



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

Division of Aging and Adult Services

Adult Protective Services

SFY 2020 Year in Review

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

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Adult Protective Services Year in Review Overview

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2019, Arizona Adult Protective Services (APS) released the APS Year in Review, changing the traditional contents of the APS Annual Report to include an overview of the APS Program and highlights of the year. In years prior, APS metrics related to the program including demographic information, case type or status, and average response times, were released through a static annual report. Although the report provided valuable details regarding programmatic actions, the format was not dynamic and publishing of the report was often delayed.

In response to stakeholder requests, APS began providing quarterly reports and created an interactive dashboard to provide more up-to-date information. The interactive dashboard includes reporting data by geographical region, alleged perpetrator and reporting source information, and can be found at: <https://des.az.gov/APSDData>.

SFY 2020 APS Year In Review Report provides a summary of accomplishments throughout the year, including a description of the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Statutory Authority

In 1980, the Arizona Legislature enacted laws to protect vulnerable adults 18 years of age or older, by passing the Adult Protective Services Act. APS, a program within the Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), was given authority to receive and assess reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults.

A.R.S. §§ 46-451(B) and 46-452 establish the roles and responsibilities of an APS professional and authorize APS to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults. A.R.S. § 46-451 defines a vulnerable adult as an individual age 18 and older, who is unable to protect themselves due to a physical or mental impairment or a court has deemed incapacitated (A.R.S. § 14-5101).

Guiding Values and Principles

APS Mission: Inspire hope with vulnerable adults by engaging and partnering with the individual, family, and community to ensure their self-determination, safety, independence, and highest quality of life.

APS Vision: Arizona’s vulnerable adults thriving free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The Arizona APS Program is a member of the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA), a national non-profit 501(c)(3) with members from all 50 states. NAPSA provides an opportunity for APS Programs to share information, solve problems, and improve vulnerable adult maltreatment response. NAPSA provides the guiding value of APS Programs, which states: “Every action taken by APS must balance the duty to protect the safety of the vulnerable adult with the adult’s right to self-determination.”

APS Action Plan

The Arizona Governor’s Executive Order 2019-03 Relating to Enhanced Protections for Individuals with Disabilities issued in February 2019, established an Abuse and Neglect Prevention Task Force to make recommendations to protect and improve care for individuals with disabilities.

The task force – comprised of individuals with disabilities, their families, advocacy organizations, relevant state agency staff, and members of the Arizona Legislature – submitted 30 recommendations to the Governor on November 1, 2019. The task force expanded the recommendations to include all vulnerable adults. It included necessary reforms and recommendations for the practice and policies of the Arizona APS system to improve and sustain the safety and security of vulnerable adults.

The Arizona House of Representatives also convened a study committee, the Ad Hoc Committee on Abuse and Neglect of Vulnerable Adults, to review and identify best practices for reporting and investigative processes to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults in Arizona. The committee met over the summer and fall of 2019 and developed its own set of recommendations. One recommendation was that the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and ADES develop and implement a stakeholder-driven action plan to protect Arizona’s vulnerable adults.¹ In response to that recommendation, APS and the ADHS hosted a community stakeholder meeting on January 23, 2020, of over 160 individuals that included vulnerable individuals, their families, and the organizations that support them, in developing a vision for the future and identifying existing gaps. Information collected at this meeting was used to develop the APS Action Plan.² The APS Action Plan, released in March 2020, outlines strategies and actions to strengthen the

¹ Arizona Department of Health Services - Director’s Office - Arizona Adult Protective Services Stakeholder Meeting <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/director/aps-stakeholders/aps-action-plan.pdf>

² Adult Protective Services Action Plan - March 2020 <https://www.azdhs.gov/director/index.php#aps-stakeholders>

Arizona APS Program. The APS Action Plan and stakeholder meeting presentation are available on the ADES website: <https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/adult-protective-services>.

