



Texas Department of  
**Family and Protective Services**

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*Adult Protective Services*

**2017**

**Community Satisfaction Survey**

**Results Report**

*November 2017*

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# **Adult Protective Services 2017 Community Satisfaction Survey Results Report**

## **I. Introduction**

In accordance with the Texas Human Resource Code, Section 48.006, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) conducts a “Community Satisfaction Survey” every other year to solicit information regarding the department's performance in providing investigative and protective services for vulnerable adults. Adult Protective Services (APS) develops and distributes the survey to stakeholders across the state, including members of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies; and other community organizations and partners, including APS Community Boards. The 2017 survey is the ninth Community Satisfaction Survey.

The Community Satisfaction Survey helps APS gather feedback from its stakeholders, gauge satisfaction with its performance, and evaluate its community engagement efforts. The survey results offer insights into areas for performance improvement and ways in which APS can enhance its community support and local community engagement initiatives, encourage resource development in communities, and strengthen volunteer programs that benefit APS clients.

This report provides a summary of results from the 2017 Community Satisfaction Survey, including findings from each of four stakeholder surveys. The results are supplemented by information about community engagement accomplishments and strategies for the coming year. This report and reports of the results from previous surveys are published on the DFPS website: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>

## **II. Background**

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) conducted the initial Community Satisfaction Survey in 2004 to assess the quality of relations between APS and community agencies and organizations across Texas. HHSC worked with APS and a community relations work group to design four separate surveys for the diverse community partners with whom APS interacts. The surveys were administered to 1) members of the judiciary, 2) law enforcement

agencies, 3) community agencies that provide referrals to APS or serve consumers referred by APS, and 4) the Adult Protective Services Community Boards. Originally an annual survey, the APS Community Satisfaction Survey has been biennial since 2009.

Reports of survey results contain state-level information only. No individual response information is included; the confidentiality of respondents is protected to the fullest extent allowed by law. In accordance with statute, survey results are shared with regional APS management for evaluation and implementation of changes necessary to address community concerns, as well as with courts with jurisdiction over probate matters including presiding judges of statutory probate courts.

### **III. Methodology**

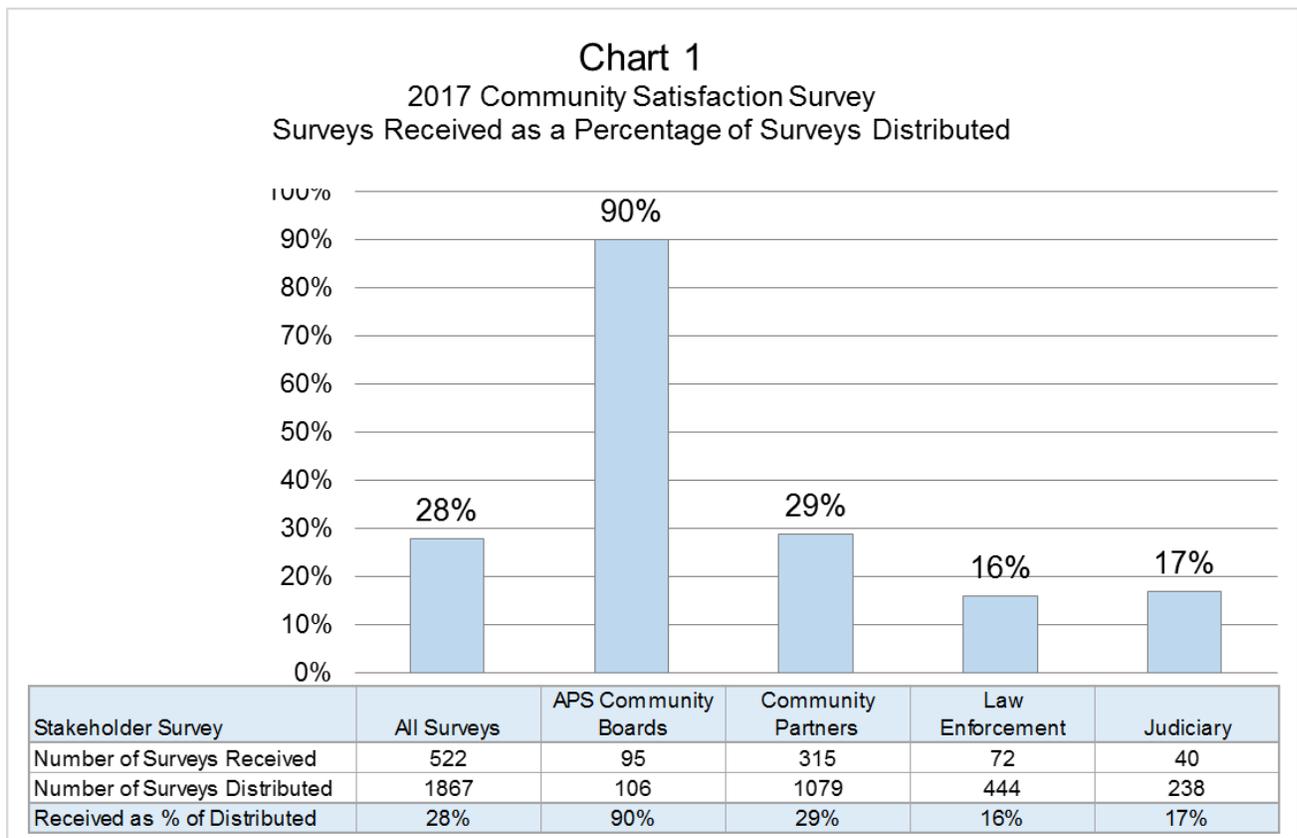
Over the years since the Community Satisfaction Survey was initiated, some questions have been revised, added, or removed, but the survey's scope and overall content has remained substantially the same. A core feature of the survey is a series of standardized statements to which respondents reply on a symmetrical agreement scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". These standardized items provide a means of collecting consistent feedback over time and comparing results across stakeholder groups.

The preliminary set of scaled items established in 2004 was reduced and refined in the 2006 survey. Further refinements and a few item additions were made for the 2007 survey, resulting in a group of 31 scaled items. This group of items has remained consistent through to the 2017 survey, with the exception of minor word changes in 2015 to help respondents understand that certain questions had broader applicability than what some respondents had interpreted. For example, the term "agency" was replaced with the word "organization" in a number of instances.

In preparation for the 2017 survey, APS management, community engagement, and research staff reviewed the 2015 survey for quality and usefulness of information. As in previous years, there were changes to clarify or build on information, such as further wording changes to better convey applicability of certain questions to a broad range of organizations. In tandem with this, the Community Organizations survey was renamed the Community Partners survey. Also, five new

scaled items were added to the existing group of 31 scaled items, in order to support comparisons of certain key indicators across additional stakeholder groups.

