

Adult Protective Services





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 clients receiving services in state operated and/or contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation.

Continued Response to APS Reform

In 2004, the Governor issued an executive order that called for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to review and reform Adult Protective Services (APS). In July 2004, HHSC issued a report that identified 252 corrective actions in three areas that needed systemic and organizational changes. They were: improving investigations and delivery of services, increasing efficiencies, and enhancing program accountability.

APS began its response to these changes in 2004 and 75 percent of the 252 corrective actions identified in the report were completed by the end of fiscal year 2005. Improvements include how APS conducts investigations, provides services, trains staff, measures performance, and works with community agencies. Many of the accomplishments below were part of APS's response to the recommended changes.

Accomplishments

- ◆ APS carried out a number of initiatives to enhance the investigation process and quality of services. These include:
 - increasing the systematic review of cases to facilitate and enhance the quality assurance process;
 - increasing field supervisors' oversight and responsibility;

- hiring specialized staff in the areas of financial exploitation, risk/self-neglect, resources and external relations, and community initiatives; and
- requiring caseworkers to engage other community professionals in moderate or high-risk cases.
- ◆ APS implemented a new method to assess clients referred for services. The CARE (Client Assessment & Risk Evaluation) instrument helps the worker identify and document problems in a person's living conditions, finances, physical health, mental status, and social relations. With the CARE, APS staff can develop plans to address factors that threaten a person's health and safety.
- ◆ APS launched the first phase of the Mobile Protective Services (MPS) project with 31 caseworkers from the Arlington, Austin, El Paso, and San Antonio regions that involved the use of Tablet PCs. These computers are equipped with secured wireless internet access, Microsoft Office, map software for finding clients and planning daily routes, voice recognition dictation software, and an APS-custom application that works with the DFPS automated case management system. The project enables caseworkers to review and document cases, review workload assignments, and locate resources. The MPS project won the 2005 Best Application Serving the Public award from the Centers for Digital Government and Education. In FY 2006, the project will be expanded to all APS staff.
- ◆ APS initiated distribution of digital cameras to be used for documenting investigations. The use of digital cameras supports the investigation process and provides an accurate, objective representation of the existence or nonexistence of abuse or neglect. Distribution will be completed in FY 2006.
- ◆ In partnership with the Professional Development Division (PDD), APS revised and enhanced the training curriculum for new employees. APS and PDD developed the agency's first comprehensive self-paced computer-based training for new staff. New employees receive comprehensive computer-based, classroom, and on-the-job training. The new APS training program expanded from three



Linnie Brooks, an APS worker in Houston, works with her supervisor to test new video telephone equipment at a client's home as part of a pilot telemedicine program. Launched in May 2005 in the agency's Amarillo and Houston regions, the program will allow medical staff to assess clients who are elderly or disabled and unable or unwilling to visit doctors' offices. Through the project, nurses accompany APS workers into clients' homes and transmit images and data for further medical and mental assessment by using advanced telecommunications technologies that work with regular analog phone lines. The worker and nurse simply set an "appointment" with a doctor who will be available to make the assessment.

"A lot of our clients don't want to go to the hospital or a doctor," says Brooks. "But we still may need to do an emergency removal to protect the client's health and safety. This equipment can allow a doctor to give a quick medical assessment and communicate their opinion to the nurse. If necessary, then we can call 911 to request an ambulance."

Funded by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, the project is being conducted in conjunction with the Baylor College of Medicine Texas Elder Abuse and Mistreatment (TEAM) Institute.

weeks to 11 weeks to ensure staff develop quality caseworker practices prior to receiving a full workload. The revised training curriculum requires all APS workers to attend 18 hours of continuing education each year.

- ◆ The Texas Health and Human Services Commission transferred management of the Guardianship program to the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) in December 2004. On Sept. 1, 2005, DADS will have the legislative authority and legal responsibility over guardianship cases. In FY 2006, DFPS and DADS will develop a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) to derive the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the guardianship process. The MOU will ensure clients receive necessary services in a timely manner.
- ◆ In an effort to reduce future staff turnover, DFPS developed a new process for screening APS and CPS job applicants. Staff identified competencies of exceptional CPS and APS caseworkers, then developed a behaviorally-based screening tool that measures quality of work, conscientiousness, planning and organization, problem solving, flexibility and adaptability, ethics, interpersonal communication, and handling conflict.
- ◆ APS continued working with local community groups to increase public awareness about abuse, neglect, and exploitation of the elderly and adults with disabilities. The agency created a comprehensive plan to enhance the way it engages community organizations, local government, and related stakeholders.
- ◆ APS staff coordinated the 21st Annual APS Conference in San Antonio in November 2004. The conference was successful, drawing more than 350 participants from as far away as Canada and Guam. The Texas APS conference is a major training event for APS practitioners and related professionals nationally. The conference offered continuing education credits to social workers.
- ◆ APS facility staff participated in a University of Kentucky survey about the incidence of sexual abuse in institutional settings.



APS Services

APS clients are adults who live in their own homes, in state operated and/or contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation, or in unregulated facilities. Two program areas serve APS clients: in-home investigations /services and facility investigations. APS in-home staff work closely with DADS staff on cases that require coordination and referral for guardianship services.

