# APS TARC
**Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center**

enhancing
effectiveness of
**APS** programs

# Professional APS Training - September 2020

Part of the located at https://apstarc.acl.gov/Toolkits.

## Introduction

The job of providing adult abuse investigations and interventions requires a broad base of knowledge and skills, some of which are very specific to Adult Protective Services (APS) and not taught in general college courses or Master of Social Work programs. APS administrators often struggle to research available funding resources for the development of APS training in their state, not realizing that such training already exists and is available for free or, in the case of eLearning training, for a small registration fee.

Over the past fifteen years, in partnership with the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA), the Academy for Professional Excellence has developed core curricula, advanced and supervisor trainings for APS professionals. The "in-person" versions of these trainings have been created to cover best practices and be customized for individual states. Each in-person training module can be tailored to accommodate county or state specific APS policies – with acknowledgement of the original curriculum developer – and includes:

- A scripted trainer manual that guides the trainer with ease to facilitate the content, activities and skill practice.
- A participant manual that includes all the materials for training activities.
- A customizable PowerPoint.

Several modules also include Transfer of Learning activities.

Many of these same courses are available in an eLearning format. Although there is a cost to register for these trainings, the eLearning format has the advantage of allowing the worker to take training from his/her desk and takes a shorter time period to complete. This removes the cost of hiring a trainer, the cost of travel and a significant portion of the cost of worker's time away from their job duties. In addition, the Academy for Professional Excellence tracks module completions by individual workers.

## Core Competency Training and Resources

The core competency training modules are available for free download for all APS organizations to use to advance workforce skills and knowledge. Each module is examined by skilled APS professionals and experts in the field to determine the specific learning objectives. Currently, there are 23 core competencies identified by NAPSA and its professional members as basics important to (or necessary for) the practice of Adult Protective Services. (Note that all of the core competency modules are also available in an eLearning format but there is a per person registration charge to access those modules). The 23 modules include the following:

## Core Competency Trainings

| # | Course Title | Course Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **APS Overview** | Designed to help APS professionals understand the job they are expected to perform. Includes general client demographics, what circumstances compel intervention; and what interventions might look like. |
| 2 | **APS Values, Ethics, and Cultural Responsiveness** | This thought-provoking training enhances self-awareness and ongoing self-reflection of the APS professional which are essential when analyzing situations from a culturally responsive lens. Participants will learn the basic components of ethics and values as applied to APS and be able to apply a practical framework for ethical and culturally responsive decision-making. |
| 3 | **Agency Standards and Procedures** *California specific | Designed to help APS professionals understand CA APS Regulations by requiring them to apply the regulations to abuse reports and case studies. |
| 4 | **The Aging Process** | Provides APS professionals with a basic understanding of the aging process that will enhance their ability to perform investigations and make evaluations. Includes a hands-on sensory awareness learning experience. |
| 5 | **Physical and Developmental Disabilities** | Designed to teach APS professionals about the unique ways of working on a case with an individual having a physical, cognitive, or developmental disability. |
| 6 | **Mental Health in APS** | Participants will review characteristics of common mental health disorders to better understand challenges and problem solve solutions when working with clients experiencing mental illness. Participants participate in experiential learning to develop empathy to enhance rapport building skills, ensuring a thorough service plan is created. |
| 7 | **Substance Abuse** | Designed for APS professionals who are unfamiliar with working with persons having substance use disorders. Explores how to work with family members for a planned change effort and learn culturally appropriate and strength-based intervention techniques. |
| 8 | **Dynamics of Abusive Relationships** | An introductory training focused on definitions of elder abuse, how to identify the various dynamics of underlying elder abuse and how these might inform services offered. |
| 9 | **Professional Communication Skills** | APS professionals gain knowledge and skills around the timing and pacing of interviews, structuring an interview to avoid collusion and how to interview people with sensory and communication disabilities. |

