



# First Responders and Adult Protective Services



## Partnering to Protect

### One Team, One Goal.

First responders are critical and valued Adult Protective Services (APS) partners in protecting and ensuring the safety of vulnerable adults in Texas. Our shared goal is to find solutions for vulnerable adults so they can live healthier, safer lives with dignity. We achieve the best results when APS and first responders work side by side to help the people we serve.

### About APS

APS is a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). We serve Texans who live in the community who are age 65 or older and adults, age 18 to 64, who have a disability that substantially affects their ability to live independently. APS investigates when someone alleges that a member of either of these groups is a victim of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation. When an investigation confirms an allegation, APS may provide or arrange for services to remedy or prevent further harm.

### Reporting to APS

Report situations of suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation to the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400. For situations that are not urgent, you can report online at [txabusehotline.org](https://www.txabusehotline.org).

Please provide as much detail as possible and a good call-back number for APS to ask follow-up questions.

State law requires everyone to report suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities to DFPS. The law also provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for those acting in good faith.

DFPS's Statewide Intake (SWI) program operates the hotline and the website. If the allegations meet APS's investigation criteria, SWI assigns a priority that is based on the severity of the situation and sends it to a local APS office where a caseworker begins an investigation. The caseworker uses the priority to determine how quickly to see the client.

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*Most of the cases APS investigates involve self-neglect. Self-neglect warning signs may include poor hygiene, lack of necessities, and unsanitary living conditions.*

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## APS Role and Responsibilities

- APS investigates allegations of abuse, neglect and self-neglect, and financial exploitation when the adult is age 65 or older or has a disability causing significant impairment.
- APS compiles testimony and records from medical providers and other community partners and seeks legal remedies as needed to ensure the safety of clients and the community.
- APS finds community resources to help clients with short-term needs such as emergency shelter, rent, house cleaning, minor home repairs, wheelchair ramps, food, and medications. Longer-term solutions include advocating for clients to receive benefits and connecting clients with social service agencies.
- APS does not have the authority to remove clients from their homes, or mandate services, unless the situation requires an emergency removal. An emergency removal requires court approval before or after the fact.

## Facts about APS

- APS clients who have the capacity to make decisions have the right to refuse services, such as home cleaning or medication assistance, but the investigation is not optional. APS is required to continue the investigation whether the client is cooperative or not.
- APS's ability to take legal actions, including for imminent mental health concerns, depends on: (1) if there is evidence that the client lacks capacity to make decisions, (2) if there is a threat to the client's life or physical safety, and (3) if there is no one else to make decisions about services on the client's behalf.
- APS works with the community, including first responders and homeless shelters, to find placement for our clients as APS does not have

emergency shelters or placements. This may include providing lists of hotels that rent by the month or apartment listings.

- If clients refuse to leave their homes and need assistance, APS must seek less restrictive alternatives. If clients have capacity to make their own decisions, then they can choose to remain in their homes. If they do not have capacity, APS may seek a court order about their living situation, including placement in a nursing home.



## Opportunities for First Responders and APS to Work Together

- **Establishing Points of Contact and Clear Communications.** APS welcomes the opportunity to build relationships with EMS and fire departments to foster trust and effective communications.
- **Working with APS to ensure the patient's safety.** As medical experts, first responders can conduct medical evaluations in the patients' homes.
- **Collaborating with APS caseworkers** on-site or after a call to get quick access to short-term resources for the adult who is in need.
- **Communicating** about any previous interaction with the adult that will help APS and first responders assess the patient's health status.
- **Expanding Training Opportunities.** Together, first responders and APS can develop cross-training opportunities such as Brown Bag Lunch-and-Learns and ride-alongs, for both first responders and APS, to learn about each other's role and services.

Contact your local APS office:

For more information, please visit [PartneringToProtect.org](https://PartneringToProtect.org).



**TEXAS**  
Department of Family  
and Protective Services  
Adult Protective Services