

About Adult Protective Services

What Are Adult Protective Services?

Adult Protective Services (APS) are investigatory, protective, and social services provided to abused, neglected, or exploited older and/or vulnerable or at-risk adults. APS is typically administered by state or county human services or aging agencies. In most states, anyone over the age of 18 who meets the eligibility criteria defined in state statute of vulnerable or at-risk adults is eligible for adult protective services. In general, the term vulnerable adult means persons with disabilities who are unable to report abuse or to protect themselves. The definition also includes persons who are unable to provide basic, life sustaining care for themselves (self-neglect). In some states, vulnerability may be defined as an individual over a specific age such as 62 or 65. About two thirds of APS cases involve vulnerable older persons and one third younger adults with disabilities.

Every action taken by APS must balance the duty to protect the safety of the younger vulnerable adult or older person with the adult's right to self-determination. Unless a court order has limited a victim's rights due to lack of capacity, the adult retains their full array of civil rights. APS often walks the fine line between trying to protect abused adults' safety, while supporting their rights to make their own decisions, even if victims' choices seem like poor ones.

Reporting to APS

In almost all states, a broad array of professionals, including doctors, nurses, law enforcement officers, social workers, and aging and disabilities services providers are mandated to report any suspicion of vulnerable adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation to APS.

What to Expect if You or Someone Else Calls APS

A. An Investigation

- An APS worker will come to the home and make face to face contact with the victim within 24–72 hours.
- The APS worker will assess immediate risk to the victim and screen to assess the victim's capacity to make informed decisions.
- The worker will investigate and substantiate abuse if sufficient evidence exists to support the finding.
- The suspected offender may also be interviewed depending on the case allegations and taking into account the safety of the victim.
- Collateral interviews, such as talking to friends, family, physicians, and neighbors, also often occur.
- Reports may also be made to a law enforcement agency.

B. Services for the Victim

- In most communities, victims who have the capacity to give informed consent may refuse any or all of these services.
- APS often develops a case plan which includes the steps to be taken to prevent further abuse and to aid the victim.
- In some cases, APS workers provide short term counseling.
- In many cases, APS workers arrange for or assist the victim in finding services to recover from the abuse and to improve their safety and quality of life, including, but not limited to:
 - Referrals for physical and mental health assessments
 - Cleaning services
 - Financial management
 - Transportation
 - Home modification to meet the needs of persons with disabilities
 - Medical attention
 - Assistive living devices
 - Food services including home delivered meals on wheels, food stamps when applicable
 - Emergency housing

- Home repairs including roofing, floor, and walls
- Pest and animal control
- Respite care or other care provider services
- Residential placement
- Linkage to all other service groups
- Assistance with applications for health care and/or financial benefits
- Reporting of crimes to law enforcement

Victims who lack the capacity to give informed consent and are in imminent danger may have emergency services ordered by the court. In some cases, APS may seek the appointment of a temporary or permanent guardian. Depending on state laws and regulations, APS may continue to monitor these services once they have been put in place, and to provide counseling or casework services until the victim's risk has been reduced or eliminated. If the court deems a victim lacks capacity, the court empowers a guardian or APS to make decisions on behalf of the victim, including, in some cases, removing the person from the home for their safety and protection.

APS regulations vary from state to state. For information on local APS offices, please visit: <http://www.napsa-now.org/get-help/help-in-your-area/>.

If you are in danger and want law enforcement to respond, call 911. To talk to someone confidentially for support and information, call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) at 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224. To find your local sexual abuse victim service program, call the [Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network](#) at 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE).