



Medical Providers and Adult Protective Services



Partnering to Protect

One Team, One Goal.

Medical providers are all critical and valued Adult Protective Services (APS) partners in protecting and ensuring the safety of vulnerable adults in Texas. Our shared goal is to find solutions for adults who are in need so they can live healthier, safer lives with dignity. We achieve the best results when APS and medical providers work side by side to help the people we serve.

About APS

APS is a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). We serve Texans who live in the community who are age 65 or older and adults, age 18 to 64, who have a disability that substantially affects their ability to live independently. APS investigates when someone alleges that a member of either of these groups is a victim of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation. When an investigation confirms an allegation, APS may provide or arrange for services to remedy or prevent further harm.

Reporting to APS

Report situations of suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation to the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400. For situations that are not urgent, you can report online at [txabusehotline.org](https://www.txabusehotline.org).

Please provide as much detail as possible and a good call-back number for APS to ask follow-up questions.

State law requires everyone to report suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities to DFPS. The law also provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for those acting in good faith.

DFPS's Statewide Intake (SWI) program operates the hotline and the website. If the allegations meet APS's investigation criteria, SWI assigns a priority that is based on the severity of the situation and sends it to a local APS office where a caseworker begins an investigation. The caseworker uses the priority to determine how quickly to see the client.

.....

Most of the cases APS investigates involve self-neglect. Self-neglect warning signs may include poor hygiene, lack of necessities, and unsanitary living conditions.

.....

APS Role and Responsibilities

- APS investigates allegations of abuse, neglect and self-neglect, and financial exploitation when the adult is age 65 or over or has a disability causing significant impairment.
- APS compiles testimony and records from medical providers and other community partners and seeks legal remedies as needed to ensure the safety of clients and the community.
- APS finds community resources to help clients with short-term needs such as emergency shelter, rent, house cleaning, minor home repairs, wheelchair ramps, food, and medications. Longer-term solutions include advocating for clients to receive government benefits and connecting clients with social service agencies.



Facts about APS

- APS clients who have the capacity to make decisions have the right to refuse services, such as home cleaning or medication assistance, but the investigation is not optional. APS is required to continue the investigation whether the client is cooperative or not.
- APS's ability to pursue legal intervention for imminent mental health concerns is limited.
- APS does not have emergency shelters or placements. APS works with law enforcement, homeless shelters, and other groups to find temporary placements for our clients, including hotels or apartments.

- If a client is in a situation that threatens their life or safety, APS must first pursue less restrictive alternatives. If a client has capacity to make their own decisions, they can choose to remain in their home. If they do not have capacity, APS may seek a court order to place the client in a safe environment, such as a nursing home. APS does not serve as a guardian. If a client needs a guardian, APS looks for relatives or refers the client to other agencies.

Opportunities for Medical Providers and APS to Work Together

- **Collaborating** with APS, medical providers, law enforcement, mental health providers, and other community partners on the best long-term outcomes for mutual clients.
- **Establishing Points of Contact and Clear Communication Channels.** APS welcomes the opportunity to build relationships with medical providers to foster trust and effective communications. By establishing local points of contact, medical providers and APS caseworkers can work together to quickly resolve issues for our mutual clients.
- **Working with APS on Investigations.** Texas law authorizes medical providers to share medical records with APS to assist with investigations involving abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.
- **Helping APS Determine Client Capacity.** Medical providers can help determine an adult's capacity to make his or her own decisions. They can also testify in court if an emergency order for protective services or guardianship appointment is needed.
- **Expanding Training Opportunities.** Together, medical providers and APS can develop cross-training opportunities such as Brown Bag Lunch-and-Learns and ride-alongs for both medical providers and APS staff to learn about each other's role and what services can be provided.

Contact your local APS office:

For more information, please visit [PartneringToProtect.org](https://www.PartneringToProtect.org).



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services
Adult Protective Services