



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA GERONTOLOGY

Do You Have The Cour**AGE** to Care?

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Nebraska Abuse and Neglect Hotline number is 1-800-652-1999. View APS website [here](#).

Nebraska's **Adult Protective Services Program** is housed within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Children and Family Services. We are dedicated to protecting vulnerable adults from further abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect. We are a relatively small program consisting of 29 Child and Family Services Specialists and six supervisors who do the work of investigating allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults in our state. Two administrators and Central Office staff oversee and support the work being done in the field.

The work of Adult Protective Services is defined by the Nebraska's APS Act for Vulnerable Adults (Nebraska Revised Statutes 28-348 20-387) and our state regulations (Nebraska Administrative Code 463 Chapter 1 – Adult Protective Services). The APS Act authorizes the Department with investigating abuse, neglect and exploitation and providing services to the victims of vulnerable adult abuse. APS works with local law enforcement agencies to investigate adult protective services reports. Our goal is to protect the individual and whenever possible to prevent the offending person from harming another vulnerable adult. A "vulnerable adult" is defined in the APS Act as any person eighteen years of age or older who has a substantial mental or functional impairment or for whom a guardian or conservator has been appointed under the Nebraska Probate Code. Not every person who is a "senior adult," (a person over the age of 65), meets the definition of a vulnerable adult. As Nebraskans we value our independence and the right to live our lives as we choose. This is appropriate as long as we can cognitively make decisions about our life and understand the potential consequences. This is why APS cannot become involved with every report of alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation received regarding all elderly persons in the state. The Nebraska Abuse Hotline screens allegations of adult abuse/neglect to determine whether the information meets the criteria of an abuse report. If the criteria is met, we investigate reports of exploitation, abuse, and neglect, and connect the vulnerable adult to the services that will help them maintain the dignity and well-being they deserve. The Nebraska Abuse and Neglect hotline number is 1-800-652-1999.

Our Adult Protective Service staff are dedicated to Nebraska's vulnerable adults of all ages. APS works closely

with other DHHS divisions, including the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Public Health and the State Unit on Aging (SUA), an office of the Division of Medicaid and Long Term Care. The SUA oversees a network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) across the state. The AAAs provide services to Nebraska's seniors without regard to vulnerability. APS staff are well versed in the resources available to the elders and other vulnerable adults and forge strong relationships with the AAAs who provide support to the elderly population of Nebraska without regard for vulnerability, as well as private groups that enhance the lives of older Nebraskans.

The staff of Nebraska's APS program are passionate about the people we serve. We recognize that seniors are living longer, but not necessarily better. Alzheimer's disease, dementia and declining cognitive and physical functioning make elders more vulnerable to victimization. Recognizing that one in 10 Americans age 60+ is a victim of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation. This translates to about five million victims of elder abuse annually and we resolve to combat this statistic every day. Unfortunately, we also recognize that elder abuse is vastly under-reported. As few as one in 14 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of authorities, making elder abuse significantly under-identified and under-reported.¹

In the U.S., annually an estimated \$2.9 billion is lost through financial exploitation of older people. Without gainful employment or years to re-grow their investment income, the victims of financial exploitation are deprived of their life's work and savings and are left without the funds necessary to pay for housing, food and medical care.

Here in Nebraska in 2019 there were 2,565 investigations of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. Of these reports, 250 alleged physical abuse or cruel punishment, 1,181 reports alleged neglect by a caregiver and 728 alleged exploitation. The remainder alleged sexual abuse or exploitation. Thirteen percent of the investigations (339) resulted in substantiated findings. Of the 340 unique victims, 247 were over the age of 60. Another category, self-neglect, resulted in 207 confirmed cases out of 1,060 reports investigated.

While elder abuse is a pervasive problem across society, there is hope. Senior centers, our Area Agencies on Aging and social services can help our older citizens avoid isolation and they can provide education and awareness help to support our older population.

Why we do what we do:

The motto of DHHS is "Helping People Live Better Lives" and this is what our APS Specialists are doing every day!

An elderly woman with medical and cognitive issues, unable to maintain her apartment, and in danger of being evicted, was referred to APS. We were able to assist her to get on the AD Waiver program and she was able to move to an assisted living facility close to her daughter.

When a man with developmental and physical disability was unable to care for his aged mother who could no longer walk, APS was called to the home to assess the situation. During the assessment period, the man's mother passed away and he was left alone. When the APS worker checked in on him, she found that he was not doing well and needed medical attention. He agreed to let her take him to the hospital where he was admitted. Since then he spent some time in a nursing home, but is happy to be going to live with a family friend.

