

APS-Reporter Feedback Practices: Examining (Mis)communication between APS and Reporters

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Introduction

1 in 10 older adults in the U.S. experience abuse or neglect.¹

Elder abuse are highly under-reported in the U.S. Only 1 out of 24 cases are reported to authorities including Adult Protective Services (APS)². Lack of communication between APS and reporters is a key barrier to reporting.³

Preliminary results from an environmental scan of APS policies and practices indicate:

- Most APS agencies do not provide feedback to reporters.
- Only 10 states have publicly available information on how they communicate with reporters.⁴

This study examines APS staff and reporters' perspectives on what is (or is not) communicated to reporters. The results help us to better understand APS-reporter communication and will inform our recommendations for strategies to improve this communication.

Purpose

Overview: This poster presents findings from a secondary analysis of data from focus groups conducted with emergency medical services (EMS) providers and APS staff in two states.

Methodology: We conducted secondary analyses of six focus group discussions with EMS providers and APS staff members in 2019. Focus groups were conducted in person, audio-recorded, and lasted 90 minutes. Data was analyzed using open coding, an inductive analytical approach recommended by grounded theory.⁵

Table 1: Focus Group Participants

State	EMS providers	APS staff
Texas	8	7
Massachusetts	15	7
Total (n = 37)	23	14

Findings and Discussion

Key Issues Raised by EMS

Clarify the reporting process

"There's a gap in **understanding of how the process works** together. What will happen from here? If there are things [APS] can't do, will I be told?"

Provide feedback on the report made

"We can't just go to people's houses. **We need some feedback**, positive reinforcement. We go there again and again, and nothing changes. Why are we doing this?"

Clarify expectations of APS

"Set expectations for us – **here's what you should expect as far as feedback**. You may not be able to get the full follow-through that you want."

Key Issues Raised by APS

Importance of older adult's right to self-determination

Lack of feedback shouldn't stop reporting

Need to establish mutual understanding

"EMS [staff] may see that they continue to get the same report and they feel that nothing has happened and **its really because they don't understand that part of the right to self-determination**, so they get a little discouraged... just like they have to go out there, we do too. **That shouldn't stop them from making a report.**"

Conclusions

APS staff and reporters are committed to providing the best care for their clients.

- **Reporters** want to understand the outcomes of their reporting actions, such as if their report improved care for the older adults, and if the report made was appropriate.
- **APS agencies'** priority is to protect the rights of older adults, which may hinder their ability to share information.
- Some states do provide feedback including at the end of an investigation. It is important to understand how this is possible, and the ways it can be replicated in other agencies.

Next steps

- Interview APS leaders across the U.S.
- Conduct a case study in Massachusetts.
- Develop a set of recommendations from our research findings and through consultation with expert advisors.

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