

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.

References

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