



News Release

Timothy Jeffries, Director

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Department takes action in follow-up to horrific case of elderly neglect in Mesa

PHOENIX – The Department of Economic Security announced internal action today as a result of the abhorrent case of elderly neglect in Mesa. Two DES employees are believed to have had knowledge of this case. One is a family member of the victim; the other was immediately placed on administrative leave while the case is investigated. Names cannot be released pending the current investigation.

"I was deeply disturbed and extremely saddened by this horrific case of abuse of an elderly individual," said DES Director Timothy Jeffries. "As the Director of DES, a citizen and a Christian, these acts are deplorable and evil to their very core. My heart sinks and my stomach is in knots. I grieve and rage for this poor elderly woman," said DES Director Timothy Jeffries. "I am even further disturbed by the involvement of two DES employees. Decisive action has been taken by the Department for their conduct."

The Adult Protective Services (APS) hotline received notification of this case on February 18. An investigator visited the home on February 19 and learned that the elderly individual had been taken to the hospital and was receiving care.

"Adult Protective Services is dedicated to ensuring the health and safety of vulnerable adults who are the victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation," said APS Bureau Chief Heather Patnode. "Protecting older adults in Arizona is our top priority and we know that the fight against elder abuse requires a community response. Too many elderly Arizonians are suffering alone and together we can change that."

"A comprehensive review of the case record was completed and it was determined that immediate action needed to occur to place the APS Investigator on administrative leave until all facts can be gathered and assessed," said Rhonda Coates, Deputy Assistant Director. "It is imperative that all APS Investigations are completed with a sense of urgency to ensure client safety."

During fiscal year 2015, Adult Protective Services received nearly 13,800 reports. During the past five years, the number of APS reports has grown by 79 percent. APS Investigators were faced with a crisis that demanded immediate attention and resolution. In March 2015, APS had an open workload of 12,676 cases requiring review. By January 2016, that caseload was reduced to 4,443 through the use of a private contractor and the implementation of a change management technique, the Four Disciplines of Execution. Caseloads are now more in-line with national standards. The current caseloads are:

Statewide: 56; Urban: 73; Rural: 33. The average caseload in SFY 2015 was Statewide: 139; Urban: 172; and Rural: 70.

Adult Protective Services is consistently focused on better outcomes for vulnerable adults in need of protection and assistance. We continue to grow, learn and act to better protect those in need.

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