

Adult Protective Services (APS)

Responsibilities

- ◆ Investigate reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities.
- ◆ Provide or arrange protective services as needed.
- ◆ Investigate reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of persons receiving services in state operated and/or certain contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation.

Accomplishments

Continued Response to APS Reform

By the end of fiscal year 2006, APS had completed 100 percent of the 252 initiatives required by APS Reform and Senate Bill 6 of the 79th Legislature. Therefore, in fiscal year 2007, APS turned its attention to evaluating the effects of these unprecedented reform initiatives. The reform initiatives touched every aspect of APS casework, including improving outcomes for clients, increasing capacity to investigate and arrange services, and working effectively with existing and new community partners. Programmatic change of this magnitude necessitated examining how changes affected the quality of services to the people and communities APS serves.

APS outlined a plan to accomplish this critical examination in phases. The first phase focused on mobile technology and was

completed in June 2007. As a result, staff made improvements to the agency's Mobile Protective Services software technology.

The next phases of evaluation, scheduled for completion in 2008, will examine areas such as quality assurance, community satisfaction, training, and risk assessment. At the completion of each phase, an evaluation report will be prepared that addresses the:

- ◆ Purpose and goals of the evaluation.
- ◆ Data analysis.
- ◆ Key findings of the evaluation.
- ◆ Plans for identifying best practices, integrating process improvements, and lessons learned.

Improving Outcomes for Clients

In FY 2007, APS worked on a number of significant initiatives focused on improving outcomes for the people it serves, and further enhancing services to our most vulnerable Texans.

Enhancing Quality Assurance and Performance Management

In fiscal year 2007, APS continued to enhance how performance management information is used to improve worker performance. This includes field management using performance management information to assess needs and build the skills of field staff. While improvement is not uniform across all measures, two important performance measures: investigation and client outcome scores have increased. The investigation quality scale has increased from 89.65 percent during the first quarter to 92.66 percent during the fourth quarter and the client outcomes scale has increased from 87.5 percent during the first quarter to 90.11 percent in the fourth quarter. The scales represent an average of 10 performance standards that measure specific program functions.

Guardianship Coordination with DADS

The transfer of guardianship responsibilities to the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) in fiscal year 2005 reinforced the primary role of APS in investigating and ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults in need of protection. This transfer provided a unique opportunity for DFPS and DADS to work together. In 2007, a joint agency steering committee developed guidelines to ensure coordination and communication in serving our clients, which will be implemented in APS policy in fiscal year 2008.



Improving Investigations and Service Delivery

APS began revising its handbook to reflect new performance standards and reform policy changes. APS also increased the number of regional specialized staff 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 additional special task units in counties with populations greater than 250,000 to assist with complex investigations.

Increasing Capacity

Improving Staff Resources

APS completed the phase-in of additional professional staff resources. APS continues to offer current staff opportunities to build skills and pursue formal education relevant to their jobs through educational stipends and ongoing professional development classes.

Caseload Reduction

At the end of FY 2007, the average daily caseload for APS In-Home Services was 36.4. That compares to an average daily caseload of 51.2 at the end of fiscal year 2006. The successful reduction of caseloads was due to several factors.

- ◆ Caseload growth was less than projected.
- ◆ Regional staff focused on reducing the duration of long-pending cases.
- ◆ A higher than anticipated percentage of new staff completed their training and maintained a full workload.

Training

In 2007, APS continued work on enhancing web-based training and the ability to provide training across the state to meet the demand created by the increase of in-home services staff. More than 300 trainees attended training in fiscal year 2007, which is more than double the previous year. APS contracted with the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston to develop training modules on conducting medical and mental health assessments. The training modules targeted medical and mental health professionals who assess APS clients. The agency also contracted for new training on the Texas Penal Code related to elder abuse and neglect.

Technology

As of December 2005, all APS caseworkers received new tablet personal computers (tablet PCs). APS caseworkers became a mobile workforce by using tablet PCs and digital cameras in the field. These tools eliminated the boundary between the field and the office. However, APS continued to improve the Mobile Protective Services (MPS) software application in fiscal year 2007 through user surveys. MPS allows caseworkers to download portions of case records into tablet PCs prior to leaving the office. Then, in the field, they can not only reference that information but also add to it, documenting the case on the go.

In May 2007, APS published the results of a mobile technology evaluation which indicated that using tablet PCs improved case work efficiency and quality by allowing caseworkers to work "any time, any place." Tablet PCs also allow workers to:

- ◆ View new cases as they are assigned.
- ◆ Document closer to the time of contact.
- ◆ Access case information remotely.
- ◆ Find and retrieve resources.
- ◆ Map travel using the streets and trips function.

