins, Ron Hall, George J. Washington, Ruby Lee Eason, Samuel Schoby, and Bessie Schoby.



tions immediately into clients' situations. APS has resources and statutory authority unavailable to the hospital. The APS workers coordinate with hospital social workers to develop service plans that ensure the clients' well-being and safety. The Tablet PCs allow APS workers to perform their jobs in the hospital environment.

Region 4 (Tyler Region)

Staff conducted a very successful conference in May 2006 in coordination with the Area Agency on Aging of East Texas and Trinity Valley Community College Henderson County Campus entitled "Protective Services for Aging Gracefully." The conference held in Athens included breakout sessions featuring agency experts from the Office of the Attorney General, American Association of Retired Persons, the Texas Silver Haired Legislature, DFPS, DADS, HHSC, and the East Texas Area Agency on Aging. Several area businesses and health care organizations also supported the conference.

Region 5: (Beaumont Region)

APS staff participated in the Santas for Seniors program sponsored by a national provider of companionship and home care services. The organization accepts donations and purchases gifts for clients who may or may not have someone to think about them during the year. As one caseworker put it, "It is so very rewarding to see their faces when you touch them with the spirit of the holidays."

Region 6 (Houston Region)

In 2006, staff participated in the Harris County Elder Abuse Fatality Review Team, which strives for justice for elderly and vulnerable citizens who died as a result of interpersonal violence or neglect. The only team of its kind in Texas, it promotes cooperation, communication, and coordination among agencies that respond to

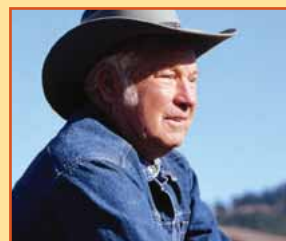
elderly and vulnerable adult deaths. The team reviews cases and makes recommendations to the county commissioner, appropriate state agencies, and local law enforcement on changes to law, policies, and practice in an effort to reduce the number of elder and vulnerable adult deaths caused by abuse and neglect. The team helped form and participated in a town-hall meeting held on June 22, 2006 entitled "Why Tolerate the Intolerable." The focus of the meeting was to raise the awareness and educate community leaders, policy makers, and the public about this growing problem.

Region 7 (Austin Region)

Region 7 APS staff began collaborating with Meals on Wheels (MOW) and More of Austin in 2006 to educate MOW volunteers about abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly and adults with disabilities. APS and MOW staff created brochures and distributed them to 3000 volunteers. The Region 7 Community Initiatives Specialist offered training to MOW volunteers on a quarterly basis. MOW also instituted a rapid response team to assist volunteers in identifying symptoms of abuse, neglect and exploitation and referring those cases to APS. The Region 7 community initiatives specialist described the collaboration as "awesome."

Region 8 (San Antonio Region)

In 2006, APS staff continued working with the Elder Fraud Task Unit formed in 2005. Through this task force, APS has enlisted the support of other entities to reduce instances of financial exploitation against adults who are elderly or have disabilities. The task force is comprised of representatives from APS, the Bexar County District Attorney's office, probate court investigators, Frost Bank Fraud Management, the Bexar County Sheriff's office, and the San Antonio Police Department. The task force provides an opportunity to discuss difficult cases, learn about



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APS policy, and train and present information to seniors, financial institution personnel, the Bexar County Sheriff's office, the Crime Control and Prevention District Board, the Bexar County Police Chiefs' Association, the Businesses Against Theft Network, and the San Antonio Police Department.

Region 9 (Midland Region)

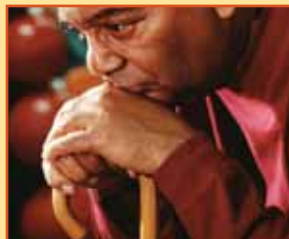
APS staff began a coalition with Midland/Odessa community centers for mental health and mental retardation to improve communication and increase awareness of policies and changes in each agency. Discussions focused on services, unmet needs, and communication. Participants from both agencies are pleased with the improved relationships and supervisors plan to form coalitions in other cities. Region 9 also continued special holiday projects with banking partners to provide gifts for clients who are elderly or have disabilities, brightening the season for more than 350 clients in the Midland, Odessa, and Big Spring area.

Region 10 (El Paso Region)

APS staff and volunteers worked with the El Paso Extreme Weather Task Force to collect and distribute fans for people who are elderly during the summer months and blankets during the winter months. The Task Force also promoted a buddy system that paired people who are elderly to check on one another and encouraged elderly residents who did not have air conditioning to spend more time in air-conditioned places such as shopping malls and senior centers. The Task Force members provided educational materials and training on the dangers of potential fires from use of space heaters and of carbon monoxide poisoning from using alternate fuel sources. These efforts resulted in a reduction in the number of deaths related to heat, extreme cold, space heater fires, and carbon monoxide poisoning in the El Paso region.

