



# National Adult Protective Services Association

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## NAPSA Letter to the Editor

*Published in the online edition of the Chicago Tribune on December 18, 2008.*

"Protecting Our Elders"  
December 18, 2008

If a child is abused or neglected, your readers are horrified, but not helpless. They know what to do: call DCFS and expect them to intervene to protect the child to the extent possible. If a younger woman is abused in an intimate relationship, they know where to refer her: to a battered women's shelter, where she can find safety for herself and her children, legal advocacy and support.

But what if it's your grandmother, or the developmentally disabled adult who lives down the street, who is being physically abused, mentally tortured, sexually assaulted, financially ripped off, and/or cruelly neglected almost to the point of death? Whom do they call then? Would they know?

They should call Adult Protective Services, which operates under state law in every state to respond to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disabilities and older persons. In Illinois, for example, suspected abused, neglected or exploited persons aged 60 and over, should be referred to the Illinois Department on Aging's Excellent Elder Abuse and Neglect Program.

People in many other states are not as fortunate in having a well trained and decently funded APS program. Unlike battered women's shelters and child protective services, which receive over hundreds of millions to billions in federal support every year, adult protective services programs receive not one dollar of directly appropriated federal support. This even though older persons, one in 20 of whom will be abused, neglected or exploited, are the country's fastest growing population group, and despite the evidence that older abuse victims die at three times the rate of their non-abused cohorts. Moreover, seniors whose carefully husbanded life savings are stolen out from under them often must then turn to publicly funded programs such as Medicaid, costing taxpayers many millions in expenditures. (continued on page 2)



NAPSA President Art Mason and his ever present coffee!

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### NEXT NCEA WEBCAST:

**What Does "Evidence Based" Practice Mean?**  
A facilitated discussion led by Pamela Teaster, PhD.  
Coming in late January, 2009

**NAPSA WISHES ALL ITS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
& A  
WONDERFUL NEW YEAR!**

“Congress has held hearings for 30 years on the tragedy of elder abuse, but it has yet to enact a single comprehensive law addressing it or the abuse of adults with disabilities. APS programs throughout the country, already under funded and in many areas under trained, are facing state budget reductions that will mean thousands of suffering older veterans, developmentally disabled adults, and grandmothers suffering from dementia will be left to suffer at the hands of their "caregivers," family members, and new "best friends" because there will be no one to respond to the reports of their abuse.

The incoming Obama administration has many huge and critical issues to contend with, yet this one, which has languished for decades because of inertia and indifference, could be readily addressed. Representative Rahm Emanuel, to his great credit, was an ardent advocate for passage of the Elder Justice Act, which would provide the first ever, modest funding for struggling state APS programs throughout the country. If the White House asks the new Congress to enact the long overdue Elder Justice Act as one of its first orders of business in 2009, it would signal caring “change we can believe in,” change that will save thousands of lives of “our greatest generation” and will allow many tens of thousands of others to live safely and with dignity, instead of in degradation, suffering and fear.

Sincerely,

*Kathleen M Quinn*

Kathleen M. Quinn  
Executive Director

*NAPSA Members: You are more than welcome, in fact you are encouraged, to adapt this letter to your own local publications. Please note, this letter is too long for a standard letter to the editor, which ideally should have no more than about 200 words (this one has 553).*

## We Need to Hear from You!

Have you handled an APS case that was especially compelling? Do you have a case you are especially proud of, where you know that your intervention made a huge difference in the life and well being of a client?

If so, would you be willing to take 5 to 10 minutes to send us a few sentences about the case? No names of course. Just a brief description of the client, the problems they were facing, and what APS did to improve their lives and safety. NAPSA will use these fact patterns to educate national policy makers about what APS does and why it is so important.

Don't worry about grammar or other niceties. Please forward to me, [kathleen.quinn@apsnetwork.org](mailto:kathleen.quinn@apsnetwork.org), brief case scenarios which demonstrate the severity of the problems facing our clients, and the centrality of APS interventions in their lives. If you have any data on cost savings as a result of your work all the better. On behalf of APS across the country, thank you!

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*NAPSA News...*

*a newsletter written by and for  
APS professionals*



## NAPSA Survey of State Budget Cuts and APS

NAPSA recently distributed a brief survey to our representatives in each state asking about the impact of state budget cuts on APS. We received 67 responses from 21 states (states with county systems had more than one respondent). The survey asked respondents to indicate if their APS programs experienced budget cuts in each of three years: last year, this year, and next year (somewhat ambiguous terms were used because of different fiscal calendars). The results paint a disturbing picture.

