



# Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

## DFPS News Release

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 3, 2020

### **Adult Protective Services Slashes Caseworker Turnover** *Higher Salaries, More Workers, Mentor Program Boost APS*

New data shows that a coordinated strategy is working to reduce the turnover of Adult Protective Services (APS) front-line caseworkers, strengthening the program and improving service to its clients, the elderly and vulnerable adults.

APS caseworker turnover fell from 25.2 percent in Fiscal Year 2018 to 20.7 percent in FY 2019. Based on first-quarter data (September, October, November), FY 2020 turnover is projected to be below 17 percent, and could be even lower.

New APS caseworkers face a particularly tough time acclimating to the work, and the hours each day spent in the homes of elderly and vulnerable abuse, neglect and exploitation victims. Almost half of them left the job in their first year FY 2018 – a 50.8 percent turnover rate. In 2020, first-year turnover is expected to be about 31 percent. And of the 194 first-year workers who signed up for the APS Mentor Program, 81 percent are still on the job.

The most significant change came during the most recent legislative session, when lawmakers gave APS caseworkers and front-line supervisors a raise of \$750 a month. More than 40 caseworkers also were added to the workforce of 526 statewide, strategically assigned to areas of most need. Thirdly, a mentorship program – modeled after one at APS' sister agency, Child Protective Services – was designed and implemented, also statewide.

The head of APS says this three-pronged strategy halted a revolving door of caseworkers and has turned around the program.

“Our turnover was too high, particularly with our new workers, and when that happens our ability to serve clients is going to suffer,” said Kez Wold, Associate

Commissioner for APS. “We were spread too thin and couldn’t get workers hired, trained, and in the field fast enough. The job of an APS caseworker is difficult, it can be complex, and with higher salaries and a supportive mentorship program, our service to clients is much improved across the board.”

A representative of one of APS’ largest stakeholders agrees.

“Today’s news from APS is encouraging, and a clear sign of progress towards reducing elder abuse in Texas,” said Tim Morstad, Associate State Director of Outreach and Advocacy for AARP. “Crimes against older Texans too often go unreported, which is why AARP believes a strong protection system is necessary to help prevent abuse and financial exploitation.”

The mentorship program has been customized to fit APS. Tenured caseworkers volunteer for the mentorship program, and go through a competitive selection process, testing, and training before they are assigned a protégé. Once assigned, the mentor is paid a \$300 monthly stipend for the six-month assignment. The mentor is required to maintain a full workload while mentoring, as well as face time and a weekly meeting with the protégé.

Wold says the improvements aren’t over: the mentorship program soon will be expanded to include supervisors, former tenured caseworkers who now will be mentored by experienced supervisors. The goal continues to be constant improvement through the ranks.

“In APS we cannot afford to sit still,” he said. “With the aging Baby Boomer population, estimates show that in the next 10 years the population over age 65 will grow by 43 percent. And we all know that Texas is gaining new residents, every single day. Many of those individuals are older, and we have to be able to meet that challenge when they need our help.”