APS Action Plan Accomplishments

- **Develop a Social Services Rapid Response Team**

The APS Action Plan recommended APS establish a Social Services Rapid Response Team to quickly identify any needs for services or resources in response to self-neglect reports. In SFY 2020, APS identified a group of investigators who would respond primarily to reports of self-neglect. In addition, through a grant provided by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), these investigators took two NAPSA-developed training courses in August, focused on issues related to investigating self-neglect reports. The investigators also attended self-neglect mentoring sessions with a NAPSA consultant.

In SFY 2020, APS developed a plan to enhance training for new and experienced investigators and APS supervisors to advance the workforce's skills and knowledge and to increase retention rates for investigators. As part of the above-referenced ACL grant, the Arizona APS Program contracted with NAPSA to provide the NAPSA Certificate Program, a nationally recognized APS core-curriculum training program, to experienced investigators. APS also contracted with NAPSA to provide core curriculum and advanced training to APS supervisors. NAPSA conducted a needs assessment in SFY 2020 to guide curriculum development for the supervisor training with piloting expected in SFY 2021.

- **Data Sharing Opportunities**

In April 2020, APS initiated an integration of the APS Registry, previously a static document listing individuals determined to have abused, neglected or exploited a vulnerable adult, with the ADHS AZ Care Check Registry, a searchable database of information about deficiencies identified against facilities and providers by ADHS. The APS Registry is now hosted on the ADHS website, and the integration was completed in early SFY 2021.

APS also began development of a data dashboard that will provide the public with access to ongoing updated APS Program related data. The APS dashboard is expected to go live in December 2020.

- **Cross-Training Opportunities among Agencies**

APS, in partnership with the ADES Office of Professional Development (OPD) and NAPSA, assembled a project team to develop and deliver training to individuals mandated to report the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults. APS began preliminary needs research for the Mandatory Reporter training and will continue to gather information about community partner policies and procedures to report abuse and neglect into early SFY 2021. The project consists of three primary deliverables: a computer-based training, an APS Awareness Presentation, and a website with access to the APS online reporting form, APS registry, APS statutes, and comprehensive resources for mandated reporters and their employers.

- **Legislative Review**

In SFY 2020 APS enlisted the ACL to assist in conducting a 50-state review of APS Programs across the country to understand similarities and differences in organizational structure, regulation and authority, and process and procedures.

The document can be accessed at:

<https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/media/50-State-Review-12-2020.pdf?time=1608069033328>

APS will be utilizing data and information collected from this review to implement best practices and continue discussions with stakeholders throughout SFY 2021.

COVID-19 Impact on the APS Program

The onset of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic required APS to modify its investigation practices while continuing efforts to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults. In April 2020, ADES introduced the APS Pandemic and Emergent Situations Policy which directs APS investigators to default to conducting virtual interviews with clients. During a virtual investigation, an initial phone call is placed to the client to determine if the client has access to a virtual device. For clients who do not have access to a virtual device, APS attempts to deliver a device or to observe the client and their surroundings through a barrier (such as a window or glass door). When it is not reasonable or practical to deliver a virtual device or to observe the client through a barrier, APS re-initiates phone contact with the client.

