



# Social Security Administration and Adult Protective Services



## Partnering to Protect

### One Team, One Goal.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is a critical and valued Adult Protective Services (APS) partner in protecting and ensuring the safety of vulnerable adults in Texas. Benefits provided by the SSA, including Medicare, Medicaid, and financial benefits, are essential to the health and well-being of adults who are in need. Our shared goal is to find solutions for these adults so they can live healthier, safer lives with dignity. We achieve the best results when APS and the SSA 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

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

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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.

## 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 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 benefits and connecting clients with social service agencies.
- APS helps clients secure a representative payee for their SSA benefits.

## 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 take legal action depends on: (1) if there is evidence that the client lacks capacity, (2) if there is a threat to the client's life or physical safety, and (3) whether there is no one else who can make decisions about services on the client's behalf.

- APS's ability to pursue legal intervention for imminent mental health concerns is limited.
- 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 SSA and APS to Work Together

- **Establishing Points of Contact and Clear Communication Channels.** APS welcomes the opportunity to build relationships with the SSA to foster trust and effective communications. SSA and APS can establish local points of contact so we can work together to quickly resolve issues for our mutual clients.
- **Working with APS to support clients** by administering retirement, disability, survivor and family benefits to adults over age 65 and adults with disabilities, enrolling APS clients in Medicare, and providing Social Security numbers.
- **Sharing Information.** Texas law authorizes APS and SSA to share the health and financial information of clients to assist with APS investigations and services.
- **Expanding Training Opportunities.** Together, SSA and APS can develop cross-training opportunities such as Brown Bag Lunch-and-Learns and joint meetings with financial institutions and community service organizations to learn about each other's role and what services can be provided.
- **Protecting Clients' Resources.** SSA and APS can work to facilitate appointing or changing a representative payee if needed.

Contact your local APS office:

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



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Department of Family  
and Protective Services  
Adult Protective Services