

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Evaluation of Ohio's Adult Protective Services: Structure, Operation, and Cost Final Report**

The Ohio Adult Protective Services law was enacted in 1981 and has been revised several times since its passage (Ohio Revised Code, 1996). The major landmark revisions were made in 1989, including allocating first time line item funds for writing administrative regulation and reporting. The fiscal responsibility for implementation of APS rests with the County Departments of Job and Family Services with administrative oversight by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, ODJFS has the responsibility for partial reimbursements to counties for APS. The County Departments of Job and Family Services provide the primary APS functions of investigating reports of elder abuse, determining the need for protective services, and providing the necessary services.

Although the legislation governing the implementation of adult protective services has been in existence for almost 20 years, no evaluation has been undertaken to assess the structure, operation, or cost of the delivery system in Ohio. In absence of such documentation, persuasive arguments are difficult to formulate for either continuing the current APS delivery system or changing the delivery of APS for such purposes as to strengthen the plans for service, improve the outcomes for clients, and increase efficiency of the system.

Therefore, the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University was contracted by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to conduct a statewide comprehensive assessment of the current status of Adult Protective Services. The primary objective in conducting the evaluation was to examine the service delivery system utilized by the County Departments of Job and Family Services in provision of APS and to estimate the related operation costs. This study was designed to gain insight on the implementation and management of the delivery of APS including program administration, service structure, and service needs, as well as the application and adequacy of APS law. The findings may be used to develop policies and strategies in the areas of program, budget, and service needs.

The specific aims of the project were:

- 1) to provide information on the APS structure, operation, and inter-organizational relationship between mandated agencies and other specific service providers through surveying the Departments of Job and Family Services staff and administrators in the 88 counties of Ohio;

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Human Services (DHS) is hereafter referred to as Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS) as renamed in July 2000.

- 2) to assist in decision-making for budget allocation for the APS system by undertaking cost-analysis through assessment of current budget allocations, revenue sources, and expenditures obtained from CDJFS administrators and secondary data; and
- 3) to develop best practice models based on information on structure and operations utilized by other states and counties across the nation.

Three research phases were proposed to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Ohio's APS delivery system. Phase I focused on gathering information from *internal* perspectives of the Adult Protective Services System, where the staff and administrators mandated to implement the APS program were the primary evaluators. Phase II of the project gathered information from *external* perspectives from the community service providers and key informants whose input in the evaluation process is critical in understanding the overall operation, structure and funding of Ohio's APS system. Phase III of the research project focused on obtaining input from professionals and the community-at-large including elderly residents on the preliminary recommendations to the State.

## **Methodology**

**Multiple sources of data were used to undertake this evaluation. A brief description of the methods and process used for all the three phases follows:**

- \_ A telephone survey was conducted to establish a contact person at the 88 County Departments of Job and Family Services and the designated agencies. Preliminary information on the profile of the county APS unit was gathered from the contact person. Questionnaires were developed and mailed to contact persons to distribute to caseworkers, supervisors, administrators, and designated agency staff.**
- \_ The caseworker survey was developed to gather information on demographics, job responsibilities, job satisfaction, case composition, service adequacy, perception of APS legislation and APS standards, relationship with community agencies, and suggestions and comments for improving the APS system. The questionnaires were self-administered and all caseworkers from the 88 counties were included as potential respondents.**

- The supervisor survey elicited data in the areas of demographics, job responsibilities, APS unit activities, staffing issues, job satisfaction, relationship with workers, APS training and services, gaps and service needs, perception of APS law and agency standards, relationship with community agencies, and suggestions and comments for improving the APS system.
- The administrator survey sought factual information about agency structure, staffing patterns, fiscal funding sources, revenues and expenditures, trends in funding, unit cost calculation, and opinions and suggestions about the APS system. Data were also gathered on demographics.
- The designated agency survey gathered similar data to the caseworker survey, which included demographics, job responsibilities, APS unit activities, staffing issues, job satisfaction, relationship with workers, APS training and services, gaps and service needs, perception of APS law and agency standards, relationship with community agencies, and suggestions and comments for improving the APS system.
- Eight provider focus groups were conducted in different regions of the state. A randomly selected group of community service providers who are listed as mandated reporters under Ohio's APS law (ORC Section ' 5101.61.) were invited to participate. Data was gathered on issues such as service availability and gaps, application of APS statute, training, role and relationship with APS system, interagency communication, APS system serving adults 18 and over versus serving elders 60 years and older, roles of state and county, and the agency that should be responsible for oversight and administration of the APS system. Structured questionnaires were also used to gather information on provider profile, interaction with the APS system, views on APS law, and other specific issues on the APS delivery system.