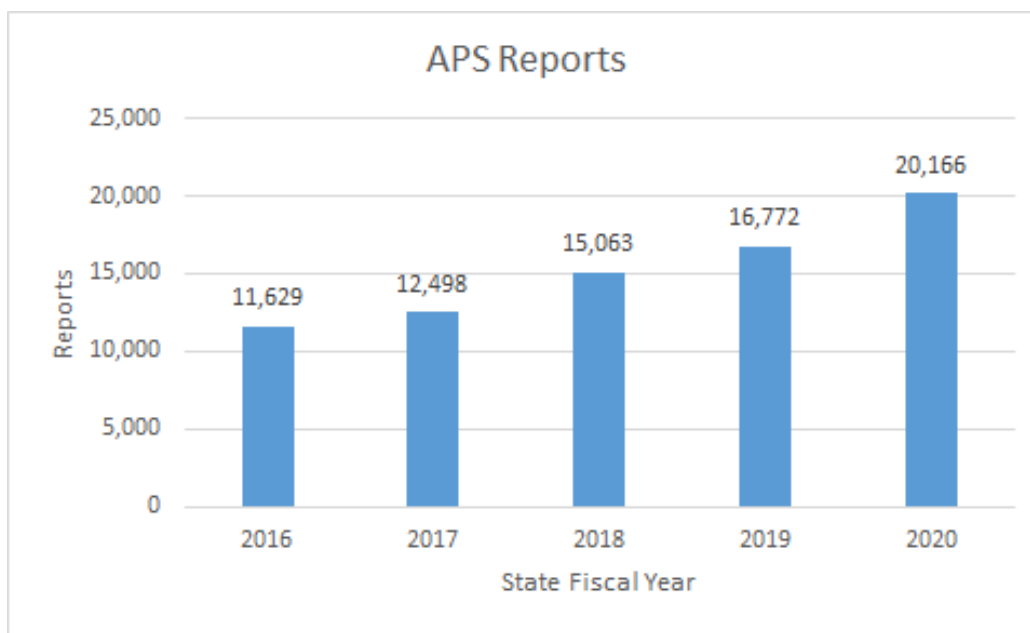
APS continues to make in-person contact with clients in emergent situations, using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to protect the clients and the APS investigators. To further ensure the health and safety of community members, APS also conducts phone or virtual interviews with individuals named as alleged perpetrators and others with pertinent information related to the investigation.

APS received a grant from the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission at the start of the Pandemic that was used to purchase tablets to facilitate the virtual investigations and to increase the availability and amount of PPE for APS investigators.

Finally, at the start of the Pandemic all APS staff, including the central intake call center, were moved to remote settings for the safety of themselves and their families. Initial employee satisfaction surveys show increased satisfaction with the work environment and increased productivity. APS plans to introduce additional technology, including electronic faxing and scanning, during SFY 2021 to further reduce the instances of coming into brick-and-mortar office spaces. Additionally, the APS New Investigator Training program was converted from a two-week in-person instructor-led training provided in Phoenix, Arizona to a two-week completely virtual instructor-led training.

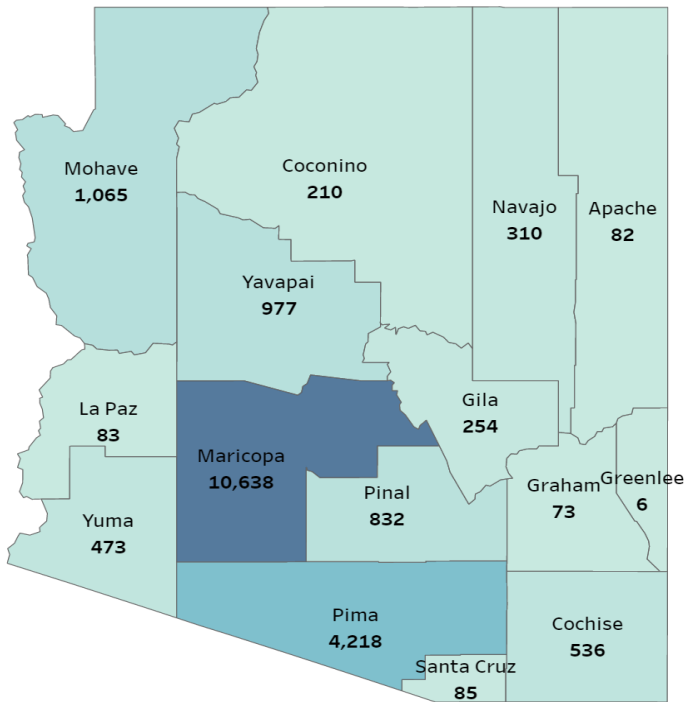
Reports and Caseload

In SFY 2020, APS received 51,193 communications into its Central Intake Unit, resulting in 20,166* new reports of neglect, abuse and/or exploitation. This represents a 20 percent increase over SFY 2019.



*20,178 reports were originally noted, but 12 were found to be duplicates

Total Cases	20,166	Arizona	19,842	Out of State	212	Unknown Location	112
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The average caseload in SFY 2020 was 33 cases per investigator. In accordance with the APS Action Plan, APS will continue to target bringing the caseload to 25 cases per investigator.