The evaluation recommendations are being used to improve casework. The APS/CPS Mobile Caseworker pilot is scheduled in FY 2008. The project will more closely link mobile caseworker activities and resources to job requirements.

Working Effectively With Community Partners

Public Awareness

In 2007, APS continued the public awareness campaign called "It's Everyone's Business" to help bring attention to the problems of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Built around community engagement activities with APS partners across the state, the campaign focused on elder abuse, as well as specialized topics featuring the dangers of summer heat, information on mental illness and homelessness, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. APS distributed public service announcements about adult abuse prevention to TV stations across Texas, and newspaper and broadcast media news stories were developed on all topics of the yearly campaign.

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In 2007, DFPS updated the adult abuse prevention kit which includes a variety of educational materials and is available to individuals and groups in all Texas communities. The materials focus on local information, efforts to help educate people about the problems faced by the elderly and adults with disabilities, and how to prevent adult maltreatment. The kit includes sections on: APS responsibilities; key definitions about types of abuse, exploitation and neglect; publicity, 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 to download for free at www.everyonesbusiness.org.

Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

APS also conducted an annual community satisfaction survey in accordance with Human Resources Code, Section 48.006. The purpose of the survey was to solicit information from community

partners regarding DFPS performance. The survey is sent annually to members of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, community organizations and resource groups, and Adult Protective Services (APS) community boards. In 2007, APS conducted its third survey concerning community satisfaction about adult protective services. The results of the survey show that the current APS community engagement activities and local outreach efforts are effective. Survey results indicated a higher level of performance in fiscal year 2007 than in fiscal year 2006. Overall, the community satisfaction survey results from all four stakeholder groups were positive.

APS uses results of the annual surveys to plan overall community engagement activities in regions. The results provide direction for sustaining community support and planning local community engagement initiatives that strengthen volunteer programs and enhance resources in communities that benefit APS clients.

Sample Survey Questions	2006 Survey Results ("Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with statement)	2007 Survey Results ("Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with statement)
From judicial community: "APS staff members are prepared when testifying in court."	73%	78%
From law enforcement community: "APS staff members are prepared with information and facts when working with law enforcement on APS cases."	72%	84%
From community partners: "APS is an important component of my community's resource and social service network."	89%	95%
From community board members: "APS is an important component of my community's resource network."	90%	97%

'Guardian Angel' Helps Client Keep Roof over Her Head



When people reach their "golden years," one of the last things they want to worry about is whether or not they can keep a roof over their heads. But after a couple of Texas-sized gully washers, that's exactly the dilemma Hilda Taylor of Comanche faced.

"We had this incredible rain, it was like the Mississippi River was running through here," says Taylor, age 71.

Taylor says one rain created a leak in the roof that rotted out the floor of one bathroom and the sink and commode sunk into the foundation. Another rain in the main living area caused a leak in the roof that almost caused the ceiling to cave in. It also left a hole where mice, rats, and cats entered the house.

Taylor, who has been on her own since 2002 when her husband succumbed to heart problems, does not have the resources to maintain her house. "I am living on half of the money I had when my husband was alive," she says. "But the bills are the same. Home repair and remodeling costs more and since I am older, there are fewer things that I can do myself. I have children, but they live in Germany. There are neighbors who are willing to help but they don't always have the time."

Since her husband was in the service, Taylor first approached the Veterans Administration but staff there said it would take time for benefits to come through. "When I was younger, I never thought stuff like this would happen to me. I'd look at people less fortunate and wonder how they let themselves go like that. Now it's me. I didn't end up this way on purpose."

Staff at the Veteran's Administration contacted Adult Protective Services and the case was assigned to Shauna Wells, a caseworker in Brownwood. Wells worked with a local roofer and through an emergency fund, was able to supplement money from Taylor's insurance company. Wells also helped Taylor apply for a rural development loan from the United States Department of Agriculture to fix the rest of the house.

"Shauna is a guardian angel," says Taylor. "I never met any official person who was as warm and helpful. I thought that was a friend helping me, I didn't pay any attention that it was someone working for the government."

Regional Vignettes

Region 1 (Amarillo/Lubbock Region)

APS staff continued to work with the Panhandle Plains Area Fraud Reduction Committee, which was formed in 2006. Through this task force, APS enlisted the support of several local banks and state and federal agencies to help reduce instances of financial exploitation against adults who are elderly or disabled. The task force is comprised of representatives from APS, City Bank Fraud Management, Plains Capital Fraud Management, Lubbock Police Department, Amarillo Police Department, US Postal Inspector, and FBI Fraud Unit. The Fraud Unit provides an opportunity to discuss difficult cases and learn more about what type of fraud cases are being discovered by the various agencies.

Region 2 (Abilene Region)

Region 2 initiated STARS (Supporting, Training, & Retaining Staff) groups for both in-home and mental health and mental retardation investigations workers with less than two years of service. Workers develop ideas for the meetings and select training topics.

