TITLE - A Week in the Life of Adult Protective Services in the Commonwealth of Kentucky

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The purpose of the study presented in the Webinar was to 1) understand the Kentucky infrastructure and the TWIST system; 2) characterize APS investigations; 3) examine the issues/needs/outcomes of APS investigations; identify data needed by APS to better monitor activities and facilitate further research; and 4) recommend changes for improving the APS system. Data collection involved three tools: 1) Intake Information Document (call log); 2) Worker Information System data; and 3) the Dynamic Family Assessment. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, and macrosystem) was used as an organizing framework for data collection. Intake staff in all nine regions of the State were asked to complete a survey form for each call received for individuals aged 60 and older from October 1, to October 7, 2007. Data were collected on 132 abuse victims identified through the week-long data gathering period and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data were gathered on alleged victim demographics, alleged perpetrator characteristics, investigation time frames, substantiations, case outcomes, and recidivism.

Compared with similar studies in California and New York, nearly all cases were processed within the state-mandated time frame, 30% cases were substantiated: the risk of abuse remained in 67% of cases and was reduced in 35% of cases. Recidivism was found to be the highest in self-neglect cases (31%), followed by cases involving abuse (24%).

PRACTICE & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The study reveals an important and comprehensive statewide picture of APS work in Kentucky and provides information on APS workflow, case and investigation characteristics, and substantiation and recidivism. Recommendations include: ensure that all calls reporting potential abuse cases to the APS tracking system (for Kentucky, TWIST) are recorded and identified in the appropriate track for services; capture data quantitatively as much as possible; incorporate information on client mental status as much as possible because it is critical to case resolution and successful prosecution; track the amount to time for different types of investigations to facilitate appropriate balance of case assignments to APS workers; calculate the costs of working on an APS case on an ongoing basis; explore the reasons for recidivism and the differences in substantiation rates by type of allegation; ensure overall outcome measures are recorded in the data entry system; and continuously revise and renew training content for maximum relevance to front line workers. Despite limitations, study findings have applicability to other APS systems in the country and highlight how APS accomplishes its work.

FURTHER READING

Wangmo, T., Teaster, P. B., Grace, J., Wong, Wilson, Mendiondo, M. S., Blandford, C., Fisher, S., & Fardo, D. W. (2014). An ecological systems examination of elder abuse: a week in the life of adult protective services. Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect, 26, 5, 440-457.

This research summary is part of a series sponsored by the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) and the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA) joint Research Committee. The purpose of this research summary is to provide direct access to findings in order to enhance practice and clarify policy choices.

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