Administration for Community Living Grant Awards

ACL Grant - Data Layer and AZAPSS Replacement

APS continued the three-year ACL grant-funded project awarded in SFY 2018 to strengthen its use of data and technology. By using data to predict the service needs for proactive planning and resource allocation, client outcomes improved.

The first part of the project was to build a data layer between two systems used within DAAS to create a master client database. Combining data from the Division of Aging and Adult Services Reporting System (DAARS) for clients who receive services from the Area Agencies on Aging with the Arizona Adult Protective Services System (AZAPSS) gives APS the ability to identify the home and community-based services a client is receiving.

With the data layer in place, the team was able to capture additional data elements such as services in place at the start of the investigation (i.e. income and benefits) and the types of service referrals made throughout the investigation. The team will use this information to analyze trends in recidivism. SFY 2020 marked the completion of the development of the data layer and the beginning of data analytics. APS plans to use the data to establish baseline measures to improve interagency collaboration between APS and the Area Agencies on Aging to increase APS client connectivity to needed services and decrease recidivism.

The data layer also enhances APS' ability to provide data to the National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System (NAMRS), the first comprehensive national reporting system for adult protective services programs. It collects quantitative and qualitative data on APS practices and policies and the outcomes of APS investigations. The goal of NAMRS is to provide consistent, accurate national data on the maltreatment of older adults and adults with disabilities, as reported to APS agencies.

During SFY 2020, APS used the combined data to submit 48 of the 54 data elements requested for the federal NAMRS report. Data collected and reported to NAMRS include maltreatment data (such as maltreatment type and disposition), client data (such as age, gender, living arrangement at the start and close of the investigation, services referred during the investigation) and perpetrator data (such as age, gender, relationship to the client).

The second part of this ACL grant project is the replacement of AZAPSS, an internally-developed case management system that has been in use for more than ten years. In March 2020, APS selected a vendor, WellSky, who has worked with APS Programs in 12 states and will provide a cloud-based solution. Through the implementation of the updated system, APS' goal is to increase the number of NAMRS data elements captured.

The target for implementation is June 2021. Once implemented, APS will have an operationally efficient system that allows for improved workflow, visibility, and reporting capabilities throughout the entire investigative process.

ACL Grant for Enhanced Investigations

In SFY 2020, APS received another three-year grant to enhance APS investigator training and improve the capacity of the program to meet the needs of vulnerable adults. The three-year grant funds are allocated to improve the training and onboarding of new investigators and enroll current investigators in competency-based training offered by NAPSA. In partnership with NAPSA, additional components of this grant initiative include

conducting a needs assessment to develop and pilot an Advanced Supervisor training, and creating and delivering an online mandatory reporter training course.

- **NAPSA Certification**

NAPSA certification is a nationally recognized APS core curriculum training program developed by the NAPSA Education Committee and Workforce Innovations at San Diego State University's Academy for Professional Excellence. The NAPSA APS core curriculum offers e-learning modules for each of the 23 core competencies identified by NAPSA as information necessary in the practice of adult protective services.³ APS investigators complete the estimated 33 hours of e-learning modules within a framework of three months. In SFY 2020, APS contracted with NAPSA to offer investigators the opportunity to pursue certification through NAPSA in conjunction with this training.

Investigators are eligible to apply to NAPSA for their certification when they complete the core competency modules and have two years of APS investigation experience. The first group of 34 APS investigators are targeted to begin taking the core competence e-learning modules in August 2020 and are expected to be completed in December 2020. The remaining APS investigators will complete this training curriculum in cohorts for the remainder of the three-year grant cycle.

To ensure Arizona-specific content was included in the certification program offered to investigators and supervisors, and in collaboration with the ADES OPD and the NAPSA curriculum training professionals' expertise, the APS Program developed two Arizona-specific core competency computer-based training (CBT) courses between January and May 2020.

The first of the two Arizona-specific CBTs provides an overview of the Arizona APS Program, and the second provides an overview of the statutes, rules, and policies that govern Arizona APS practice. These Arizona-specific CBTs are available to all current investigators as part of the NAPSA certification program, to newly hired APS Investigators as part of the onboarding process, and to supervisors.

