

Education and Training Toolkit for   
Adult Protective Services

Sample Policies and Procedures

Part of the Toolkit available at

<https://apstarc.acl.gov/Toolkits.aspx>

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# Introduction

This APS Training policy and procedures template is designed to provide a reference guide for developing state-specific policies and procedures for APS staff and supervisor training. Suggested policy and procedures are provided. This sample should be adapted to meet the training requirements for state APS programs.

## Sources

[U.S. HHS ACL, National Voluntary Consensus Guidelines for State Adult Protective Services Systems, Updated March 2020.](https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2020-05/ACL-Guidelines-2020.pdf)

Training plays a role in APS worker satisfaction and worker retention and enables staff to continue their development. Structured, comprehensive, standardized training promotes skillful, culturally competent, and consistent APS practice. Training curricula should address the various education levels, experience, years of service, and training needs of both new workers and more experienced workers. It is recommended that an APS worker training process have four important components or phases: orientation to the job, supervised fieldwork, core competency training, and advanced or specialized training. The complex roles performed by APS workers require both formal content delivery and guided fieldwork to affect the transfer of learning from the classroom to practice. Subject content may be delivered in a variety of modalities, including, but not limited to, classroom workshops, reading, workbook exercises, case conferences, shadowing experienced workers, online courses, and virtual-reality- or simulation-based trainings for experiential learning. APS systems are encouraged to be creative in content delivery. Trainers should be qualified and proficient by academic degree, expertise, and/or work experience to provide training on the topic offered. When possible, APS programs are encouraged to bring in trainers from outside of the APS program.

The purpose of the orientation is for workers to acquire knowledge and skills in key areas and understand when they need to seek guidance from their supervisor. It is recommended that APS systems develop and provide orientation for all new workers. If possible, key elements of that orientation need to be completed and workers need to demonstrate competence in these key areas before they are assigned cases. It is recommended that, at a minimum, the following areas be addressed in the orientation: concepts articulated in the APS System’s Code of Ethics, including the principles of autonomy, least restrictive alternatives, person-centered service, trauma-informed practice, and supported decision-making; the role of APS and how the program fits into the larger long-term services and support network; common legal issues with which APS is involved, including confidentiality, conflict of interest, and guardianship/ conservatorship (including alternatives to guardianship and conservatorship); the types of maltreatment covered by their state’s statute, including their definition, signs, and symptoms; the case documentation process, including tracking and documenting attainment of client goals; the goals and process for conducting an APS investigation, including both the determination of maltreatment and the client assessment; the process for screening for decisional capacity; the process for determining whether or not maltreatment has occurred, including clear definitions of confirmed, inconclusive, and unfounded case finding determinations; guidance for serving clients with disabilities; the importance of culturally competent service; the way to incorporate person-centered planning into service planning and implementation; and criteria for closing the case and applying a standardized process to determine level of progress towards client goals.

It is recommended that the orientation phase be followed by a period of close supervision of the new worker by a mentor or supervisor for a period of no less than 12 months. The ultimate goal of this supervised fieldwork phase is the “transfer of learning” (i.e., the direct application of knowledge and skills to work with clients).

It is recommended that APS systems provide ongoing training to workers on a regular basis. It is suggested that training on the following core competencies for APS workers be provided within the worker’s first 24 months: APS ethical issues and dilemmas; APS philosophy, values and cultural competence; The aging process; Cognitive deficits, including dementia; Serving clients with physical and intellectual disabilities; Motivational interviewing; Mental health issues; Substance abuse; Dynamics of abusive relationships; Professional communication skills (written and verbal); Self-neglect; Caregiver neglect; Financial exploitation; Physical abuse; Sexual abuse; Emotional/psychological abuse; APS case documentation/report writing; Initial investigation and worker safety; Assessing decision-making capacity; Supported decision-making models; Risk assessment; Public benefits eligibility (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security); Voluntary case planning/intervention process; Involuntary case planning/intervention process; Collaboration and resources (including working in multidisciplinary teams [MDTs]); Laws related to APS work (e.g., guardianship/conservatorship, mental health commitments, domestic violence); Working with the criminal justice system; Case closure and termination Nurses working within the APS program should receive ongoing education related to medical, physical, emotional and social needs of older adults and adults with disabilities.