Here is a summary of the responses we received:

### Cuts Last Year

- 9 of 21 (43%) states indicated some kind of budget cut in their last fiscal year, ranging from 2 to 15 percent.
- 4 of 21 (19%) states indicated staff reduction through attrition/hiring freeze.
- 5 of 21 (24%) states indicated they had reduced services, including triage/screening out of lower priority cases, reduced in-home care services, fewer investigations, and less time spent on investigations. Other reductions included fewer face-to-face interactions, fewer home visits, less training and prevention activities, and reduced adult foster care services.

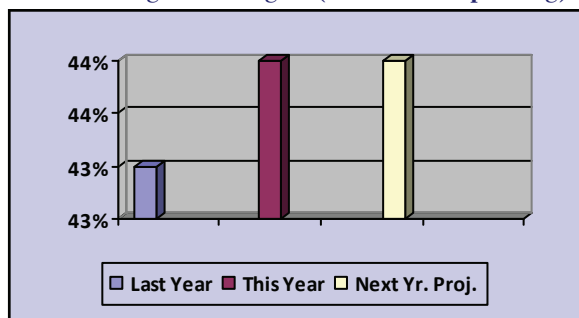
### Cuts This Year

- 8 of 18 (44%) states indicated a budget cut in their current fiscal year. Cuts ranged from 2 to 15 percent.
- 7 of 18 states (39%) states indicated staff reduction through attrition/hiring freeze, layoffs, and reduced hours.
- 3 of 18 (17%) states indicated increased caseloads.
- 5 of 18 (28%) states indicated reduced services including triage/screening out of lower priority cases, reduced in-home care services, fewer investigations, and less time spent on investigations. Other reductions included thoroughness of investigations, reduced face-to-face interaction, reduced home visits, decreased in prevention work, and reduced help for people to stay at home.

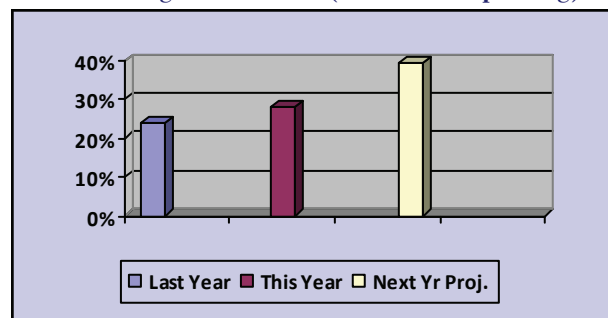
### Cuts Anticipated Next Year

- 8 of 18 (44%) states foresee a reduction in their budget for next year. Anticipated cuts range from 2 to 10%.
- 7 of 18 (39%) states are not yet sure if their budgets will be reduced (too early).
- 6 of 18 (33%) states will have to reduce staff through layoffs and attrition.
- 5 of 18 (28%) states anticipate increased caseloads.
- 7 of 18 (39%) states plan to reduce services including not addressing self-neglect, triage/screening out of lower priority cases, reduced in-home care services, fewer investigations, and less time spent on investigations.

**States Cutting APS Budgets (21 States Responding)**



**States Cutting APS Services (21 States Responding)**



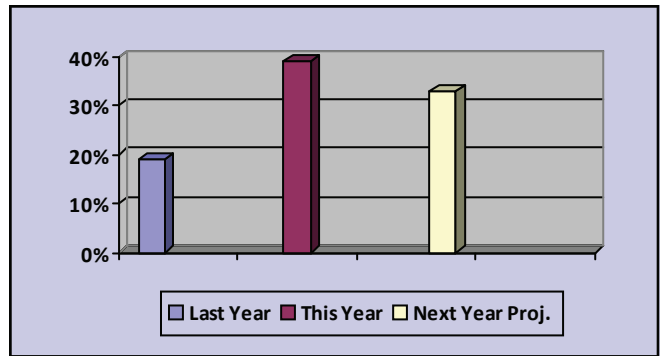
**Has your APS Program experienced cutbacks due to state budget reductions? Please tell us by emailing [aubrey.grant@apsnetwork.org](mailto:aubrey.grant@apsnetwork.org). NAPSA will not release your name or your state unless you expressly give us permission to do so. We are especially interested in hearing about adverse effects on clients (maintaining their confidentiality of course). Thank you!**

(continued from previous page)

**Other Cuts and Comments**

- One state that has been impacted by budget cuts indicated that adult day care may be completely eliminated.
- Among states that did NOT indicate budget cuts:
  - One state indicated *APS staffing has been reduced through attrition by 50 percent in the last 10 years* because “APS is not a priority,”
  - One state’s budget, although not cut, has been frozen since 2001, and
  - One state reported being under a hiring freeze and cutting all non-service related spending (conferences, travel, etc.).