APS administered the survey in a web-based and paper format. The surveys were available for completion for a 30 day period, from May 16 to June 15, 2017. The deadline for completion was extended and reminders were sent during the period. After the responses were compiled, personal information was separated from survey responses in order to protect respondent confidentiality.



In 2017, 1,867 surveys were distributed and 522 surveys were received (28% of those distributed) ([Chart 1](#)). Over the years, the number of surveys distributed has ranged from 1,867 to 2,768, while the number of respondents has ranged from 381 to 781. The ratio of surveys received to those distributed has varied from 17% (2013) to 28% (2017). ([Table 1](#), Appendix 1)

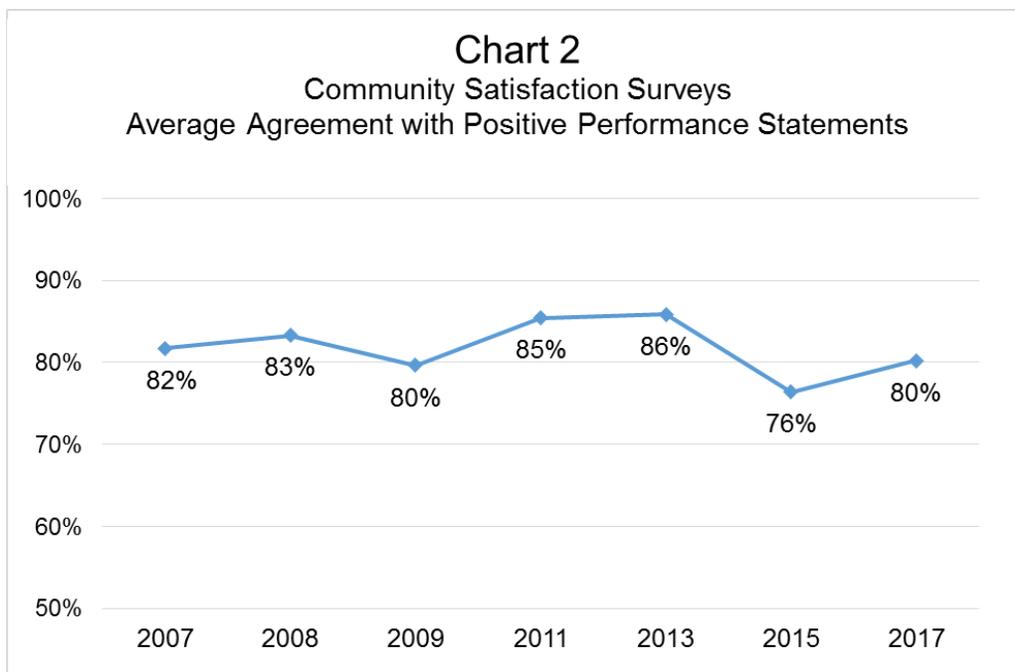
The remainder of this report summarizes results from each of the four stakeholder surveys, including a comparison of results on the standardized scaled survey items. The report concludes with information about community engagement accomplishments and plans for the coming year.

## IV. Survey Results

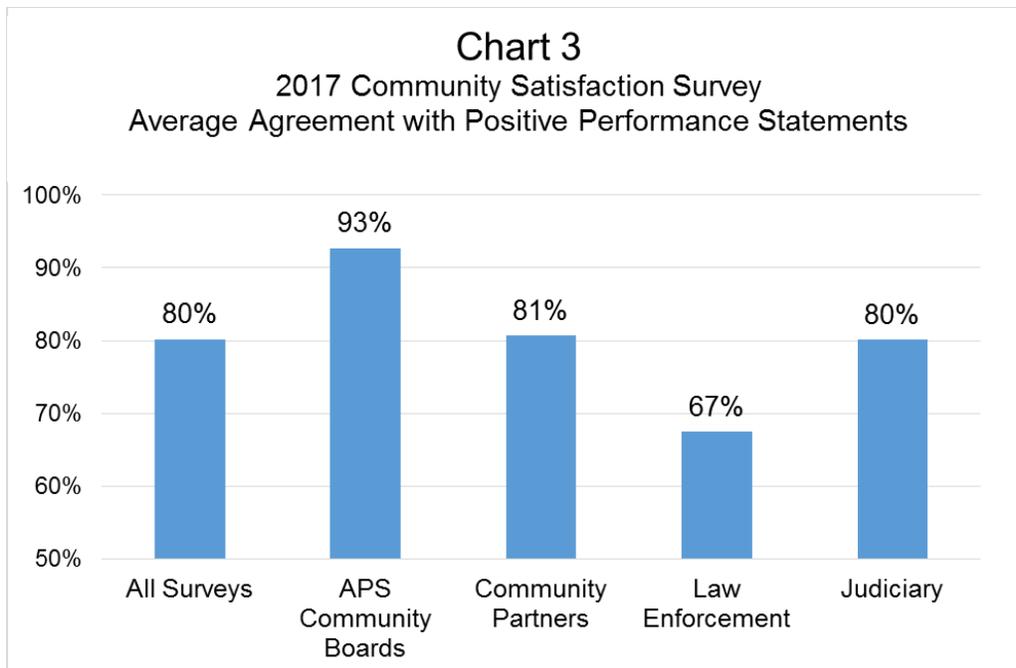
This section provides a summary of key findings from the Community Satisfaction Survey, overall and for each of the four stakeholder surveys. The findings focus primarily on feedback from standardized survey items asked consistently over the past ten years.

- Each stakeholder survey included a series of feedback statements, to which respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement using a standardized scale of “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. Each item was a positive statement that reflects on some aspect of APS performance in coordinating with partner agencies and community organizations. Each stakeholder survey contained eight to ten such standardized survey items, totaling 36 items across all four surveys.

### Agreement with Positive Performance Statements



Overall, feedback from stakeholders who responded to the 2017 Community Satisfaction Survey was positive. On average, the majority (80%) of respondents agreed (“agree” or “strongly agree”) with standardized feedback statements that reflect positive APS performance in its work with partner organizations. This average rate of agreement is an improvement over the 2015 average (76%) but lower than in the previous two surveys (86% in 2013; 85% in 2011). ([Chart 2](#))



In 2017, the average rate of agreement with the standardized positive performance statements varied by stakeholder group from a high of 93% among APS Community Board survey respondents to a low of 67% among Law Enforcement survey respondents ([Chart 3](#)).

In 2017, rates of agreement for individual performance statements ranged from a low of 38% for “APS caseworkers understand law enforcement protocols and guidelines.” (Law Enforcement survey; see [Table 14](#)) to a high of 97% for “I understand APS’s mission, scope, and purpose.” (APS Community Boards survey; see [Table 10](#).) Over the years, the typical range of item agreement has been from 60% to 98%.

Further details of key findings on APS performance feedback provided by the standardized survey items are provided in subsequent sections of this report.

