



Law Enforcement and Adult Protective Services



Partnering to Protect

One Team, One Goal.

Law enforcement agencies are critical and valued partners to Adult Protective Services (APS) in protecting and ensuring the safety of vulnerable adults in Texas. Our shared goal is to find solutions for adults who are in need so they can live healthier, safer lives with dignity. We achieve the best results when APS and law enforcement 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. Texas law 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.

.....

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

.....

APS Roles and Responsibilities

- APS must report allegations that may be a criminal offense to law enforcement with a letter.
- In some situations, APS may respond to emergency situations to assist law enforcement.
- APS collaborates with law enforcement and other community partners to find the best outcome for clients.
- APS seeks court-ordered warrants and protective orders to ensure the safety of clients and the community as needed.
- APS facilitates access to 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.



Facts About APS

- APS's legal authority comes from the Texas Human Resources Code and the Texas Administrative Code. All APS actions are civil.
- APS has no authority to remove people from their homes or mandate services unless the situation meets certain conditions for emergency removal and APS seeks a court order. APS must show that the client is being abused, neglected, or financially exploited, there is a threat to life or physical safety, and that the client lacks the capacity to consent to services and no one else can give consent.

- 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 does not have emergency shelters or placements. APS works with law enforcement, homeless shelters, and other groups to find temporary placements for our clients, including hotels or apartments.
- If clients refuse to leave their homes and need assistance, APS must pursue less restrictive alternatives before placing them into nursing homes. If clients have the capacity to make their own decisions, then they can choose to remain in their homes. If they do not have the capacity, APS may seek a court order about their living situation.

Opportunities for Law Enforcement and APS to Work Together

- **Conducting joint investigations.** In some cases, law enforcement and APS do not have the authority to act on their own but can work together to achieve better outcomes.
- **Working together** to serve warrants and protective orders.
- **Making joint home visits** to ensure everyone's safety.
- **Establishing points of contact and clear communication channels** so that APS and law enforcement can reach the right people.
- **Developing cross-training opportunities**, such as Brown Bag Lunch-and-Learns and ride-alongs, to learn about each other's roles and services.
- **Sharing status updates on referrals** made by APS Financial Exploitation Units.
- **Celebrating successes** where partnerships have resulted in positive outcomes.
- **Recognizing officers** whose contributions are making a difference.

Contact your local APS office:

For more information, please visit PartneringToProtect.org.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services
Adult Protective Services