

Video Transcript

(on screen title) Adult Protective Services In-Home Program

A Realistic Job Preview

(The song "Games People Play" by Alan Parson plays in the background of opening titles with the lyrics, "Where do we go from here now that all other children are growin' up? And how do we spend our lives if there's no-one to lend us a hand?")

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

As an APS In-Home Caseworker, we investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly and disabled inside the home so we go out to the homes of the elderly and disabled and we ensure their safety while living in the community.

Anna Damon, APS Supervisor

Usually an allegation has been made by somebody in the community and we basically go in and take a quick snapshot of what's going on in the house to see if the allegations have any merit.

Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

A case comes to our central intake line in Austin, the 1-800 number. Once we receive the intake down to our local field office, we route the case out to a worker who is assigned to that area. They immediately start working on the case, making contact with the people who are involved with the case.

The most common cases we deal with are self-physical neglect cases, cases where for some reason the person is in the home and they are unable to meet their needs or they just need something to help them out, then we go out and we try to assist them to the best of our ability to alleviate their situation whatever it might be.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

Insuring the safety of the elderly and disabled in the community can be a variety of things. It's putting services in place, making sure that they have all the services that they need to remain safely in their home.

Jenny Stefanic interviewing elderly client

Have you heard anything on the food stamp application?

Elderly client

Uh, they give us, first 30 would just be \$51, now they give us \$55.

Jenny Stefanic

That's more than you were receiving the first time, right?
And you completed the application for housing, right?

Elderly client

Yes ma'am.

Jenny Stefanic

Ok, and you turned it in?

Elderly client

Yes ma'am.

Jenny Stefanic

Have you heard anything?

Elderly client

No, they say they're going to take a while before they, before they get it.

Jenny Stefanic driving in car

With APS, you never know what to expect. Today we're going to see a 50-year old male who has brain injury and as a result of that he's having difficulty managing his own money, um, he is easily taken advantage of and therefore people are coming at the beginning of the month and he's loaning them money leaving himself in a state of neglect.

Jenny Stefanic interviewing adult male in client's household

So tell me how you all are handling the finances right now? Does he still have the card?

Adult male member of the client's household

Yeah. I'm going with him for making groceries.

Jenny Stefanic

Ok, so you're keeping the card?

Adult male member of the client's household

Everything.

Jenny Stefanic

But he's actually using it when you go somewhere?

Adult male member of the client's household

Yeah. We spend together.

Jenny Stefanic speaking to disabled adult male

Allright well then I'll touch base with the doctor and the home health and then I'll give you a call. Ok. It won't be until the beginning of next week because I'm going to be out making visits today so I'll be able to sit down on Monday and make the phone calls.

Jenny Stefanic driving in car

When I first started this job, going to a residence that I had never been to before was very nerve-racking. I would sit in my car for possibly 10 minutes convincing myself to just go knock on the door because the unknown was intimidating and made me nervous. Over time, I've learned that you just have to be prepared and expect the unexpected and just go in with an open mind and I think that's all you can do.

Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

And I think that for a lot of the people who are out in the field, their biggest fear is knocking on the door at times, you're walking into environments by yourself at times, you don't have a gun, you don't have a badge, you don't always have backup and support right there beside you and you're knocking on the door of a stranger's home.

Anna Damon, APS Supervisor

You will run into hazardous and or risky situations, for example, dogs. They can be little dogs or big dogs and they bite, dogs bite, so that can be an issue. Sometimes you can run into hostile family members.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

I've had several hoarding cases and they're probably the most difficult cases to work. The people don't want you in their home, they're embarrassed by their homes, they just don't want you there, they don't want your assistance and they have this really strong attachment to their personal belongings that are in their home. They need the assistance but they don't think they need the assistance, so they're very very difficult cases to work. I had one lady who her house was so filled with maps and newspapers and she was sleeping outside on her back porch and so we went in and we cleaned her home, we placed her in an assisted living facility while we were cleaning her home and she allowed us to do that but six months later the home was back to what it had been before we had cleaned it.

(On Screen titles)

The job is fast-paced

Frustrating at times

Unpredictable

Demanding

Stressful

Emotional

Jenny Stefanic driving in car

With this job I spend most of my days in the car either driving to a client's house or documenting. Most of my meals are eaten either in the car or in the parking lot while I'm documenting so with this job you definitely need a reliable transportation. It's not something you could take the bus to. Some of the areas we work don't have bus routes, the bus doesn't go out that far. This is definitely not a nine-to-five job. Even if you shut down your computer at five o'clock, you're still thinking about the clients, what you have to do tomorrow morning, where you ended your day, what you didn't get to finish and then there's also those days that there's some emergency going on with the client and you're working till six, seven o'clock. I've done emergency removals where I've had to stay with the client at the hospital till one in the morning.

Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

Sometimes you're on call and you have to work some weekends and so with the amount of intakes and clients they have coming in, with the workload they currently have, and the time that they're allotted to complete it in, it gets demanding.

Jovanka Burnett, APS Caseworker

It does affect the family life because you can't plan things when you're on call if you have vacation schedule. Sometimes you're able to switch with your coworkers depending on what's going on but usually if you're on call, you have to be on call.

Marie Rice, APS Caseworker

You have to be willing to change your plans at any moment, especially, you know, first thing in the morning, you see what cases came in overnight, you know, you map it out. You're like, ok, I'm going to get these these these this done this done and then within two hours that could be different.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

This is a very stressful job. You ultimately are holding other people's lives in your hands some days in making the decision should they remain in the community, should they be placed in a facility, can you put enough services in place for them to remain safely in the community? And not only that, but you don't just have one client, you have 35 clients and so ensuring all of their safety at the same time can be very very stressful.