It is recommended that programs provide advanced or specialized training for workers. For example, if the APS agency serves Native American, Hispanic, or other ethnicities, workers should have access to training specific to those populations. The training should go beyond a mere “overview” and provide in-depth content on the specific needs of those populations to be served. It is recommended that workers be supported in their goal of achieving state or national certification, if desired.

# Chapter (insert number) APS Training Section (insert number) APS Staff

## Policy

APS staff responsible for investigative and direct-client work related to a report of adult maltreatment should have a college bachelor degree in approved areas of study or equivalent years of work experience in the area of adult services. Orientation training for APS work and human resources new-employee orientation training are requirements for the position.

## Procedures

**New employee orientation and training**

1. New staff will begin orientation training and obtain (insert number of training hours) prior to doing supervised fieldwork.
   1. Orientation by Human Resources (insert content topics and number of hours)
   2. APS job orientation (insert content topics and number of hours)
   3. Supervised fieldwork (insert number of hours)
   4. APS core competency training (insert number of hours)
   5. Advanced or specialized training, if applicable.
2. Training Modalities
   1. Classroom workshops
   2. Reading
   3. Workbook exercises
   4. Case conferences
   5. Shadowing experienced workers
   6. Online courses
   7. Virtual-reality or simulation-based trainings for experiential learning.
   8. Attendance at conferences (prior approval must be obtained).
   9. Continuing education classes required to maintain licensure of a skill required for the job.
3. Training Content
   1. List training topics. Consider the inclusion of the trainings listed in the [U.S. HHS ACL, National Voluntary Consensus Guidelines for State Adult Protective Services Systems, Updated March 2020.](https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2020-05/ACL-Guidelines-2020.pdf)
4. Completion of Training, Testing, Certification or License
   1. Describe requirements and timeframes for completion of new staff training/orientation.
   2. Describe expectations and timeframes for shadowing experienced workers and supervisor review of all casework.
   3. Describe state testing if applicable.
   4. Describe expectations for keeping current professional certification or license for skills pertinent for the position.

# Chapter (insert number) APS Training Section (insert number) APS Supervisor

## Policy

APS personnel responsible for supervising investigative and direct-client workers should have a college bachelor degree in approved areas of study, (insert number) years of work experience in the area of adult services or a master degree in approved areas of study with (insert number) years of work experience. Orientation training for APS supervisor and human resources new-employee orientation training are requirements for the position.

## Procedures

**New employee supervisor orientation and training**

1. New supervisors will begin orientation training and obtain (insert number of training hours) within (specify time period).
   1. Orientation by Human Resources (insert content topics and number of hours).
   2. APS job orientation if the person has not had previous work experience in APS (insert content topics and number of hours).
   3. Supervision by an experienced APS supervisor/administrator (insert number of hours for probation period if applicable).
   4. Ride-along “shadow” visits with experienced APS field staff.
   5. APS core competency training (insert content topics and number of hours)
   6. Advanced or specialized training, if applicable.
2. Training Modalities
   1. Classroom workshops
   2. Reading
   3. Workbook exercises
   4. Case conferences
   5. Shadowing experienced workers
   6. Online courses
   7. Virtual-reality or simulation-based trainings for experiential learning.
   8. Attendance at conferences (prior approval must be obtained).
   9. Continuing education classes required to maintain licensure of a skill required for the job.
3. Training Content
   1. List training topics. Consider the inclusion of the trainings listed in the Voluntary APS Guidelines.
      1. Understanding oneself as supervisor
      2. Foundations of effective supervision
      3. Teambuilding for APS professionals
      4. APS supervisor as trainer
      5. Management of personnel issues
      6. Data and fiscal operations
      7. Worker safety and self-care
      8. Collaboration and resources
   2. General supervisory training may be offered by departmental human resources department and if applicable list those topics.
4. Completion of Training, Testing, Certification or License
   1. Describe requirements and timeframes for completion of new supervisory training/orientation.
   2. Describe expectations and timeframes for shadowing experienced workers and administrator review of work.
   3. Describe state testing if applicable.
   4. Describe expectations for keeping current professional certification or license for skills pertinent for the position.