- The key informant survey entailed interviewing randomly selected key officials in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state and local government, and agency directors from eight geographical regions identified. Data was collected from these stakeholders regarding pivotal issues of APS service delivery including awareness of APS issues, perceived APS strengths and barriers, suggestions for resource allocation, and perspectives on the administrative structure of the system. Interviews also served to both evaluate and promote the awareness among stakeholders of the APS system. Trained male and female interviewers conducted the interviews that lasted approximately 30-40 minutes.**
  
- A Community Forum was conducted in which Ohio residents who interact with the APS system (both as providers and recipients) were presented with research findings and preliminary recommendations. Invitations were distributed via mass mailing to all public and private sector providers within the elder abuse network and public officials who have oversight or a decision-making role within the APS system. A total of 166 people attended the community forum. Round table discussions were held wherein the participants provided feedback and prioritized the recommendations to facilitate implementation. Participants provided both written and oral feedback, and the discussions were facilitated by the project staff.**
  
- In addition, secondary data was obtained from the AProtective Services for Adults® (ODHS 4287) quarterly reports, which consists of a number of variables including client demographics, incidence rates by type of maltreatment, age groups served, and types of cases.**
  
- To quantify the closed-ended responses, the SPSS-PC software program was used. Responses to open-ended questions were content analyzed and coding schemes were developed using the Nu\*Dist software program which allows for classification of qualitative data. The procedure employed for analysis included identifying related themes and categories**

for major research questions, quantifying the data by tallying the frequency of scored items within categories, and obtaining the most notable quotes to further substantiate the respondents' viewpoints.

## **Major Findings**

**Phase I Findings:** For Phase I the data were gathered from the surveys and analyzed. The major findings from the surveys are presented by structure, operation, and cost and are as follows:

### APS Structure

- 1) Aside from the mandated agency structure, five counties had either contracted or were in the process of negotiating with external agencies to act as mandated agencies. The majority of counties located their APS program in Social Services. In four counties mandated agencies had contracts with designated agencies. There are eight designated agencies in Ohio and the majority of them serve the elderly population.
- 2) The predominant job title category for mandated agency caseworkers was Adult Protective Service or Social Service Worker with the majority having a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work or a related field. Supervisors were more likely to have Master's Degrees than were caseworkers. There was wide variation in income for both caseworkers and supervisors in mandated agencies, especially between regions containing smaller and larger counties. The ratio of supervisors to workers in the state was 1:3, and the majority of the employees were full-time. A considerable percent of the designated agency staff had Master's degrees and most were social workers. Their salary levels were comparable to the mandated agency salaries.
- 3) Mandated agency caseworkers were more likely to indicate that they did not receive training when compared to supervisors' perception of caseworker training. Supervisors were likely to view the amount of training received by caseworkers as inadequate. Most of the training was

in-house, provided by supervisors, and less formalized. The dollar amount set for training varied with regions containing larger counties having higher amounts of dollars than regions with smaller counties. Despite variability in training hours, caseworkers received an average of 61 hours of training. Designated agency staff received more structured training and had access to both in-house and external sources of training.

- 4) Nearly half of the mandated agency caseworkers provided services to caregivers and perpetrators. A proportionately higher percent of designated agencies provided services to caregivers and perpetrators than mandated agencies. Although the majority of counties served the 60 plus population, close to half reported that they had an unofficial policy among workers to serve ages 18 to 59 as needed and when resources permitted. Designated agencies tended to target the 60 plus population.
- 5) With respect to whether APS services should be provided by a single agency or two separate agencies for different age groups, caseworkers' responses matched their respective agency's service provision system for the population age served. Supervisors were split in their responses as to whether or not to integrate or have separate service delivery systems. The administrators were more likely to be in favor of a single system than a two-system service delivery structure. The designated agencies also favored a single system for providing APS services.