### **How APS can Further Ensure the Safety and Dignity of Vulnerable Adults**

A key question in all four stakeholder surveys asked respondents to share their thoughts on how APS could further ensure the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults in their communities. A thematic analysis of these responses highlighted the following perceived needs:

1. Increased efforts to educate and spread awareness in the community of maltreatment against older adults and adults with disabilities, as well as APS’s scope of service

- *“The more we educate our community, the more vulnerable adults we will be able to reach. APS staff and Board members need to constantly look for innovative and effective ways to share ‘the story’.” (APS Community Board survey)*
  - *“Continue to create awareness, make it known to the community at large that we are here to protect and defend vulnerable adults. Use PSA's events, conferences, television and radio interviews, be in the face of the community about APS mission and purpose.” (APS Community Board survey)*
2. Improved responsiveness to alleged victims and community partners when investigating allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation and during delivery of services to APS clients
- *“Continue to help the elderly when in need. Listen and have a good communication and always follow up with those they come in contact with.” (Community Partners survey)*
  - *“Continue to act upon each case as soon as possible” and “Aggressive follow up and communication with law enforcement.” (Law Enforcement survey)*
3. Education and training for APS caseworkers on topics relevant to the APS population
- *“Ensure all staff are equal in the understanding of the definition of qualified persons and equally knowledgeable about all resources available.” (APS Community Board survey)*
  - *“Be more proactive in sharing what resources are available to those that may be impacted. As a leader of the county, be more knowledgeable of the role you play in our area and how we can be more supportive.” (Judicial Partners survey)*
4. Specific training for external stakeholders on APS’s scope, purpose, and procedures
- *“Be aware of where the elderly spend their time in the community and make presentations on what APS offers so they are aware.” (Community Partners survey)*
  - *“Make sure this office and all emergency services understand the scope of APS ability” (Judicial Partners survey)*
5. Increased visibility and involvement of APS in the community
- *“Continue to be visible and involved in community activities, even if not directly APS related, to foster information sharing and networking.” (Community Partners survey)*
  - *“Continue to reach out to service entities in their communities so that familiarity of names of staff and the services their departments' represent.” (Community Partners survey)*

An additional theme present in many responses as to how APS can further ensure the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults involved APS staff capacity to investigate abuse, neglect and exploitation; protect victims; and coordinate investigation and victim services with APS partners. Concerns were expressed with the number of APS caseworker positions, having skilled and experienced staff, and improving recruitment and retention efforts.

Many respondents were concerned with the quantity of staff; they recommended increasing the number of caseworkers in order to manage increasing workloads and ensure staff can give adequate attention to the growing APS population. A typical response to the question of how APS can further ensure the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults was: *“Hire more workers. Sometimes caseloads are too high for the workers to be able to spend much time working on an individual case.”* (Community Partners survey)

Other respondents expressed concern with not only staffing levels, but also the development and retention of experienced, skilled staff as critical to the availability and quality of APS services. Another typical response was that APS efforts could be improved, *“By expanding service provided to the vulnerable older adults and those with disabilities in our community. More caseworkers who feel valued and satisfied with their jobs so they stay in place. Long term, knowledgeable staff would be a key factor in improving service/care.”* (APS Community Boards survey)

## **Stakeholder Group Comparisons**

This section provides a comparison of responses from the four stakeholder surveys, focusing primarily on common topics explored by certain standardized performance survey items that are comparable across the four stakeholder groups. Patterns of overall similarity and difference between stakeholder groups are summarized for the 2017 survey results. Trends over the past 10 years of Community Satisfaction Surveys are discussed, where significant.

As was seen in [Chart 3](#), in the 2017 Community Satisfaction Survey, the average percentage of respondents agreeing (“agree” or “strongly agree”) with statements that reflect positive APS performance varied noticeably across the four stakeholder surveys. Over the past 10 years, APS Community Board survey respondents have shown a noticeably higher rate of agreement (92%, 10 year average) than other stakeholder group survey respondents. ([Table 3](#), Appendix 2)

These average rates of agreement for each stakeholder survey have varied from year, sometimes substantially, as in the case of the Judiciary and Law Enforcement surveys. This is most likely due, in large part, to the relatively small sample sizes for these surveys. No significant trend of increase or decrease over the past 10 years is apparent in the Law Enforcement, Judiciary, or APS Community Boards surveys. However, there has been a downward trend in the Community Partners survey, where average agreement fell gradually from 88% in 2007 to 81% in 2017.

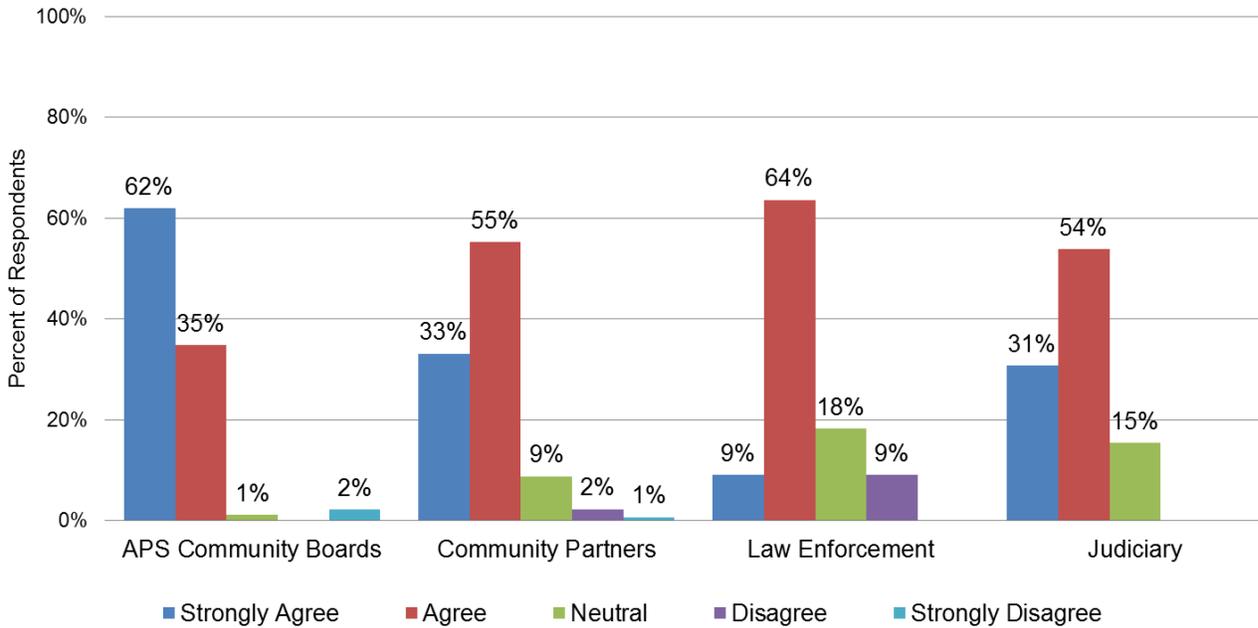
Among the larger series of standardized positive performance survey items in the Community Satisfaction Survey, five groups of statements with same or similar language across stakeholder surveys may be compared as reflecting relative APS success in five key areas:

1. Communicating the APS mission, scope and purpose
2. Enhancing community resources and services
3. Ensuring the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults
4. Coordinating with community partners through appropriate referrals
5. Achieving a good working relationship with community partners

A summary of feedback on these topics from all four stakeholder surveys is presented on the following pages.

*Communicating the APS Mission, Scope and Purpose*

**Chart 4**  
 2017 Community Satisfaction Survey  
 Responses to: "I understand APS's mission, scope and purpose."

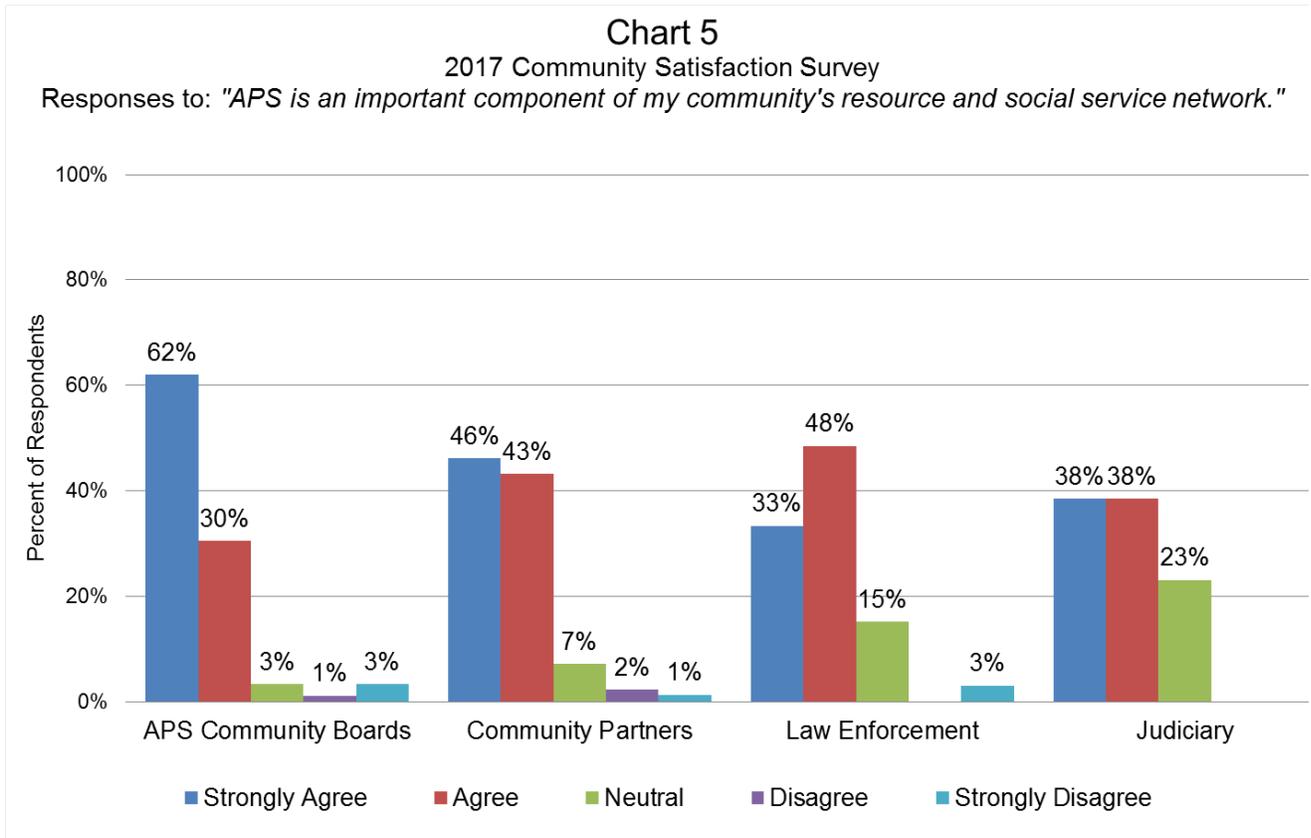


Respondents in all four surveys indicated their level of agreement with the following statement: "I understand APS's mission, scope, and purpose." Community boards reported the highest level of agreement overall: 97% either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement. Community partners and judiciary respondents had similar levels of agreement (88% and 85%, respectively). Law enforcement respondents had the lowest level of agreement, at 73%. Overall, 89% of respondents reported that they understand the mission, scope and purpose of APS. (Chart 4)

*The total number of responses for calculations in Chart 4 is 445, including 307 from community partners, 92 from APS community boards, 33 from law enforcement, and 13 responses from the judiciary.*

*For complete data, see Appendix 3, Table 4.*

**Enhancing Community Resources and Services**



Stakeholders in all four surveys also indicated their level of agreement with the statement, "APS is an important component of my community's resource and social service network." APS community boards and community partners reported the highest levels of overall agreement with the statement (92% and 89%, respectively), with boards being most likely to agree strongly. Law enforcement respondents agreed with the statement 82%\* of the time and judiciary respondents agreed 77%\* of the time. Overall, 89% of respondents agreed that APS is an important component of their community's resource and social service network. (Chart 5)

*The total number of responses for calculations in Chart 5 is 445, including 307 from community partners, 92 from APS community boards, 33 from law enforcement, and 13 responses from the judiciary.*

