

Adult Protective Services: Increased Demand and Decreased Funds

Adult Protective Services (APS) offer victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation a range of remedial services. Calls for APS have increased during the recent recession, which began in December 2007. However, funding for these services either remained flat or decreased in many states in state fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Mistreatment of older adults is a growing problem with devastating consequences for those affected. New data show that as many as one in ten older adults are victims of mistreatment, with a higher percentage being victims of financial exploitation.¹ Only a small percentage of elder abuse events are ever referred to agencies that can assist victims.

Adult Protective Services (APS) caseworkers are the first responders in most states to reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults, according to the National Center on Elder Abuse at the U.S. Administration on Aging. They respond by investigating the reports, monitoring and evaluating the situation, and, in some cases, arranging for medical care, long-term services and supports, housing, and legal services for their clients.

Increased Calls for Adult Protective Services

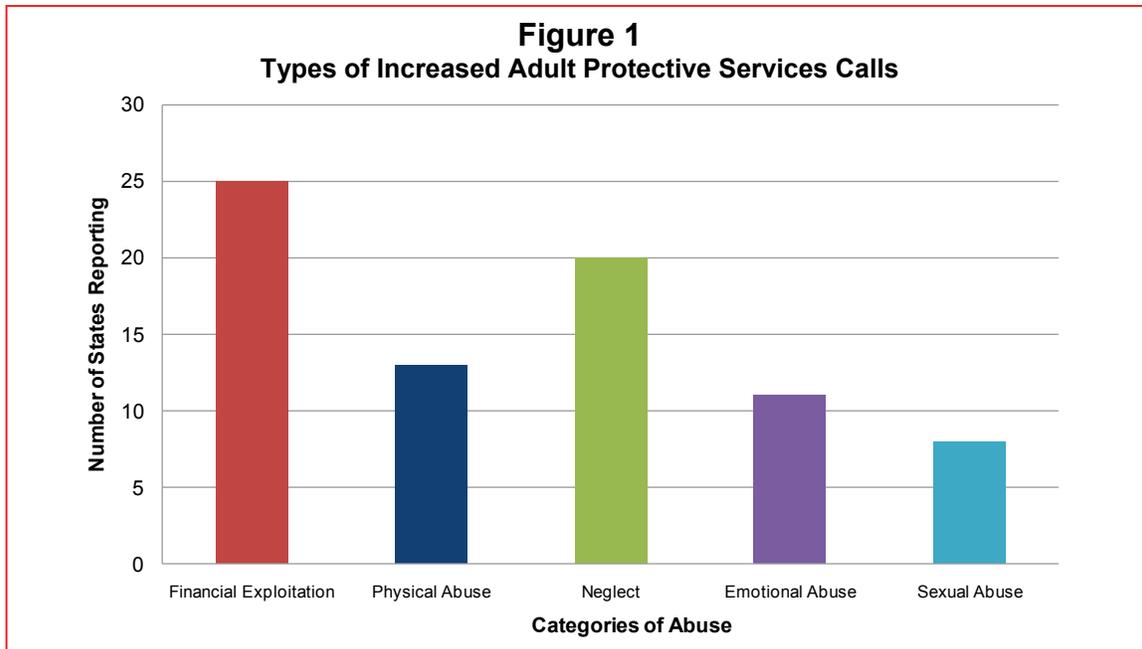
An AARP Public Policy Institute-funded national survey of state units on aging in 2010 found that 24 states plus the District of Columbia reported increased calls for APS in state fiscal year 2010 (see figure 1). All of these states named financial exploitation as a cause of increased calls. Nineteen states plus the District of Columbia reported that neglect was a factor in the

increased calls. Many of the state officials indicated that most “neglect” calls were “self-neglect,” in which older people, in the judgment of others, are thought to be neglecting their own needs and putting themselves at high risk of harm and serious deterioration. One additional write-in concern state officials expressed was the number of adult children with disabilities, primarily developmental disabilities, who were being abandoned at emergency shelters and emergency rooms since the recession started.

Reduced or Flat APS Expenditures

Despite an increase in the number of APS calls, only three reporting states—Alaska, Idaho, and Nevada—increased APS spending in state fiscal year 2010, while the rest of the responding states either maintained (16 states) or decreased (5 states) spending. In state fiscal year 2011, only two reporting states—Alaska and Idaho—planned to increase APS spending. Four states were planning for reductions, and 16 states planned for APS appropriations to remain the same.

The Elder Justice Act (EJA), passed as part of the Affordable Care Act, authorizes a direct funding stream for state APS programs, as well as funding for state demonstration grants to test a variety of methods to improve APS.



To date, Congress has not appropriated funds for these EJA provisions.

Conclusion

State APS provide safeguards for adults who cannot protect themselves from crime, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. During the economic downturn, APS reports of mistreatment have increased. Since cases are underreported, it is likely that the magnitude of the problem is far greater than reported.

This survey of APS was conducted as part of a 50-state AARP Public Policy Institute study that looked at a broad range of state-based long-term services and supports. The study, *Weathering the Storm: The Impact of the Great Recession on Long-Term Services and Supports*, found that 31 states cut non-Medicaid programs in state fiscal year 2010, and 28 states were expecting to cut these programs in state fiscal year 2011.

Note: Data for this fact sheet were excerpted from *Weathering the Storm: The Impact of the Great Recession on Long-Term Services and Supports*, which can be downloaded at www.aarp.org/health/health-care-reform/info-10-2010/health-panel-10201.html. State-by-state data for APS are contained in table IV in the appendix of the report.

¹ R. Acierno, M. A. Hernandez, A. B. Amstadter, H. S. Resnick, K. Steve, W. Muzzy, and D. G. Kilpatrick, Prevalence and Correlates of Emotional, Physical, Sexual and Financial Abuse and Potential Neglect in the United States: The National Elder Mistreatment Study. *American Journal of Public Health* (Feb. 2010): 292–7.

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