### APS Operation

- 1) Caseworkers spent over 65% of their time on client-related tasks and about 35% of their time on administrative-related tasks. Even though the supervisors spent considerably less time on client-related tasks (21%), the percentage of time indicated was reflective of the multiple roles that the supervisors were expected to perform, especially in smaller counties. Designated agency staff spent much less time on administrative-related tasks than client-related tasks.

- 2) The findings indicated that not all caseworkers were involved in receiving reports. In about 18% of the counties, there were specialized intake units. Among tasks performed, a significant percentage of caseworkers indicated performing direct services with clients. A substantial percent of the designated agencies are involved in investigation and coordination of ongoing services or case management.
  
- 3) Nearly half of the mandated agency caseworkers could rely on standard procedures most of the time (45.2%), while a little over a third reported that they could rely on standard procedures some of the time (38.2%). Only a small portion of caseworkers responded that they could never rely on standard procedures. The frequency of use of standard procedures for handling APS cases is higher among designated agency staff.
  
- 4) Most caseworkers had access to written procedures for performing APS work. However, supervisors were less likely to state that there were written procedures for performing APS work. The prevalence of written procedures is greater in designated agencies. However, they too cited inadequacies in investigation procedures.
  
- 5) The ratio of caseworker to clients was 1:31. On average, caseworkers spent approximately 12 hours investigating an APS case from initial contact to substantiation, and cases remained open from determination to closing an average of 117.5 days. Designated agency staff carry a much lower caseload, report similar time frame for investigation, and project more days a case is open than mandated agencies.
  
- 6) About half of mandated agency caseworkers had used protection orders. Routine and emergency protection orders were sought at about the same frequency. Use of protective orders by designated staff is much lower; however, they seek law enforcement intervention in cases more frequently than mandated agencies.

- 7) Caseload composition data on mandated agencies suggested that the percent of minority clients was relatively low compared to non-minority clients. About 29% of caseworkers had no minority clients on their caseloads. An average of 30% of clients was from rural areas. Designated agencies are less likely to serve clients from rural areas, as most of the agencies are located in urban areas.
- 8) Overall, both caseworkers and supervisors indicated being satisfied with their jobs. A third of the caseworkers asked their supervisors for help with APS cases about once a month. Similarly, a third of caseworkers tended to receive suggestions from their supervisors about once a month without asking for help. There is a mutual reciprocity in interaction between supervisors and staff in designated agencies; about the same percent of time that staff asks for help, they receive help from the supervisor.
- 9) Overall, the number one concern among caseworkers and supervisors was the reluctance of the victim to cooperate with the investigation. In addition, the cooperation of the family/guardian was an area of overlap in terms of main concerns. Staff of designated agencies identified similar concerns as mandated agencies, with exception to concern about legal liability, rated as the fourth most important concern.
- 10) The APS legislation was perceived to lack clarity in both definitions and courses of action for abuse, neglect, and exploitation by all respondents. Supervisors were more likely than caseworkers to perceive inadequacy in the legislation.
- 11) Mandated agency caseworkers were less comfortable recommending interventions to clients than conducting overall assessments and evaluating functional levels of clients. Caseworkers were least comfortable working with clients who resisted intervention. The designated agency staffs were also most comfortable in assessment of clients and least comfortable making recommendations for interventions.

- 12) Counseling was the most frequently provided service to clients regardless of type of maltreatment. For abused clients, the most commonly used services were home health care, housing, court services, intervention by law enforcement, medical, legal services, and meals. For neglect cases, home health care, meals, case management, supportive services, counseling, medical services, court services, and housing were most frequently used. In cases of exploitation, services utilized were court intervention, law enforcement, legal services, home health care, payeeship, credit counseling, and case management.
- 13) Most of the identified gaps in services were also recommended most frequently for APS clients by caseworkers. There was a discrepancy between demand and supply of these services. The most frequently identified service gaps were in the areas of housing, personal support, access, home health care, and legal services. The other key issues related to these services were affordability, accessibility, and eligibility.