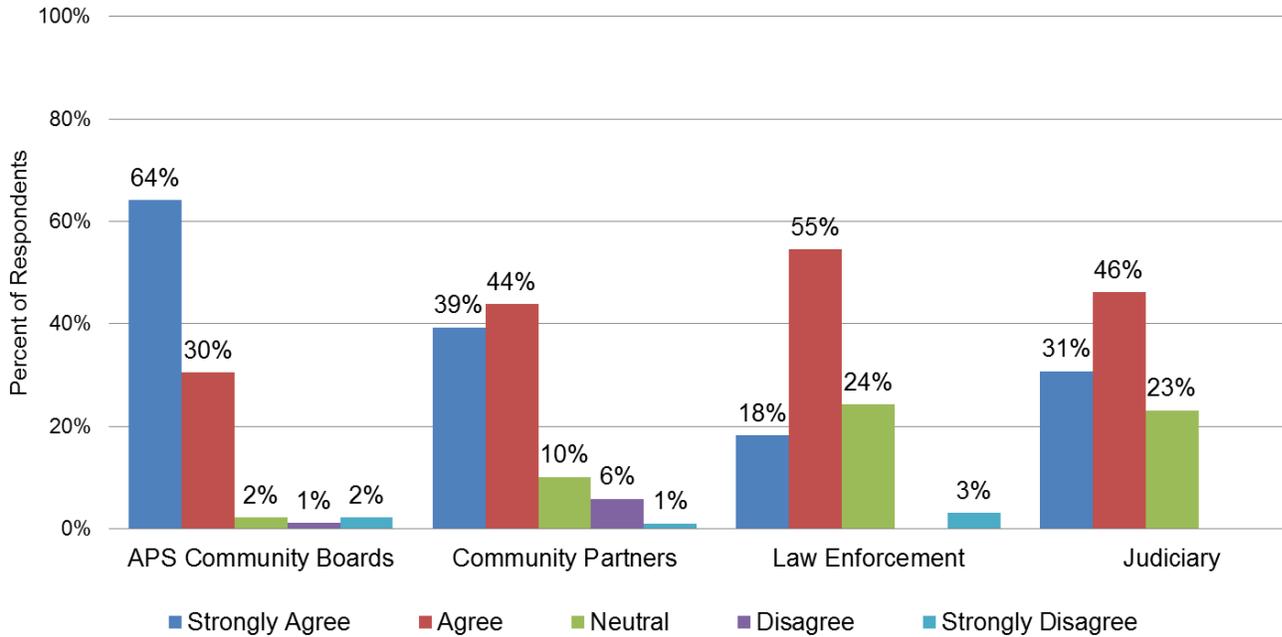
*\* The overall combined percentage of respondents who agree, rounded to the nearest whole number, may not exactly match the sum of the two whole number percentages for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree", due to the effect of rounding.*

*For complete data, see Appendix 3, Table 5.*

***Ensuring the Safety and Dignity of Vulnerable Adults***

**Chart 6**

2017 Community Satisfaction Survey  
 Responses to: "APS ensures the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults in this community."



All four stakeholder groups indicated their level of agreement with the statement, "APS ensures the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults in this community." Again, APS community board respondents had the highest level of overall agreement with the statement (95%\*). Community partners had the next highest level of agreement, at 83%. Judicial and law enforcement respondents had the lowest levels of agreement, at 77% and 73%, respectively. Overall, 85% of respondents agreed that APS ensures the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults. ([Chart 6](#))

*The total number of responses for calculations in Chart 6 is 445, including 307 from community partners, 92 from APS community boards, 33 from law enforcement, and 13 responses from the judiciary.*

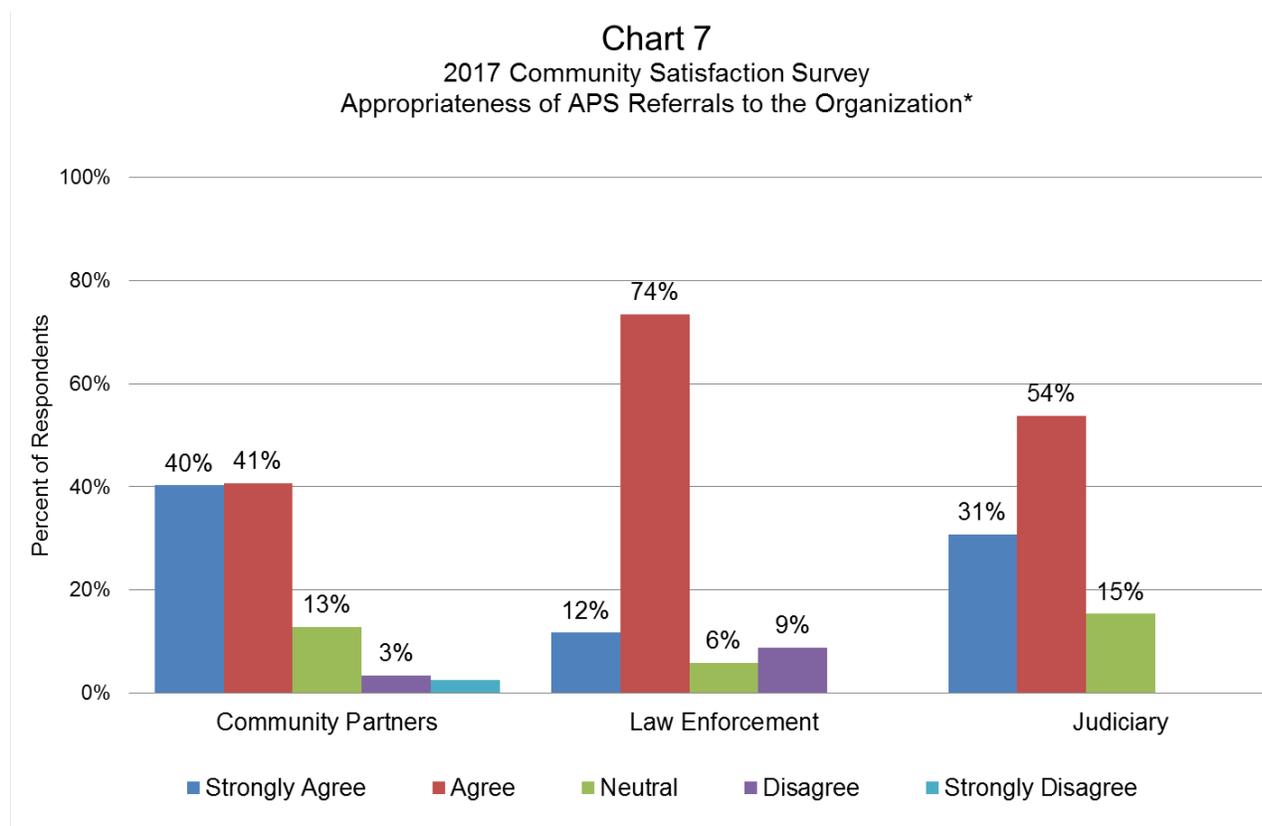
*\* The overall combined percentage of respondents who agree, rounded to the nearest whole number, may not exactly match the sum of the two whole number percentages for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree", due to the effect of rounding.*

*For complete data, see Appendix 3, [Table 6](#).*

### *Coordinating with Community Partners through Appropriate Referrals*

Three stakeholder groups indicated their agreement with statements about appropriateness of APS case referrals, be they case referrals to an organization for services, to law enforcement for criminal investigation, or to a court for legal action. The relevant statements are as follows:

- Community Partners: “APS referrals to my organization are appropriate.”
- Law Enforcement: “APS referrals to law enforcement are appropriate.”
- Judiciary: “APS seeks appropriate court action.”