Recognizing the value of involving our community stakeholders, the groups asked representatives from Area Agency on Aging, Community Care for the Aged and Disabled, law enforcement agencies, and others to provide training sessions on client services, safety, and other topics. STARS meetings include time for training, peer networking, and in-depth discussions with the regional director and program administrator.

Region 3 (Arlington Region)

Region 3 hosted several "It's Everyone's Business" campaign events in May 2007 as part of Elder Abuse Prevention Month including one at the Senior Recreation Center in McKinney, and another at the Senior Center in Frisco. Both presentations focused on how to recognize elder abuse and what to do if it is suspected. The lectures pointed out that although many forms of abuse are more obvious to the public, such as physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological abuse, others are less obvious such as self-neglect, medical neglect, malnutrition, over medication, or exploitation.

Region 4 (Tyler Region)

APS staff joined forces with Area Agency on Aging of East Texas and other agencies in 2007 to create the Affordable Housing Solutions program. Affordable Housing Solutions is an on-going

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program consisting of a one day community event to help low income vulnerable adults learn more about affordable housing, home repair, and relocation options. An Affordable Housing Solutions event was held once every three months in various counties throughout the region. The topics included: Senior Housing Options, Section 8 Housing, Mold Prevention, How to Conserve Energy in Your Home, Insulating Your Home, USDA Rural Development Programs; How to Hire a Contractor; Medicaid Estate Recovery, and Consumer Credit Counseling Services. Every attendee received a free housing resource directory provided by the American Association of Retired Persons and the Cities of Tyler and Longview.

Region 5 (Beaumont Region)

Trinity County APS Board members took on the "Ultimate Fundraiser for the Year." Through individual connections with extended family members in all the right places, the board acquired numerous brand new hunting items to raffle off just before deer season (which is huge in East Texas). The funds raised through these efforts will assist many APS clients in one of the more impoverished counties of East Texas.

Region 6 (Houston Region)

In 2007, the Region 6 APS Advisory Board collaborated with Harris County Probate courts and the APS attorney to provide legal training for 40 new caseworkers. The primary purpose of the training was to increase the knowledge, awareness, and skills of APS staff about legal interventions. Staff gained valuable knowledge on testifying in court proceedings in an actual courtroom environment. Participants included a probate court judge, county attorney, private attorney, physician, and nurse practitioner. The training included mock trial proceedings.

Region 7 (Austin Region)

After less than a year in existence, the Williamson County Special Task Unit is off to a successful start. Members have provided very creative recommendations for resolving some of the most complex and difficult situations faced by Williamson County APS clients. The group has had a varied membership including a bank president, a local physician, a pastor, and representatives from the County and District Attorneys offices, Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority, and five local law enforcement agencies.

Region 8 (San Antonio Region)

San Antonio's Elder Domestic Violence Task Force, of which APS is a member, has been in existence for 10 years. In 2007, APS collaborated with the task force to produce a public awareness campaign called "Domestic Violence, It Gets Old." The campaign will be a year round effort to raise public awareness of elder abuse in the San Antonio area.

Region 9 (Midland Region)

Region 9 staff demonstrated leadership in becoming mobile caseworkers and experts in new technology. With the introduction of tablet personal computers (tablet PCs), many rural area staff quickly incorporated tablet PC capabilities into their work style, enabling them to save travel time by performing many "office" functions outside the traditional office setting. The region formed a skilled users group which included a member from each unit who demonstrated enthusiasm and good technical skills with tablet PCs. These skilled users provide training in small groups for their unit and continue networking to identify best practices and helpful tips.

Region 10 (El Paso Region)

In May 2007, Region 10 APS staff organized a free, two-day training on domestic violence and elder/disability awareness. Nearly 100 attended the public session at El Paso Community College and topics included accessibility of services, communicating with people with disabilities, and breaking down of stereotypes. According to the 2000 census, more than 3.6 million Texans have a disability—122,545 of them reside in El Paso County.