#### APS Expenditures and Cost Estimations

- 1) **The two primary sources of funding for APS were from the ODJFS and Title XX Block Grants. For 1999 the average dollar amount received by counties from ODJFS was \$69,142.03 and an average of \$161,524.60 was received from Title XX. There was great variation in actual funding amounts among counties. These variations may be consistent with the volume of APS cases and the population sizes of the respective counties. No cost data were provided by the mandated agencies on contracts with designated agencies. The total expenditure amount provided by administrators presumably is inclusive of contract costs. Costs incurred by designated agencies beyond the contracting amount for APS is not known.**
- 2) **Although nearly half of Ohio counties have tax levies for senior services, only three counties indicated receiving funds for APS from a county levy. A small number of**

counties identified other sources of funding such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, consolidated funds, state operating funds, and Area Agencies on Aging.

- 3) On an average, counties reported using \$191,464.67 to deliver APS to clients. There was considerable variation among counties in the amount of expenditures reported. Large and medium sized counties reported higher dollar amounts than small counties.
- 4) The administrators reported expenditures for APS as either remaining the same or increasing over a three-year period (1997 B 1999). The percentage of change between 1997 and 1999 ranged from 2.13% to 7.6%. However, most administrators perceived the funding to have declined in the past five years for APS programs.
- 5) Counties reported using multiple methods to offset decreases in funding. Most frequently, counties utilized other sources such as consolidated funds, Title XX, local funds, and shared cost with non-APS programs (69.2%). Nearly a quarter indicated that the decrease in funding was offset through reduction in staff, hiring freezes, or job sharing. Another 23% reported scaling down services to clients and a small percent reduced staff benefits to offset reduction in funding.
- 6) Three different cost calculations were used to estimate the total cost to provide APS statewide. The resulting estimates ranged from 15.5 million to 17.9 million dollars. Of the three formulas used for calculating costs, the most comprehensive formula was the third formula, which resulted in \$16.7 million. This estimate is perhaps the most reliable measure of the dollar amount expended by APS in Ohio.

**Phase II Findings:** For Phase II the data was gathered from focus groups and key informant interviews and analyzed. The major findings from the focus group discussions and interviews are presented by structure, operation, and cost.

A. Findings from Community Providers

APS Structure in Community Agencies

- 1) The 124 professionals and para-professionals who participated in the focus groups were from occupational groups such as the police and sheriffs, social service providers, visiting nurses, in-home service providers, health and mental health care providers. The majority of the respondents were from agencies that serve the elderly population which is consistent with the APS caseworker surveys that reported having most contact with aging network providers.
- 2) The majority of the participants were female, white and had a bachelor's or master's degree. About 10% were African American. Mean age was 43.8 years (range 25 to 66 years). The profile of the mandated reporters is similar to most other studies reported in the field, with exception of the law enforcement officers. A little more than half of the police officers that responded were females. The average number of years in their current job was eight. The predominate job title reported by participants was case manager, social worker or program coordinators with the most common vocations being social work, nursing or other health fields.
- 3) A considerable percent of the mandated reporters indicated receiving special training on APS or elder abuse issues (61%), but a little over a third (37%) reported that they had no special training. Female participants stated more often than males that they have received training. Regions with smaller counties more often expressed not having adequate resources

for training. Compared to county APS staff, the mandated reporters are less likely to report having received training in APS.

- 4) With respect to whether APS services should be provided to individuals 18 years of age and over or only to those 60 years and above, the responses were more consistent with APS caseworkers= perceptions. Most of them agreed that the mandated agency should include the 18 and above age group (66%), and a third of them felt that APS system should serve only 60 and above. With respect to whether APS should be provided by one or two agencies, a considerable percent favored one agency for all ages (18 to 59 and 60 plus). Respondents from community agencies that served all age groups were more likely to favor one system, and respondents from specialized agencies that served only elderly population were more likely to support two systems for delivery of APS services.

#### APS Operation of Community Agencies

- 1) One in six community agency staff was either unaware or unsure whether they were required by law to report cases of maltreatment. There is great variability in the number of elder abuse cases identified and reported by mandated reporters. About 25% of them did not identify any cases. Of the elder abuse cases identified, three-fourths of the respondents reported the cases and a quarter noted that they do not report cases to the county APS system. Interestingly, a number of the providers noted that they report directly to the court system, local sheriff=s office or other community agencies.
- 2) Most community agency staff had access to written rules and procedures for identifying and reporting cases of maltreatment. A little over a third (35-36%) noted that there were either no available written polices or procedures or unsure that such a document existed in their respective agency. The adequacy of the guidelines provided by agencies is not clear.

- 3) The APS legislation was perceived to lack clarity in the roles and responsibilities of interacting agencies. The ambiguity in the jurisdiction over APS cases was cited as being a challenge in working with the county APS system. Providers also felt that the law lacked adequate direction in courses of action to be taken, once cases of maltreatment were identified. The other consistently noted deficiencies in the law included the lack of clarity in the definition of terms like competency, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- 4) Providers most frequently acknowledged the lack of training and awareness of APS issues among mandated reporters as a barrier to working with the APS system. Specifically, law enforcement officers were perceived as needing training in APS. Over half of the community providers also suggested training and education for all mandated reporters. Cooperation of court personnel like judges, magistrates and prosecutors was considered to be a barrier in successfully helping identified APS clients.
- 5) A third of the community agency staff identified services that are available for the victims of maltreatment. Services for clients and families, all home-based services, and APS services 24 hours a day, seven-days a week were considered to be available in the community.
- 6) The most frequently identified service gaps were in the areas of accessing services, alternate housing services, emergency shelters, personal support services, social support services and legal services. The need for volunteer guardians or guardianship programs is the second most widely identified service shortage. Both the APS caseworkers and mandated reporters identified similar types of services, which are in short supply in the community. More than half felt that almost all services were out of reach for adults under 60 years of age, and for moderate-income elderly.
- 7) Overall, APS caseworkers appear to interact frequently with many community agencies. APS caseworkers had the most contact (6 or more times last year) with home health care agencies, PASSPORT and hospitals. Sixty-nine percent of caseworkers had 6 or more

contacts last year with home delivered meal programs and 65% had the same number of contacts with offices on aging.

- 8) APS caseworkers=perceive their interactions with the other agencies to be very positive. A considerable percent of them (90 - 96%) indicated that community agency staff were helpful and cooperative. However, caseworkers rated the community agencies less positively in the areas of: help received in emergency situations, assistance in investigation, treatment approaches, accessibility for consultation, and understanding roles and responsibilities.
- 9) Community agency staff cited the lack of: access during and after business hours, adequate follow-up on cases, overall communication, and initiative to collaborate on cases as barriers to working with the APS system. Providers reported being apprehensive to make referrals on suspected elder abuse cases due to the belief that caseworkers would not take action.
- 10) A considerable percent of APS caseworkers rated their overall relationship with most community agencies as excellent or good with exception to the county mental health board and the county MR/DD Board. The overall ratings of community agencies relationship with APS caseworker were less positive and consistent with their perception of difficulty experienced in working with caseworkers. Most providers expressed having >some to quite a lot of difficulty= in working with APS workers and a little less than half described the overall relationship as fair or poor.

#### Perception of Funding Sources for APS

- 1) Providers identified three primary sources of funding: federal, state and county. Most perceived that the state should be responsible for providing the necessary funds for the APS program in Ohio. About a quarter of the community agency staff cited that the funds

for APS should be generated by both the state and county. Another quarter percent felt that the funding responsibility lies with the federal and state government.

- 2) Providers identified four major areas where funding was needed: client-related services, training, staff recruitment, and prevention programs. Funds for client-related services were mentioned in conjunction with overall services, emergency medication and discretionary services such as cleaning, transportation, medication, etc. More frequently, the participants from regions with moderate to smaller counties identified needing funds for training.

## B. Findings From Key Informant Interviews

### Background Information

- 1) **A total of 126 key informants participated in the telephone interviews. Region three had the highest representation in the sample and region four had the least representation. The representation from the other six regions is evenly distributed. Approximately half of the respondents were county/regional government employees and another half were affiliated with city government or the court systems. Only 8% represented state government affiliation.**
- 2) **Most of the key informants were county commissioners or probate court judges and magistrates. Interviewers reported being more successful in scheduling interviews with both the judges and the commissioners.**
- 3) **Most of the informants were male (76%), white (98%), and married (84%). Approximately half (49%) of them had graduate degrees and a quarter (25%) had undergraduate degrees. Another quarter had less than an Associates degree.**

### APS Experiences of Key Informants

- 1 **More than half of the key informants stated that they had some experience with the adult protective services system (63%) and over a third reported they had no experience with or awareness of APS (37%).**
- 2 **Judges, magistrates and directors of elderly services were most knowledgeable about APS and able to provide the most useful information. The elected officials like the commissioners and legislators were less knowledgeable unless they had**

**direct (employment in human service system, close working relationship with CDJFS) or indirect experiences (contact with advocacy groups and constituents) with the APS system. Mayors typically had least knowledge of APS. A little less than half (41%) had direct experience with adult protective services.**

- 3 The most frequently identified strength of APS was the inter-agency coordination and/or collaboration efforts among agencies, followed by dedicated and/or skilled staff, supportive and efficient nature of whole system, and ability to provide services to clients. Again, the most knowledgeable group of stakeholders were those who had direct or indirect experiences with the APS system. The APS staff was generally perceived as being dedicated, competent and skilled in performing their work.
- 4 About half of the key informants were familiar enough to identify the limitations of the current APS system. Seven major areas of concerns were identified: lack of services, inadequate funding, lack of awareness of the APS program and functions, APS staff related issues, under-utilization of the legal system, systemic problems, and ambiguity of the APS law.
- 5 Court personnel cited lack of guardians and age restriction for accessing APS services most often as a limitation of APS. County commissioners and agency directors were generally concerned about the inconsistency across counties resulting from insufficient funding. Regardless of their professional responsibility, the sentiments about lack of publicity or visibility of the APS program were noted as a major concern.
- 6 Of the key informants who responded, 20% were aware of the existence of the APS law, but unaware of any legislative shortcomings. Because so few answered this question, there may be even more who were unaware of any shortcomings. The most frequently cited limitations of APS were the lack of clarity on age group served under the law and the lack of clarity in regards to definitions of terms including exploitation, competence, and incapacitated. Lack of clarity on agency authority and criteria for staffing the program were also considered as shortcomings of the law.

#### APS Funding Issues

- 1 Almost 60% of the key informants responded to the question regarding funding sources for APS. About a quarter (24%) were not familiar with the funding sources for APS. Over half cited county dollars, state dollars or a combination as the major funding sources for APS. Over one third noted Title XX to be the major funding source for APS in their counties.
- 2 About one quarter of the key informants gave suggestions for other funding sources such as state finding through a budget line item, county tax levies and grants from private foundations or United Way. Recommendations were also made for using a combination of federal dollars like TANF dollars, Title III, and Title XX.

### Opinions and Suggestions

- 1 The suggestions were consistent with issues identified as weaknesses in the current APS system. Informants proposed increasing/re-establishing funding for APS administration and services; instituting procedures for interagency collaboration, and advocating for legislative changes (inclusion of under 60 years of age population, penalties for perpetrators, clarity on definitions of terms). Others offered training and education for community, mandated reporters and law enforcement as a way for improving the operation of APS. Further suggestions were made for standardizing training, investigation procedures, and assessments for APS staff.
  
- 2 With respect to the administration of APS, the majority of informants felt that the counties should control APS and most of them were county commissioners. Legal personnel and agency directors more frequently supported a centralized and/or regionally administered APS system (31%). State legislators were divided in their opinion, half supported the county-based program and half felt it should be state controlled.

**Phase III Findings:** Phase III data was gathered from the community forum and analyzed. The major findings from the forum along with the recommendations follow:

A. Findings from Community Forum

- 1 Recommendations made by community forum participants were congruent with those initially formulated by APS research project staff. Additional suggestions generated by the community forum participants were mostly related to best practices, or methods for implementing specific recommendations including training, caseload size, interagency collaboration and APS structure.
  
- 2 There was general consensus that only one state agency should be responsible for the oversight of the APS program. While 2 out of 15 groups specifically supported this idea, a follow-up discussion during the roundtable also generated similar sentiments. Post community forum letters further supported the idea that only a single state agency should be responsible for the overall management of the APS program.
  
- 3 The two recommendations that received the most votes from the participants were the need for an active leadership role by the state agency (n = 70) and need for increase in the state line-item for APS (n=70). The second most important recommendation was to have certification standards for APS caseworkers to ensure consistency across counties among practitioners and provision of quality services to clients. The third most important recommendation was to place the funding responsibility on the state agency requiring that the funding source for APS be centralized (n =48).

4 Participants recommended that the statutory definition be expanded to include persons age 18 years and above (n=24) and APS be considered as part of other relevant systems such as domestic violence and criminal justice (n = 24). Although Ohio's law is limited to vulnerable persons 60 years and older, on an average 8.4% (n=479) of the substantiated APS reports include adults 18-59 years of age (ODJFS Protective Services for Adults Report, 1998). Congruent with this data, nearly half of the counties surveyed indicated that caseworkers provided services to adults 18-59 years of age.

5 The state is perceived as the major source of funding for APS and is comparable to most other states in using a combination of Social Services Block Grant, Older Americans Act, and state plus local funds. While like other states, Ohio depends on Title XX dollars for delivery of APS, there is considerable variability among counties in how unit costs are calculated for APS services using Title XX dollars. For example, Title XX APS county expenditure reports show unit cost ranging from \$13.21 to \$16,410.41 (ODJFS, 2000). These discrepancies raise issues on clarity of billing policies for service cost. Both standardized calculation of unit costs for services as well as standardization of tasks performed in processing an APS case is recommended.

6 Participants as the fourth most important issue identified the establishment of an APS hotline system that is responsive to after-hours calls. Formalizing the role of Area Agencies on Aging in supporting the service provision for APS cases at the local level, and building

cooperative inter-organizational efforts in addressing current APS shortcomings was considered critical. The participants suggested the development of Adult clusters.

7 The need for retaining qualified APS caseworkers was supported by most participants suggesting a mandate for certification of all APS workers. There is a growing trend towards developing competency sets as a requirement for classifying APS workers.

8 Participants felt strongly that appropriate APS training be provided for mandated reporters and recommended that the state or local APS agency be involved.

## B. Recommendations

The recommendations that emerged from the analysis of the study's findings are discussed under six major areas of concern: structure, training, services, inter-organizational relations, funding, and statutory change. The proposed recommendations are congruent with the national consultant's suggestions for Ohio to address based on the review of the findings (Wolf, 2001).

### Structure

- 10 There was a general consensus that only one state agency should be responsible for the oversight of the APS program. This agency could be ODJFS or ODA. Regardless of who takes the responsibility for the program, that agency would have multiple tasks: to develop credible standards of staffing, training, and service provision, to advocate for additional funding, and to conduct extensive, ongoing monitoring and program evaluation.
- 20 The state APS agency should create a uniform APS system across all 88 Ohio counties with the capacity to effectively address the difficult and diverse issues encountered in situations of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation. For example, there is currently variability in caseload sizes among counties. The counties that were found to have higher caseload size tend to assign all three tasks (intake, investigation, and ongoing) to caseworkers or had unequal case distribution among workers within counties. Protocols should be established and workers trained in when and how to transfer or close a case. Caseloads should be distributed evenly within counties with respect to the severity and intensity of the cases. The state should mandate the national standards for caseload size, which is 25 cases per worker.
- 30 The state agency with responsibility for APS law implementation should assume a visible and active leadership role in assuring capable APS service delivery and sufficient APS resources. Both the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio Department of Aging are legitimate candidates for this role, since they have important functions in the protection of vulnerable adult populations.

40 The state APS agency should expand the regulations attached to APS law implementation in order to make ambiguous concepts and provisions operational, and to standardize and improve APS service delivery statewide.

50 The state APS agency should monitor APS law implementation and compliance with regulations at the county level through regular and systematic program evaluation activities.

### Training

10 APS caseworkers in both mandated and designated agencies should be required to complete a certificate program in order to perform APS activities.

20 Service providers identified as mandatory reporters in Ohio's APS law should be educated on their roles and responsibilities in implementing the law early in their careers.

30 The state APS agency, in cooperation with the state unit on aging as well as state and local adult abuse networks, should develop educational products, such as fact sheets, posters, and public service announcements, for adaptation and use by counties in public awareness campaigns on adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

### Services

- 10 County mandated APS agencies should have 24-hour, 7-day capacity to handle reports of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation, especially for emergency situations.
  