Region 11 (Edinburg Region)

The Silver Ribbon Community Partners Board of Hidalgo and Starr Counties held their first annual "Jackpot of Love" fundraiser in February 2006, netting more than \$30,000 for the benefit of Region 11 APS clients. More than 250 people risked wet, chilly weather to attend the fundraiser. Board members, local dignitaries and attendees rendered warm recognition to APS staff for their devoted service to the most vulnerable adults of the region.



APS Services

APS clients are adults who are age 65 and older or who have a disability and reside in the community. They may also be adults or children with mental illness or mental retardation who receive services in state operated and/or contracted settings, or in unlicensed facilities. Two program areas serve APS clients: in-home investigations and services and mental health (MH) and mental retardation (MR) investigations. APS in-home staff work closely with Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) staff on cases that require coordination and referral for guardianship services.

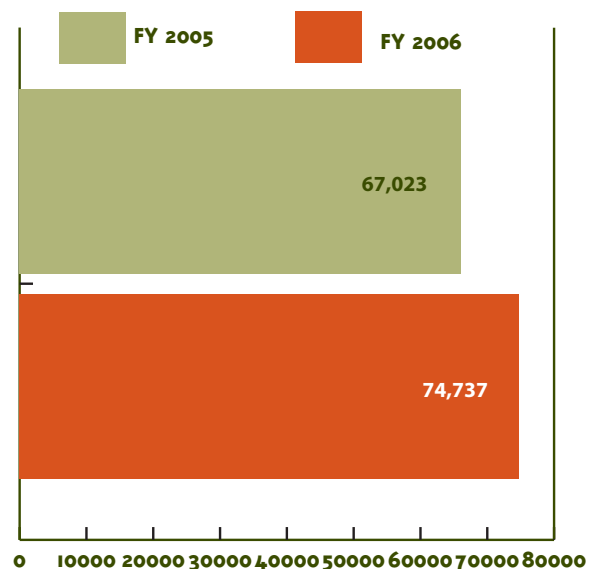
Protecting adults who are elderly or have a disability continues to be a growing issue in Texas. Based on HHSC population projections for 2006, Texans who were elderly or who were adults with a disability made up about 17.2 percent of the state's population. In 2006, 2.3 million Texans were age 65 and older and 45 percent, or 1.02 million, of those had a disability. About 12 percent of adults between the ages of 18 and 64 had a disability. Many of these individuals live alone and depend on others for care.

In-Home Investigations and Services

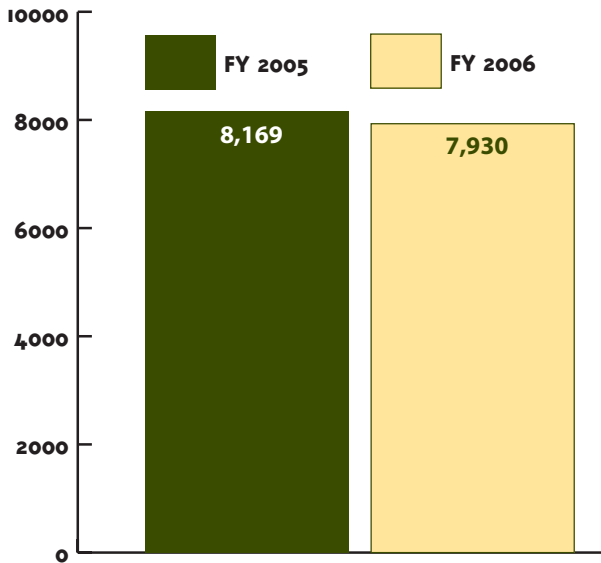
The largest APS program area is in-home investigations and services. The in-home program investigates allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of the elderly or adults with disabilities. Specifically, APS works with vulnerable adults who reside in their own homes or in room-and-board homes not subject to licensure. APS also investigates allegations of exploitation involving vulnerable adults living in nursing homes who may be financially exploited by someone outside the facility. State law requires anyone who believes that an elderly person or adult with a disability is being abused, neglected or exploited to report it to the DFPS hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or online at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

An investigation begins within 24 hours of receiving a report. In FY 2006, APS completed 74,737 investigations of which 51,200 cases were confirmed cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. When maltreatment is confirmed, APS may provide or arrange for emergency services to alleviate abuse, neglect, and exploitation including short-term assistance, shelter, food, medication, health services, financial assistance for rent and utility restoration, transportation, and minor home repair. APS also refers clients to other social or community services, including guardianship services at DADS.

Completed In-Home Investigations



Completed Facility Investigations



MH and MR Investigations

APS is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of clients receiving services in state operated and/or contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation. Investigations are conducted in the following settings:

- ◆ state schools;
- ◆ state hospitals;
- ◆ state centers;
- ◆ community mental health/mental retardation centers; and
- ◆ facility and community center contractors, including home and community-based waiver programs.

During FY 2006, APS completed 7,930 investigations in state operated and/or contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation.