**States Reducing APS Staffs by Attrition (21 States Responding)**



**NAPSA Says Thanks:**

As we look back over the past year, NAPSA is especially grateful for:

- The unstinting contributions of our volunteers, in particular the NAPSA board and committee members;
- The passion and commitment demonstrated by APS professionals across the country to serve and protect the most vulnerable and the most invisible of our adult citizens;
- The dedication of NAPSA’s staff to make NAPSA the best organization and voice for APS it can be;
- The contributions of our many, many advocates, friends and partnering organizations;
- The ongoing support of our major funders, especially the Administration on Aging as well as the Dept. of Justice, NCALL, the Archstone Foundation and the Retirement Research Foundation;
- The generous support of our board members and our longtime regular donors, including Eva Kutas, Jennifer Merck, and Pat Stanis, as well as NAPSA staff, all of whom contribute to the organization monthly.



**NAPSA’s Wish list for 2009:**

- **The passage and funding of the long overdue Elder Justice Act**, which would provide the first ever federal funding stream for APS throughout the country;
- **Increased recognition of, and respect for, the life saving services provided by APS;**
- **Increased attention to the needs of abused, neglected and exploited adults with disabilities aged 18—59 as well as to abused older persons.**
- **Increased support for research** and data collection to demonstrate the need for, and the effectiveness of, APS interventions;
- **Funding for a national APS Resource and Training Center** to help build the capacity of APS in every state to respond effectively to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older persons and younger persons with disabilities.

# President Elect Obama Needs to Hear from APS!

The Obama-Biden transition team has on its website ([change.gov](http://change.gov)) a long list of the incoming administration's agenda items, which include "women", "disabilities", and "seniors and social security." They specifically identify violence against women as one of the issues they plan to address. No where do they list violence toward, or neglect and exploitation of, adults with disabilities and older persons. Once again, as usual, APS clients and APS services are invisible.

The transition team is asking ordinary Americans to send in their comments. Please take a minute, and have your family and friends do the same, to send the transition team an email asking them to add the Elder Justice Act and support for APS to their agenda. It is a long shot, of course, but we have to start somewhere to raise the visibility of our clients and their needs, as well as the under-funded, life saving work done by APS throughout the country. Feel free to use parts of the NAPSA letter to the editor if you wish. You can send your comments to the address below; however, you can also make a comment on each of the individual agenda pages, which might be more effective. Address: <http://change.gov/page/content/contact/>

As a reminder of why APS advocacy is so important, please see the information below, compiled by Past NAPSA President, Nancy Alterio of Massachusetts.

***No one will or can act on behalf of APS as APS professionals themselves can!***

For over 30 years, Congress has been presented with facts and testimony calling for a coordinated Federal effort to address abuse, neglect, and exploitation of elders and adults with disabilities

Only 3% of sexual abuse cases involving people with developmental disabilities will ever be reported

A study of psychiatric inpatients found that 81% had been physically or sexually assaulted

(Valenti-Hein & Schwartz, 1995)

(Goschert & Richardson, American Journal of Psychiatry, 1987)

62% of women with physical disabilities reported experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse

**Let's Make  
2009 the  
year for  
APS!  
Yes We  
Can!**

Older persons who are victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation are as much as 3.1 times more likely to die at an earlier age

(Nosek & Howland, 1998)

Mark S. Lachs, MD, MPH; Christianna S. Williams, MA; Shelley O'Brien, MS; Karl A. Pillemer, PhD; Mary E. Charlson, M. The Mortality of Elder Mistreatment JAMA. 1998;280:428-432.

**Did you know that:**

- Only 1/1000th of the annual \$1 billion research budget of the National Institute on Aging focuses on elder abuse?
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) last year spent just \$55,000 of its \$8.8 billion annual budget (0.00062%) on elder abuse issues?
- And that there are professionals in these two federal agencies truly committed to addressing elder abuse? They need our help! [Thanks to MT Connolly for these statistics.]