- 20 Area agencies on aging should work with county APS agencies and local adult abuse networks to develop and fund programs to fill identified service gaps. Although service gaps vary by locale, among those most frequently identified statewide are the following: transportation/escort, housing options, respite services, guardianship programs, emergency shelters, legal services, home health care, homemaker services, money management, and services for those with moderate incomes
  
- 30 APS caseworkers should have a broad understanding of available services and housing options in their community. They also should feel comfortable and capable accessing these resources on behalf of their clientele. APS supervisors should foster a community perspective and referrals during the orientation and supervision of APS caseworkers.

#### Inter-organizational Relations

- 10 APS agencies should lead in the formation of adult clusters to improve the handling of cases and the use of government funding when multiple public agencies are involved with a particular case. Particular emphasis should be placed on working with public agencies in the aging network, mental health system, and mental retardation/ developmental disabilities system.

- 20 APS agencies should forge close relations with the domestic violence service system in order to address domestic violence in late life as an interfacing problem with elder abuse and with the criminal justice system in order to address the criminal aspects of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
  
- 30 APS agencies should be active participants and supporters of adult abuse networks at state, regional, and county levels.
  
- 40 It should be the practice norm to handle APS cases involving multiple community agencies through case conferences and consultations with these agencies.
  
- 50 County APS agencies should provide written follow-up to service providers who make reports.

#### APS Funding

- 10 Funding varies considerably among Ohio counties. Due to dwindling Title XX resources, it is recommended that the state take an active role in seeking out new sources of funding for APS. In addition, Title XX expenditures for APS vary tremendously across counties, with no indication of why some counties are spending thousands of dollars per client, while others spend less than \$20. Not only does the state agency responsible for the administration of APS need to advocate for an APS line item in the state budget, but current resources need to be evaluated and a consistent method for cost calculation developed. There is also some concern that a

transfer of the APS program at the state level from ODJFS to ODA would sever some local funding streams at the county level.

20 Funding is required to enhance the APS infrastructure at the state level so that sufficient staffing and other resources are in place to undertake such recommended activities as developing regulations and monitoring their compliance among county APS agencies, creating a certificate program to train APS caseworkers and insuring its sound implementation, and establishing formal protocols with state authorities concerned about adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The current state line item for APS should be expanded for this purpose.

30 APS and the identified service gaps in addressing adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation should be included in the allocation agenda of senior citizen and human service levies as they are enacted or renewed in individual counties.

40 Substantive revenue expansion will be required at the state level under four circumstances: a) significantly increased reporting as a result of outreach effort and publicity; b) growth of the target population under APS law to include non-elderly adults; c) continued decrease in the Social Services Block Grant; and d) change in institutional arrangement for oversight of the APS program, wherein if the service delivery system is changed from a local to regional model there would be no guarantee for transfer of the Title XX dollars.

#### Statutory Change

- 10 The definition of adult should be expanded to include all those age 18 and over with mental or physical impairments that render them unable to provide for their own care or protection.
  
- 20 The list of mandatory reporters should be expanded to include those health, social, and safety service providers, such as vocational or rehabilitation counselors, in contact with younger impaired adults who are not currently identified in the law.
  
- 30 Reference should be made to other Ohio laws that serve to protect vulnerable adults in order to promote collaboration across systems and expand intervention strategies. Both civil and criminal laws should be included, such as the Domestic Violence law and various Homicide and Assault laws.
  
- 40 The APS law should include specific services for perpetrators and caregivers.

### C. Best Practices

Project staff and hired consultants analyzed findings from the community forums to develop the final recommendations. Other data sources (4287, Title XX) were also analyzed to substantiate the formulated recommendations. In addition, the project staff and consultants examined other APS programs across the country to develop best practice suggestions for the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

The first stage of the APS research project was completed in December 2000 and the findings are presented in a report submitted to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services on January 30, 2001. A comparative analysis of existing legislation and APS programs was also submitted to ODJFS. The second stage of the APS research project was completed in February 2001 and the findings are presented in a report submitted to the ODJFS on April 30, 2001. This report presents the methodology and findings from Phase III of the research project along with recommendations and best practice methods for implementation of the findings.