| # | Course Title | Course Description |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | **Self-Neglect** | As one of the most common reports that APS professionals receive, participants will learn about self-neglect and its prevalence and how to assess self-neglect across five domains (medical, psychological, environmental, financial and social). |
| 11 | **Caregiver or Perpetrator Neglect** | Participants learn the necessary and essential components for effective investigations of caregiver neglect. They will understand common physical and behavioral indicators, learn factors that contribute to client risk, and identify key principles of service planning. |
| 12 | **Financial Exploitation** | This training explores the indicators of financial exploitation, decision-making capability and undue influence in these cases as well as primary components of financial exploitation investigations and their common challenges. Participants practice interviewing and investigative skill building. |
| 13 | **Physical Abuse and Neglect** | This interactive eLearning brings together forensic research, geriatric medical information tailored for elder physical abuse investigators, and practical field skills. |
| 14 | **Elder Sexual Abuse** | Participants learn the myths and realities of sexual violence as it relates to APS clients. They will learn how to recognize and discuss sexual victimization, how to screen for and interview clients regarding sexual abuse and what interventions to offer victims. |
| 15 | **APS Case Documentation/Report Writing** | Participants learn the necessary and essential components of effective documentation and report writing. They will understand the purpose of competent documentation; demonstrate the use of clear, concise, and objective language; and demonstrate written case documentation skills through an interactive skills practice exercise. |
| 16 | **Investigation First Steps** | Participants will be taught how to evaluate initial reports, how to prepare for the initial visit and reduce client resistance, how to interview suspected perpetrators, and how to assess dangerous situations. |
| 17 | **Assessing Client Capacity** | The purpose of this training is to assist APS professionals in identifying the factors that affect their clients' decision-making ability, and to identify when to seek a professional evaluation. Participants will be able to define autonomy, capacity, and incapacity; describe factors that may influence client capacity; describe signs and symptoms that indicate capacity issues; identify key questions and approaches used to screen client capacity; and identify implications of client capacity issues on case planning. |

| # | Course Title | Course Description |
|---|---|---|
| **18** | **Investigation: Risk Assessment** | In this introductory training, participants learn how to assess risk across five domains in terms of severity and urgency. Participants also work to develop risk reduction service plans. |
| **19** | **Voluntary Case Planning/Intervention Process** | APS professionals learn the basic components of determining the intervention needs and developing a safety plan for clients. Participants will be able to identify the factors that influence the client's intervention needs. They will learn strategies to work with them to develop mutually acceptable goals that will decrease their risk. They will learn to use a safety planning tool developed for use with clients. |
| **20** | **Involuntary Case Planning/Intervention Process** | APS professionals learn to identify situations where the client's safety takes precedence over the client's right to self-determination and how to think through making that determination. They will explore the ethical issues involved in these tough cases and learn how to document their decisions appropriately so that their decisions can be defended. |
| **21** | **Collaboration in APS Work** | This skill-building, interactive training is intended for entry level APS professionals and their MDT partners to learn how to collaborate more effectively on a personal level across disciplines. Participants will be able to articulate the benefits, challenges and barriers to successful collaboration. |
| **22** | **Working with Criminal Justice** | In this interactive and thought-provoking introductory training, Adult Protective Services (APS) professionals and others learn how to identify crimes and the elements of crimes. Participants learn how to "build" a case that is more likely to be accepted for prosecution and how to support the victim if the case goes to court. They will also learn about their own role as a witness in court and develop an understanding of an appreciation for Law Enforcement and Prosecutors while remaining client focused. |
| **23** | **Case Closure** | Participants learn the factors and conditions which indicate a case should or should not be closed. They will be able to explain how client rapport and other aspects of the helping relationship affect the outcome of the case. Participants will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the service plan and to identify components that make a comprehensive case summary.  In addition, participants will learn to recognize the stresses related to case closure and will be challenged to come up with personalized stress relief program. |

Curricula and training materials can be found at https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/core-competency-areas/

Future training topics being considered by the NAPSA Education Committee include the following:

- Laws related to APS work (e.g., guardianship/conservatorship, mental health commitments, domestic violence)
- Supported decision-making models
- Worker safety
- Motivational interviewing
- Cognitive deficits, including dementia
- Public benefits eligibility (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security)

## APS Specific Training Videos

In an effort to provide additional training aides to APS professionals, these videos were developed for APS programs to download for free and use as demonstration tools, discussion prompts for staff meetings or in training sessions, and provide an opportunity to discuss agency specific policies.

Foci of the free videos include:

- Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators: Financial Abuse Allegation
  - De-escalating conflict, clarifying conflicting answers, having difficult conversations
- Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators: Caregiver Neglect Allegation
  - Addressing cultural differences, recovering from mistakes while conducting an interview, redirecting the interview, starting conversations on resources and education
- Self-Neglect Home Visit Interview
  - Rapport building, risk assessment, engaging with clients who are hesitant, active listening, asking open-ended questions
- Addressing APS Professional Safety
  - Screening for common safety concerns such as weapons, animals, others in the home, etc. Please note that this video was developed before the current pandemic.

All training videos are available for download and use found at https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/apswi-videos/.