APS received a report of a senior who was living at a homeless shelter and was unable to move on due to having dementia. Nebraska APS was able to assist her by locating and contacting her son in another state who became his mother's guardian and helped her move into subsidized housing with in-home services.

One report involved a gentleman whose roommate had COVID-19. The man was assisted by APS to be tested for the virus. The test showed he was, so he was admitted to the hospital. The APS worker was able to talk to him and help him feel better. He is now recovering and doing well.

¹ Elder Abuse Statistics and Facts, 2017

Another report that was accepted for Self-Neglect involved a woman who was showing signs of early dementia who needed to find a new doctor because her old physician had left the area. The APS Specialist learned the woman had diabetes and was not taking her medication correctly; she would run out of insulin or forget to take it, resulting in many trips to the ER. She would also would drive--and get lost, sometimes as far as 70 or 80 miles away from home, only stopping when she ran out of gas. One day she fell and was admitted to the hospital with a severe concussion. Although the woman left the hospital and was discharged to a memory unit, her son--who was her medical Power of Attorney (POA), but not her financial POA could not sign financial documents and was not able to pay the facility or direct any financial decisions. The woman needed to apply for Medicaid so the facility could be paid and no one had the authority to act on her behalf. She was in danger of being evicted from the facility due to non-payment. APS learned the woman had been very involved in her church. Her son called their pastor and asked him to speak with the APS Specialist so she could explain what his mother needed. The pastor and APS worker worked together to have a guardian and conservator appointed so the woman could have her finances taken care of and someone to make the decisions her son was uncomfortable making. The pastor was able to identify a member of the congregation, a retired financial professional who knew the woman and had experience as a guardian / conservator. He was willing to meet his friend's needs. This man's selfless act has been wonderful for our client. He has also taken so much stress off her son. It was a win-win all the way around. The very first day the guardian was appointed he signed all the needed paperwork so the woman could apply for Medicaid. She is getting her medication on time every day and her son reports being much less stressed knowing that his mom's needs are being met and she is safe.

	2017	2018	2019
APS Related Calls	14,158	14,404	14,186
Info/Referral Courtesy Interview	2,843	2,659	1,879
Accepted Reports	2,650	2,286	2,565
Does Not Meet Definition (DNMD) Reports	8,665	9,459	9,742
Substantiated Reports	359 (14%)	322 (14%)	339 (13%)
Allegations by Type:			
• Physical Abuse	1,509	1,290	1,484
Investigated / Assessed	297	253	250
Substantiated	16 (5.4%)	16 (6.3%)	16 (6.4%)
• Sexual Abuse & Exploitation	289	335	371
Investigated / Assessed	94	94	137
Substantiated	12 (12.8%)	9 (9.6%)	12 (8.8%)
• Financial & Material Exploitation	2,045	2,531	2,474
Investigated / Assessed	705	751	728
Substantiated	82 (11%)	135 (17%)	81 (11%)
• Neglect	6,080	6,438	6,736
Investigated / Assessed	1,176	1,007	1,181
Substantiated	80 (6%)	57 (5%)	63 (5%)
• Self-Neglect	3,276	3,350	3,415
Investigated / Assessed	1,198	989	1,060
Substantiated	222 (18%)	184 (18%)	207 (19%)
Victim Profile			
• Unique Victims	351	354	340
Male	155	154	143
Female	196	200	196
Unknown			1
18 – 59	118	135	93
60 – 69	80	73	74
70 – 79	66	73	71
80 – 89	61	51	87

90+	26	22	15
Perpetrators placed on Central Registry	151	149	146
Perpetrator Profile			
• Relationship to Victim			
Family Member / Friend	74	80	73
Payee / POA / Guardian	26	28	22
Caregiver	39	37	32
Facility / Medical Staff	53	83	44
• Gender			
Male	57	56	52
Female	94	93	93
Unknown			1
• Age of Perpetrators			
18 – 24	13	9	9
25 – 29	16	17	7
30 – 39	31	30	25
40 – 49	33	36	33
50 – 59	34	28	31
60 – 69	18	22	28
70 – 79	6	7	9
80+	0	0	4
Abuse / Neglect Factors most often chosen out of list of 34			
• Physical Disability	3,658	4,105	4,279
• Mental Health Issues	2,966	3,630	3,922
• Developmental Disability	1,589	1,730	1,906
• Admission to Hospital	292	475	597
• Diabetes	233	411	418
• Alcohol Use	317	371	337
• Serious Bodily Injury	123	191	228
• Hoarding	136	169	167
Incident Location - Substantiated Alleges.			
• Home / Apartment	95	69	65
• Nursing / Intermediate / AL	69	80	83