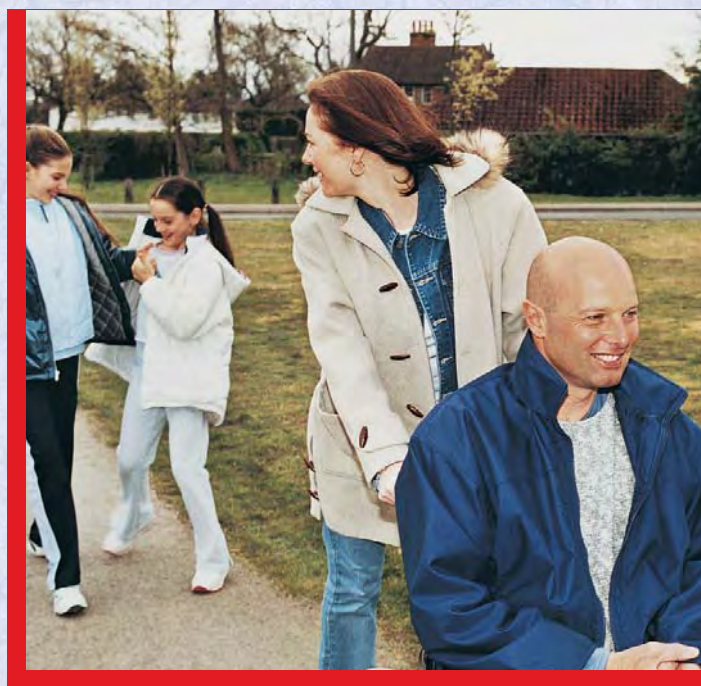
Region 11 (Edinburg Region)

Region 11 staff partnered with Silver Ribbon Community Partners for Thanksgiving and Christmas of 2006. They delivered 45 family dinners for Thanksgiving and 30 for Christmas so APS clients could enjoy a festive holiday dinner in the traditional way where the parent hosted their adult children and grandchildren. Workers also delivered personal hygiene items, warm-ups, pajamas, and household cleaning items.

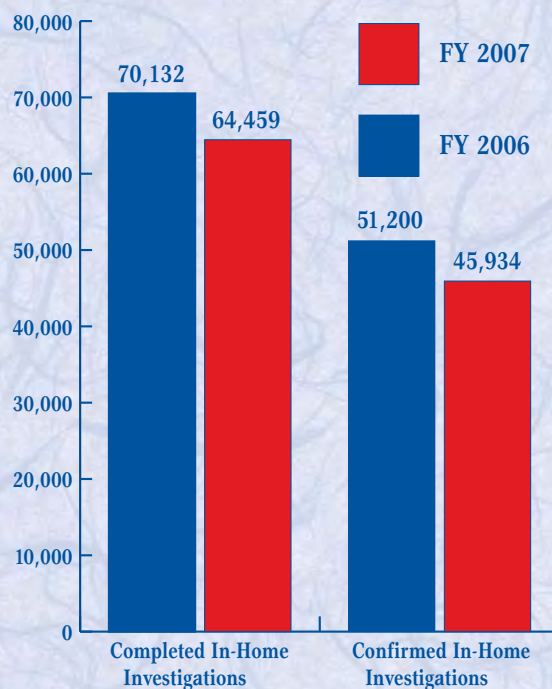
Community Engagement

In fiscal year 2007, Texas Partners for Adult Protective Services, a non-profit organization, was established after a year of planning. The purpose is to support and advocate for APS on a statewide level. Local community volunteers representing every region around the state were recruited to serve as board members. Also in 2007, regional community engagement specialists strengthened collaborations with community partners to better protect the people we serve. Community initiative specialists built a larger base of APS volunteers and interns and developed diverse community boards. Resource and external relations specialists focused on building relationships with the health and human service community, law enforcement officials, judiciary partners, and code enforcement officials. APS community engagement staff served as partners on extreme weather task forces, fatality review teams, and financial exploitation task teams, as well as other collaborative efforts in all parts of the state to protect vulnerable people in our communities.

Resource and external relations specialists partnered with APS regional attorneys and regional trainers to provide training relating to judicial partners for new caseworkers. The training provides new caseworkers with information on accurate documentation, navigating the court system, and testifying in court cases. Pilot trainings, conducted in December and January, were positively received by staff.



Completed In-Home Investigations



Additional Accomplishments

APS staff coordinated the 23rd Annual APS Conference in San Antonio in November 2006. The successful conference attracted 437 participants from 25 states and two countries outside the U.S. The annual Texas conference is a major national training event for APS practitioners and related professionals and offers continuing education credits to social workers and law enforcement.

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

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with Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) staff on cases that require coordination and referral for guardianship services.

As the population of adults who are elderly or have a disability continues to grow, so does the need for protective services. Based on HHSC population projections for 2007, Texans who were elderly or who were adults with a disability made up about 17.9 percent of the state's population. In 2007, over 2.3 million Texans were age 65 and older, and 44.5 percent or 1.04 million of those had a disability. 12.7 percent of adults, ages 18 to 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 with initial contact by phone or in person within 24 hours of receiving a report. In FY 2007, APS completed 64,459 investigations, which resulted in 45,934 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. These services may include 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.

Mental Health/Mental Retardation Investigations

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

- ◆ State schools, state hospital and state centers.
- ◆ Community mental health/mental retardation centers.
- ◆ Facility and community center contractors, including home and community-based waiver programs.

During FY 2007, APS completed 8,088 of these investigations.

Completed Facility Investigations