On these indicator statements, 85%\*\* of both law enforcement and judicial respondent groups agreed that APS case referrals to their sector for action are appropriate. Community partners reported somewhat lower levels of agreement at 81%. Overall, 82% of respondents agreed that APS case referrals to their organization or sector are appropriate. (Chart 7)

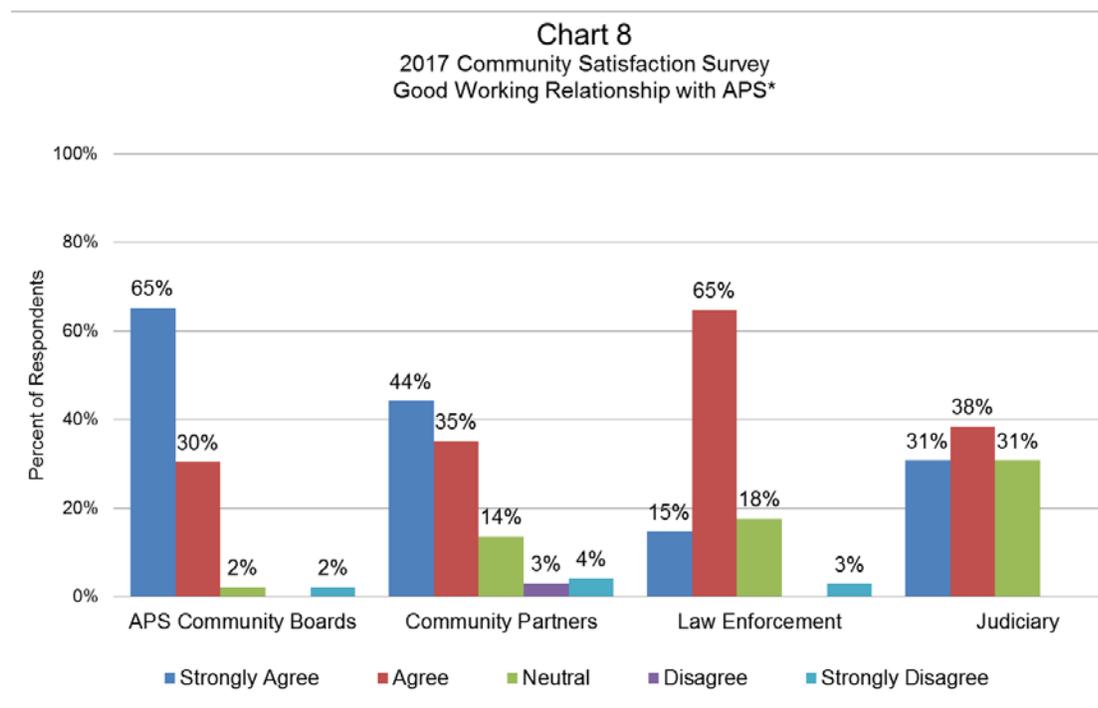
\* Wording varies by stakeholder group: Community Partners: “APS referrals to my organization are appropriate.” Law Enforcement: “APS referrals to law enforcement are appropriate.” Judiciary: “APS seeks appropriate court action.” The total number of responses for calculations in Chart 7 is 280, including 233 from community partners (excludes 48 “Not Applicable” responses), 34 from law enforcement, and 13 from judiciary.

*\*\* The overall combined percentage of respondents who agree, rounded to the nearest whole number, may not exactly match the sum of the two whole number percentages for “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, due to the effect of rounding. For complete data, see Appendix 3, [Table 7](#).*

## *Achieving a Good Working Relationship with Community Partners*

Respondents from all four stakeholder groups indicated their agreement with statements about the working relationship between APS and the respondent’s organization or sector, as follows:

- Community Boards: *“The board has a good working relationship with APS.”*
- Community Partners: *“There is a good working relationship between my organization and APS in the community.”*
- Law Enforcement: *“There is a good working relationship between law enforcement and APS in this community.”*
- Judiciary: *“There is a good working relationship between the courts and APS in this community.”*



On these statements, community board members had the highest level of agreement (96%\*\*) and were most likely to strongly agree. There were similar levels of agreement among community partners (79%) and law enforcement (79%\*\*). The judiciary had the lowest level of agreement (69%). Overall, 83% of respondents reported a good working relationship with APS. ([Chart 8](#))

\* *Wording varies by stakeholder group: Community Boards: “The board has a good working relationship with APS.” Community Partners: “There is a good working relationship between my organization and APS in the community.” Law Enforcement: “There is a good working relationship between law enforcement and APS in this community.” Judiciary: “There is a good working relationship between the courts and APS in this community.” The total number of responses for calculations in Chart 8 is 404, including 265 from community organizations (excludes 16 “Not Applicable” responses), 92 from APS community boards, 34 from law enforcement, and 13 from the judiciary.*

*\*\* The overall combined percentage of respondents who agree, rounded to the nearest whole number, may not exactly match the sum of the two whole number percentages for “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, due to the effect of rounding. For complete data, see Appendix 3, [Table 8](#).*

## **Individual Stakeholder Survey Analysis**

This section provides a high-level summary of survey responses for each of the four stakeholder groups, focusing on the standardized survey items on key performance topics discussed in the Stakeholder Group Comparisons section. For each stakeholder group, a summary of responses to the 2017 survey is presented, along with information on percent agreement across surveys over the past 10 years. Tables within the Appendices break down 2017 results as well as percent agreement over the past 10 years.

The range of variation seen in levels of positive/negative feedback across topics and over time provides some benchmarks for understanding high and low levels of performance in APS's work with a particular stakeholder group. Analysis of results over successive years of the survey offers potential for determining whether performance has improved over time. However, sample sizes and variability from year to year generally prohibit definitive conclusions on improvement year to year. In some instances, longer term trends can be detected, with possible implications that APS has been progressively gaining or losing ground in a particular area.

### ***APS Community Boards Results***

There were 95 respondents to the APS Community Boards survey in 2017, of whom 92 were current board members and three were former board members. Nearly half of respondents (49%) reported having been on their board for two years or less. Others had been on their board from three to four years (25%) or five years or more (26%). A large majority of respondents (90%) reported that in the past two years, their board usually met once a month. Most others reported quarterly meetings (7%). Virtually all respondents (98%) indicated that they had been in contact with APS staff in the past two years. Of these, most (74%) reported monthly contact. Others reported less frequent contact of once or twice a year (16%) or more frequent contact of at least once a week (10%).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of feedback statements about their board and APS, using a standardized agreement scale of “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. Each item was a positive statement about APS-board relations. Table 9 in **Appendix 4** provides the number (“*n*”) and percent of board member responses to these statements in the 2017 survey. Table 10 provides percent agreement

with these statements in surveys over the past 10 years, calculated as the combined percentage of respondents each year who indicated either “agree” or “strongly agree” for each statement.

In 2017, overall levels of agreement with the feedback statements ranged from 85% to 97% and were highest for:

- *“I understand APS's mission, scope, and purpose.”* (97%)
- *“APS staff members interact positively with the board.”* (96%)
- *“The board is aware of the needs and priorities of the APS population in the community.”* (96%)
- *“The board has a good working relationship with APS.”* (96%)
- *“APS ensures the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults in this community.”* (95%)

In past 10 years, levels of percent agreement with the feedback statements in the APS Community Boards survey have been consistently high, with most statements attaining at least 90% agreement (Table 10). Any apparent differences in percent agreement from year to year may not be statistically significant.