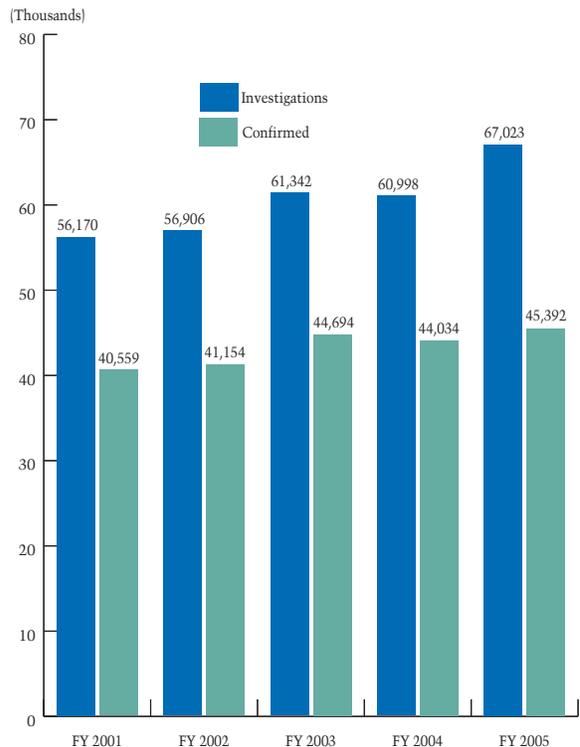
Protecting people who are elderly or have disabilities continues to be a growing issue in Texas. Based on the 2000 Census of non-institutionalized people, Texans who are elderly or have disabilities make up about a quarter of the state's population. In 2005, 2,260,428 Texans were age 65 and older, according to population projections. 10.8% of adults between the

ages of 18 and 64 have a disability, and 43% of people over 65 have a disability. Many of these people live alone or are dependent 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>.

Completed In-home Investigations





An investigation begins within 24 hours of receiving a report. In 2005, APS completed 67,023 investigations of which 45,392 cases were confirmed cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. When maltreatment is confirmed, APS provides or arranges for emergency services to alleviate abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

APS may provide or arrange for services 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.

Guardianship is a legal method used to protect the well-being of individuals when they cannot protect themselves. A guardian is court-appointed to make decisions on behalf of an incapacitated person. Guardians can be family members, county attorneys, banks, private attorneys, etc. Guardianship duties may include managing a person's estate, living arrangements, medical treatment, funeral arrangements, and disposal of property.



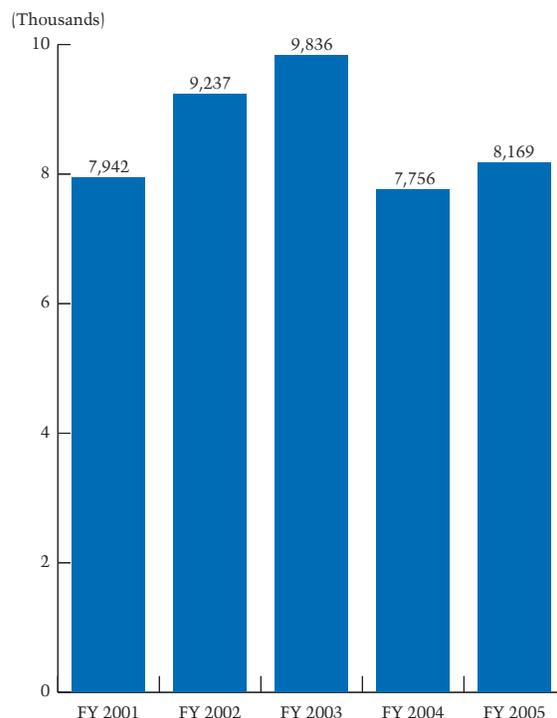
Facility Investigations

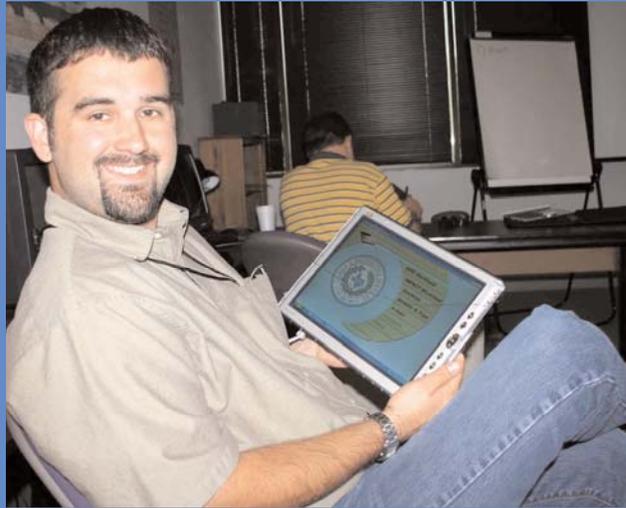
APS is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of clients receiving services in state operated and/or contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation. Investigations are conducted in the following settings:

- ◆ 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 2005, APS completed 8,169 investigations in state operated and/or contracted settings that serve adults and children with mental illness or mental retardation.

Completed Facility Investigations





Keith Rohlack, an APS specialist in Belton, admits he is not a techie. But when he learned about a new project that takes advantage of mobile technology, he was happy to be among the few chosen to test it out.

Like many frontline staff, Keith begins each day hoping to spend his mornings in the field with clients and his afternoons typing in all the documentation. Unfortunately, as most workers already know, it's not always possible to type in documentation that soon. "Depending on the intake load, it can take longer to type in my documentation—much longer. Our first priority is to deal with the demands of the cases coming in. By using the speech recognition and digital pen on the Tablet PCs, I think workers will save a lot of time on documentation."

The project, which started in June 2005 with 31 caseworkers from the Arlington, Austin, El Paso, and San Antonio regions, involves the use of Tablet PCs. The Tablet PCs enable staff to view their daily assigned workload and reports, access the agency's abuse database, map routes to visit clients, use its dictation/voice recognition feature, and upload images from a digital camera, among other tasks.

Keith says reaction among staff has been positive because they really want to make use of any technology that will save time. "Using Tablet PCs enables us to bring technology into the field; Internet access to caseload and past cases. Anything I can do at my desk I can do in the field. It's really cool technology."