Marie Rice, APS Caseworker

I care very much about my clients and so I find myself being emotionally attached sometimes so that can cause even more stress because then you're worried about what's going to happen to them or how you're going to resolve the situation and it is hard to shut that off at five o'clock when you're supposed to be done for the day.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

I think at any given time, you have those cases that really weigh heavy on you and that you feel like you tried everything you possibly could and you still, the outcome, you know, wasn't what you wanted or the client just refused assistance and it's hard, you carry that with you, you do, you have a sense of "you failed the client" even though you know in your heart you tried everything possible.

Anna Damon, APS Supervisor

I have a case that sticks in my mind. The gentleman in his early 70s living on a house that had been in his family since the early 1900s, um, they had discovered like oil and uranium. His wife had passed away. He lived on the property with his son who was IDD and his caretaker. Now the reason this case sticks in my head is that the conditions of the home and the property were probably the worst I've ever seen, just horrible. Horrible. The house had not been cleaned since probably the mid 80s.

He finally agreed to go to the hospital and, you know, I followed the ambulance back to the hospital and he wanted ice cream and I went and got him some ice cream. I just remember how grateful he was, that how persistent I was. He ended up passing away but it's just one of those things where, you know I don't know what it is, I could, I knew he needed the help and I knew that his son, through no fault of his own, that he was just so used to being stubborn and running people off and I would not let him run me off.

Voice over of Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

Before you start carrying the caseload of Adult Protective Services, we send you through a litany of trainings including being active in the community with completing shadow activities or activities with tenured workers. You get a mixture of computer-based trainings, classroom trainings, on-the-job trainings with tenured workers and then some independent training by yourself where you actually go and take some cases but throughout that process you always have support of the more tenured staff, your field training staff, your supervisors, and your peers.

(On screen titles)

Training prepares you for success

Teamwork carries you through

Voice over of Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

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Marie Rice, APS Caseworker

That team support is vital, especially as a new employee. I've been here almost a year and I still am constantly depending on my teammates just to answer questions, to run past ideas. Sometimes we're in situations that are taking all day and we've got something else that needs to be done and it's really nice to be able to say, "hey, can somebody make this phone call for me?", or, you know, and in return when somebody needs that, you know, you've got to be able to give that back but I could say that that's definitely an important part of this job and I don't know that I'd be successful without it.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

I turn to my coworkers. I turn to the people who understand the job that I do and have had those same days that I have and have had those same bad outcomes and I turn to them. I call them and I talk it out with them and they give me words of encouragement or support and then I'm able to move on.

(On screen titles)

Do you have what it takes to work for APS?

Jovanka Burnett, APS Caseworker

No, this job is not for just anybody. You have to be compassionate. You have to be flexible. You have to be amenable to change. Things can change in a heartbeat and you have to be ready to go at any given moment. You have to be highly organized and highly motivated.

Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

You have to be a person who knows and can work well independently and be willing to adjust with changing situations. With these cases, at one minute someone is perfectly fine and we think that we put things in place to

make sure they're safe and they're secure and in the next moment, things might fall through and you have to be able to adjust with that.

Marie Rice, APS Caseworker

I think that patience is another really important thing. Again, because you have to be able to, you know, take time sometimes for these people and listen to them. Listen to their stories. Listen to what's going on so that you can build that rapport. I definitely think it's important that you, you know, again are able to handle the stress but also have that open heart because that really helps you to be successful.

Delrick Washington, APS Supervisor

You have to be able to remain kind of on an even keel with your emotions and your thoughts. You can't be a person who goes with the ups and downs because there's a lot of ups and downs.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

To me, this goes back to being able to being personable and that sense of being able to go up to a total stranger's door, knock on the door and say hello and somehow get yourself inside. If the idea of going by yourself scares you, then it's probably not a good fit.

Jovanka Burnett, APS Caseworker

This job is right for me because I like to meet people. I like to help people. I like the freedom to schedule my day the way I'd like to. I'd like actually being involved with making sure that somebody's safe and protected.

Marie Rice, APS Caseworker

I think for me, it is that overall sense of satisfaction when you can make a difference, when you've changed somebody's life, when you've got them out of that predicament that maybe they've been in for a very long time because they don't have that support or nobody knew what was going on. Just that acknowledgement that I can see that smile when I go to visit them that last time or, you know, the recognition that they know we have helped them. That wipes away, you know, all the negativity and the frustration and the long hours because you really feel like I have made a difference. I have changed someone's life and for me, that's what keeps me going and keeps me, you know, driving and doing all the cases and doing what we need to.

Jenny Stefanic, APS Caseworker

I guess I can't say it enough that, you know, it can't be just a paycheck. You have to want to help the elderly and disabled and you have to know that every day is going to be a challenge and some days more challenging than others and you learn as you go, um, but at the end of the job is very rewarding when you make a difference in somebody's life or you help them and there's going to be days when you're very frustrated and then the next day you're gonna do something and the client's going to call you and thank you and it's gonna make all the difference in the world. So, while the job can be very frustrating and challenging, it's also very self rewarding to know that you're helping somebody.

(On screen titles)

APS Staff

Jenny Stefanic Caseworker

Anna Damon Supervisor

Delrick Washington Supervisor

Jovanka Burnett Caseworker

Marie Rick Caseworker

Allison Price Caseworker

Allie Baker New Worker

Produced by DFPS Office of Communications

Camera and Lights by Sean Conrad

Edited and Directed by Darrell Azar

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

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