### ***Judiciary Results***

Forty individuals responded to the Judicial Partners survey in 2017, of whom 60% (24 individuals) were judges. Other roles included attorneys, court investigators and probate staff. Of the 24 judges, nearly 60% (14 judges) reported having had an APS case appear before their court in the past 2 years. Most of these judges (12 individuals) indicated that they had been in contact with APS staff in the past two years. Typically this contact was once or twice a year (eight judges) although some reported more frequent contact of once a month or at least once a week. Further questions in the survey were directed to judges who had an APS case appear before their court in the past 2 years. Other respondents, including judges with no APS case experience in the past two years and those not in the judiciary, were redirected to the Community Partners survey.

Asked to indicate the types of APS legal proceedings that they as a judge have dealt with, a majority of responding judges reported having dealt with *APS emergency removal cases and protective services orders* (10 respondents) and *cases involving emergency detention under the Mental Health Code related to APS cases* (9 respondents). Other commonly reported types of proceedings were *temporary court-ordered mental health services under the Mental Health Code related to APS cases* and *protective custody under the Mental Health Code related to APS cases*.

Judges were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of feedback statements about current relations between their court and APS, using a standardized agreement scale of “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. Each item was a positive statement about APS-court relations. Table 11 in **Appendix 4** displays the number (“*n*”) and percent distribution of judiciary responses to these statements in the 2017 survey. Table 12 provides percent agreement in surveys over the past 10 years, calculated as the combined percentage of respondents each year who indicated either “agree” or “strongly agree” for each statement.

In 2017, overall levels of agreement with the feedback statements ranged from 69% to 92% and were highest for:

- *“APS provides appropriate documentation/information to support legal actions requested.”* (92%/12 of 13 respondents)
- *“APS seeks appropriate court action.”* (85%/11 of 13 respondents)
- *“Attorneys representing APS are prepared in dealings with the court.”* (85%/11 of 13 respondents)
- *“APS staff understand the court’s procedures and guidelines.”* (85%/11 of 13 respondents)
- *“I understand APS’s scope, mission, and purpose.”* (85%/11 or 13 respondents)

Levels of percent agreement with the feedback statements in the Judicial Partners survey have varied from year to year, with most statements attaining at least 70% agreement over the past 10 years (Table 12). Due to sample sizes and differences in respondent groups over time, trend analysis for the judicial survey is not advised. Any apparent differences in agreement from year to year are not statistically significant.

### ***Law Enforcement Results***

There were 72 respondents to the Law Enforcement survey in 2017, of whom 69% (50 individuals) were law enforcement officers. Most other respondents were with victim or community services. Of the 50 law enforcement officers, 70% (35 officers) reported having worked on a case with APS in the past two years. Of these officers, 94% indicated that they had been in contact with APS staff in the past two years. Most often this contact was once or twice a year (55%, or 18 officers) although many had more frequent contact of once a month (10 officers) or once a week (5 officers). Further questions in the survey were directed to law enforcement officers who had worked on a case with APS in the past two years. Other respondents, including officers with no APS case

experience in the past two years and those who were not law enforcement officers, were redirected to the Community Partners survey.

Officers were asked what method they use to report cases to APS. Response options provided comprised the dedicated law enforcement telephone line, the statewide abuse reporting telephone hot line or internet reporting web page, and an “other” option. Multiple response options could be selected. The great majority of officers (80%) reported that they use the law enforcement hot line, with a few of these officers reporting use of supplementary methods. Officers who did not indicate that they use the law enforcement line (7 individuals) reported using the internet reporting web page (3 individuals), the statewide hot line (1 individual), or APS staff contacts.

Officers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of feedback statements about current relations between APS and law enforcement in their community, using a standardized agreement scale of “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. Each item was a positive statement about APS-law enforcement relations. [Table 13](#) in **Appendix 4** displays the number (“*n*”) and percent distribution of law enforcement responses to these statements in the 2017 survey. [Table 14](#) provides percent agreement with these statements in surveys over the past 10 years, calculated as the combined percentage of respondents each year who indicated either “agree” or “strongly agree” for each statement.

In 2017, overall levels of agreement with the feedback statements ranged from 38% to 85%, and were highest for:

- “*APS referrals to law enforcement are appropriate.*” (85%)
- “*APS is an important component of my community’s resource and social service network.*” (82%)
- “*There is a good working relationship between law enforcement and APS in this community.*” (79%)
- “*I understand APS’s mission, scope and purpose.*” (73%)
- “*APS ensures the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults in this community.*” (73%)

Less than half of the officers agreed that “*APS caseworkers understand law enforcement protocols and guidelines.*” (38%)

Levels of percent agreement with the feedback statements in the Law Enforcement Partners survey have varied from year to year, with most statements attaining at least 70% agreement over the past 10 years (Table 14). Due to sample sizes and differences in respondent groups over time, trend analysis for the law enforcement survey is not advised. Any apparent differences in agreement from year to year are not statistically significant.

### ***Community Partners Results***

There were 315 respondents to the Community Partners survey in 2017, of whom 93% were staff and 6% were volunteers with an agency, organization or service in their community. Of those respondents who identified with an agency or organization (281 individuals), most (69%) indicated that they had been with their organization for 5 years or more. A majority of respondents (87%) reported that they had been in contact with APS staff in the past two years. Of these, most (51%) indicated that they had been in contact with APS staff once or twice a year. Others reported more frequent contact, either once a month (37%) or at least once a week (12%).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of feedback statements about APS and community partner relations in their area, using a standardized agreement scale of “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. Each item was a positive statement about APS-community partner relations. Table 15 in **Appendix 4** provides the number (“*n*”) and percent of responses to these statements in the 2017 survey. Table 16 provides percent agreement in surveys over the past 10 years, calculated as the combined percentage of respondents each year who indicated either “agree” or “strongly agree” for each statement.

In 2017, overall levels of agreement with the feedback statements ranged from 71% to 89% and were highest for:

- *“APS is an important component of my community's resource and social service network.”* (89%)
- *“I understand APS's mission, scope, and purpose.”* (88%)
- *“APS ensures the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults in this community.”* (83%)
- *“Referrals to my organization from APS are appropriate.”* (81%)

Levels of percent agreement with the positive performance statements in the APS Community Partners survey have been relatively high over the past 10 years, with most statements attaining at

least 80% agreement (Table 16). However, agreement for each statement declined from 2007 to 2017 and overall average agreement has declined about seven percentage points overall from 88% at the beginning of the decade to 81% in the most recent survey.