- **Supervisor Training**

NAPSA conducted an APS Supervisor Core Needs Assessment in May 2020 to determine APS supervisors' current training needs across the nation, including the

³ National Adult Protective Services Association - NAPSA Certificate Program - The National APS Certificate Program <https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.napsa-now.org/the-napsa-certificate-program/&sa=D&ust=1599849187609000&usg=AFQjCNFxBUX13Jh2rbEJKeyhmf2KnmC18Q>

Arizona APS Program. NAPSA curriculum developers will incorporate information gathered from the Needs Assessment and an upcoming Supervisory Curriculum Advisory Committee (SCAC) to develop the supervisor core curriculum training and will use Arizona-specific material, based on the needs assessment responses provided by APS supervisors, to develop the Advanced Supervisor training curriculum. NAPSA is scheduled to have the training available to Arizona APS supervisors in SFY 2021.

- **New Investigator Onboarding and Training**

In May 2020, APS developed an internal evaluation tool (the Onboarding and New APS Investigator Training Needs Assessment tool) to identify gaps in the onboarding and training of new APS investigators. APS began the needs assessment in June 2020. Using the Needs Assessment tool, APS District Program Managers, Assistant Program Managers, and Supervisors provide feedback about these two critical points in a newly hired APS investigator's journey.

The needs assessment will be completed in July 2020. The information provided by APS Leadership in the needs assessment and an upcoming New Investigator Training and Onboarding Workgroup will be used throughout SFY 2021 to guide improvements in current processes, tools, and material used to onboard and train new investigators. APS plans to develop and implement the enhanced APS Investigator Training and Onboarding in SFY 2021.

Legislation

Legislative changes that resulted from the 2019 54th Legislature - First Regular Session went into effect on August 27, 2019, and are as follows:

- The definition of neglect was updated to remove the need for a “pattern” of conduct. (A.R.S. § 46-451);
- The list of professionals who have a duty to report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable adults (A.R.S. § 46-454) was expanded.

The following was added to the list of mandatory reporters:

- Licensed practical or registered nurses;
- Certified nursing assistants;
- Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT);
- Home health providers;

- Psychiatrists;
- Pharmacists;
- Speech, physical or occupational therapists;
- Long-term care providers;
- Medical examiners;
- Guardians;
- Conservators;
- Fire protection personnel;
- Developmental disabilities providers; and
- Employees of the Arizona Department of Economic Security.
- A provision was added to prohibit retaliation against a person who reports in good faith or a vulnerable adult who is the subject of a report;
- A requirement was added for ADES to check the APS Registry for any person employed or seeking employment in a position that provides direct services to children or vulnerable adults;
- Updates to the APS Confidentiality statute were made to include a new section created to address the APS Program specifically (A.R.S.§ 46-460). This new section provides special protections to the identity of the reporting source and clarifies that information created and gathered by APS is confidential, with some exceptions:
 - Authorizes the release of the identity of the reporting source to certain entities, such as law enforcement.
 - Authorizes the release of the minimal necessary information needed to arrange for services, apply for benefits, conduct the investigation of allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation, and to protect against clear and substantial risk of imminent serious injury to a client or to others.
 - Authorizes the release of information to other states and tribal governments for official purposes.

Several APS bills related to the protection of vulnerable adults were introduced into the 54th Legislature 2020 Legislative Session addressing vulnerable adults, but due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the 2020 state legislative session ended before the bills completed the process.

Community Engagement

APS Leadership participated in pre-pandemic in-person and virtual community events such as stakeholder meetings, community partnership events, and events related to aging community members. The goal of community engagement is to promote and strengthen

APS' community partnerships, improve client outcomes, and raise awareness about the APS Program.

Community events attended by APS Leadership during SFY 2020 included:

- Flagstaff Informational Forum
- Winslow Indian Health Center
- Senior Expos in Prescott Valley
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

APS Leadership also presented information about the APS Program to various community partners such as hospice facility staff, nursing students, medical professionals, social workers and nursing managers, paramedic students, and law enforcement.

More Information

More information can be found on the APS website at: <https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/adult-protective-services>.