## Supervisor Topics

As outlined in the APS TARC Brief, Training Supervisors in APS: Guidance and Resources, APS supervisors are vital to the success of APS programs and their role is fundamental in assuring the safety and well-being of APS clients. The APS supervisor role is multi-faceted and challenging, and to be effective the supervisor must be able to perform tasks within multiple domains including administrative, educational and support. Too often, APS supervisors often come to their position with little or no training on effective supervision and start their role without an understanding of the wide array of responsibilities the position entails.

Fortunately, the field of APS is at an exciting and critical juncture and recognition of the need for training and support for APS supervisors is at the forefront. In the next three years, the Academy for Professional Excellence (California) and Division of Aging and Adult Services (Arizona) are collaborating with NAPSA to develop a standardized, competency-based APS Supervisor Core Academy that builds from the initial competency and training work from 2012/2013 and incorporates research, national needs assessment data, and other evidence-informed topics and practices such as modeling trauma-informed interviewing during supervision.

The goal is to make these curriculum materials available nationally by 2023, following the model of APS Worker Core Curriculum.

In the interim, the following APS supervisor curricula are available at no charge:

**Supervisor Trainings**

| Course Title | Course Description |
|---|---|
| **Understanding Self as Supervisor** (Core) | In this dynamic and interactive training, supervisors will acquire tools to assist them in understanding their multi-dimensional role and how to effectively and efficiently lead their staff to better performance and job satisfaction within a culturally sensitive framework. |
| **Foundations of Effective Supervision** (Core) | APS supervisors are tasked with many different roles and among these roles are a multitude of foundational elements that once acquired are the building blocks for an effective supervisor. In this training, participants will explore each supervisory role and its elements in-depth and practice using tools. |
| **Supervisor as Trainer** (Core) | This training explores learning styles, adult learning theory, training techniques, and evaluation of learning to help equip supervisors with the knowledge, skills and confidence in this role. |
| **Enrich Your Supervision: Using Transfer of Learning Tools to Coach Your Staff** | This interactive virtual workshop will walk participants through innovative and practical coaching resources to upgrade their staff's efficiency in **risk assessment** and **documentation** skills. |
| **Working with Less** | Supervisors as well as frontline staff are under increased pressure and demands as a result of increasing caseloads, increased case complexity, fewer community resources and staffing reductions/reorganization. In this dynamic and interactive training, supervisors will acquire tools to assist them to effectively and efficiently balance their roles and responsibilities and provide appropriate guidance and support to their staff. |

## Advanced Training Topics

Professional development and continuing education are imperative for APS professionals to ensure that workers have the most up-to-date skills, knowledge, and resources needed to investigate these sensitive cases. The Academy for Professional Excellence collaborates with NAPSA and Southern California Curriculum Advisory Committee to assess the needs of additional and advanced training for APS professionals of all levels and experience.

These trainings address specific skills needed in APS and enhance identified core competency areas. For all in-person training, curricula come complete with the following free materials to download and tailor to meet the needs of APS programs:

- A scripted trainer manual that guides the trainer with ease to facilitate the content, activities and skill practice.
- A participant manual that includes all the materials for training activities.
- A customizable PowerPoint.

Training materials can be found at https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/advanced-training/.

Topics include:

- Estate Planning and Financial Abuse Issues (Free download of instructor led training)
- Investigating APS Criminal Cases (Free download of instructor led training)
- Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators (Free download of instructor led training)
- Consistency in Determining Findings (California Specific)
- Determining Dependent Adult Status (California Specific)
- Client Capacity (eLearning with a registration fee required)

An eLearning Financial Abuse Training Series is also available and designed to help APS professionals navigate the complexity of financial abuse of older adults. There are registration fees required for this series. The series consists of:

- Six mini eLearning Modules
- Introduction eLearning on Financial Exploitation, and
- Undue Influence Committed by Professionals eLearning.

## Field Guide

There is also a Field Guide for APS (pdf) which is intended to provide an agency or an individual APS supervisor with an organized system to ensure that the new APS professional gains the experiences and formal training needed to be an effective professional. This guide outlines nineteen (19) Knowledge Areas identified as comprehensive for APS field work. These Knowledge Areas include basic field skills, as well as working with unique types of cases/situations. The Field Guide for APS is available for download at https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/ .

## Conclusion

This brief outlines a menu of available APS trainings that APS Administrators can access for free or at a reduced cost. These training resources can be used to develop a state's full training program with a minimum of development costs and high confidence that the trainings will meet program needs. Please let the TARC know if these resources have been useful to your state's training program.

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