## **V. Accomplishments in 2016-2017**

APS continued its public awareness campaign called "It's Everyone's Business" ([www.everyonesbusiness.org](http://www.everyonesbusiness.org)), which addresses important issues related to protecting older adults and individuals with disabilities. The main goals of the campaign are to enhance awareness about the problems of adult abuse, neglect and financial exploitation; enlist the aid of all sectors of the community; and increase awareness of APS programs. Some of the main audiences of the campaign are the judiciary, law enforcement members, and community organizations that provide services to vulnerable adults. The month of May is designated as "Older American's Month" also known as "Elder Abuse Prevention Month" or "Elder Abuse Awareness Month," and APS highlights the issues of adult abuse and neglect during May with district training conferences, mayoral and county court proclamations, and media events around the state.

The United Nations General Assembly designated June 15 as "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day." It is the main day in the year when the world voices opposition to the abuse and suffering inflicted on older people. An increasing number of events and activities are held across the globe and locally on this day to raise awareness of elder abuse, and highlight ways to challenge such abuse. APS staff and community engagement staff work with local service providers to coordinate events and activities on this particular date around the state.

APS also supports a second public awareness campaign during the month of October focusing on financial exploitation called "If It's Not Your Money, It's A Crime." The campaign identifies signs of financial exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities, and provides specific information to the banking community and the public on how to spot and report financial exploitation. Community engagement staff work with local service providers to coordinate conferences and training on financial exploitation around the state. The conferences bring together banking institutions, law enforcement agencies, and judicial partners to learn more about reducing financial exploitation in their communities.

APS Community Engagement staff work diligently throughout the year to continue to inform and educate the public with local workshops, trainings and conferences to communicate to the community about elder abuse issues, and provide support to our APS staff within the districts. They also provide learning opportunities for domestic violence facilities and Child Advocacy Centers as well as numerous other state, county & local agencies who coordinate services with our staff and clients.

For the past 2 years, APS teamed up with Banfield Charitable Trust (BCT) and provided vulnerable adults who were abused, neglected or financially exploited the ability to provide appropriate health and veterinary care for their animals when receiving services from APS. The funds were utilized to purchase items such as pet food, veterinary care and services, grooming, flea and tick medications and heart worm preventative, and when needed, short term shelter until the pet and owner can be reunited in a safe environment. APS also identified individual staff members in each region to be the Pet Subject Matter Expert (SME) for this project. The Pet SME's received additional training on the BCT grant, the new APS policy and forms, and information on outreach to community pet resources. The grant was a huge success and APS plans to reapply after a gap year.

APS has been collaborating since 2012 with the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging and WellMed Medical Management on innovation grant projects to enhance adult abuse and neglect protection and preventive services. In 2016, the partnership was awarded new funding from the Elder Justice Innovation Grants program for a two-year project (2016-2018) to deliver and evaluate interventions to identify self-neglect and risk of self-neglect, then provide prevention or protective services to WellMed clients in the San Antonio and Corpus Christi areas. The effort builds on a previous four-year initiative of APS, WellMed and Benjamin Rose to provide abuse and neglect training and ongoing consultation to WellMed healthcare clinicians who screen for abuse, neglect and exploitation, provide services to at-risk patients and caregivers, and report victims to APS in 5 major metropolitan areas of Texas. The new self-neglect project is an opportunity for APS to collaborate with community partners and researchers to improve detection of self-neglect and risk of self-neglect, enhance preventive and protective services, and help Texans 65 and older and adults with disabilities maintain their independence.

APS staff continues to be supported by local volunteer boards and coalitions around the state that provide necessary resources to APS clients and staff. Texas APS volunteer boards and coalitions sponsor community events to raise funds to purchase items for APS clients, help APS staff plan local workshops and conferences to educate the public about elder abuse issues, and provide support in the way of recognition and appreciation events for APS staff. Texas Partners for Adult Protective Services is the statewide, non-profit organization serving as an additional resource to APS clients and staff. Its focus is to help improve the lives of adults who are abused, neglected, or exploited in Texas by developing resources and providing assistance to local boards who support APS. Any local board with a current 501(c) (3) status may be affiliated with Texas Partners for APS. Members of Texas Partners for APS are nominated by their local board and serve on Texas Partners for a three-year term.

## **VI. Strategies for Fiscal Year 2018**

APS district community engagement for Fiscal Year 2018 focuses on enhancing stakeholder outreach and development, including more community service options for APS clients; identifying potential funding sources through grants and foundations; exploring additional partnerships for external research; and updating public awareness materials for community engagement. To accomplish this, APS redesigned its field operations, including consolidating its community engagement positions, due to budgetary constraints and the reduction of staff, in an effort to refine our approach and ensure more staff participation in community engagement.

APS will continue to address the issues that are important to protecting older adults and individuals with disabilities in Texas through targeted public awareness campaigns during the months of May and October. Local volunteer boards and coalitions are invaluable in helping APS protect older adults and individuals with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. Texas Partners for APS continues to support board development at the local levels by offering assistance to new boards on becoming a non-profit organization, fundraising, and community awareness. APS community engagement specialists will continue to support and strengthen these boards and coalitions around the state.

APS will continue to develop working and successful relationships with other institutions across the nation in partnering with and supporting further research and scholastic endeavors in the fight

against abuse, neglect and exploitation. APS has collaborated for many years on research, education and geriatric assessment initiatives with the Texas Elder Abuse & Mistreatment (TEAM) Institute. New funding from the National Institute of Justice will support a project beginning in 2018 to study elder abuse polyvictimization. The TEAM project will take a statistical modelling approach using Texas APS data to develop definitions and measures of polyvictimization.

Since 2014, APS has been assisting research by the University of North Texas Health Science Center to develop an elder abuse screening and reporting tool used by emergency medical responders in Tarrant County. This project will build knowledge about abuse reporting by health care professionals and increase community capacity in Texas to report abuse and neglect. APS will continue to seek out collaboration and funding opportunities with other research partners.

An annual review of the community engagement strategies by state office and the districts will ensure districts are progressing on the goals set forth by DFPS and APS management. The evaluations will provide the community engagement staff an opportunity to identify initiatives that are thriving and those that need further development. Strategies will be reviewed at the end of each fiscal year and new plans will be developed and implemented based on the successes and challenges identified in the previous year.

## **VII. Conclusion**

APS shares community satisfaction survey results with each APS district, and when requested, district management follows up on an individual basis. District business plans address community concerns by implementing necessary changes. In addition, the community satisfaction survey report is shared with the presiding judge of the statutory probate courts and with courts with jurisdiction over probate matters in the district, community board members, and other survey respondents who indicated an interest in receiving the final survey report.

The APS 2017 Community Satisfaction Survey results show that APS community engagement efforts are effective. The results reinforce the continued need for outreach efforts and continued collaborations with the local communities and other service agencies. These survey results also provide valuable insight for making improvements, enhancing community satisfaction, and

strengthening partnerships with civic and professional organizations at the local and state level. APS will continue to use activities identified in the district business plans to continue to assess, strengthen, and improve relationships with its community partners.