

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH IN ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

A Statement by the  
National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)  
and  
National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA)

Believing that knowledge is power and that:

- Advances in Adult Protective Services (APS) policy and practice must be based on sound data;
- The needs and safety of clients must always be the first priority in the use of APS staff time;
- To advance the knowledge base of APS and positive outcomes for clients, valuable staff time is needed for research;
- Good research requires investment of time, attention to detail, and establishment of good measures;
- APS case records/agency data systems can contain a wealth of data that contributes to the understanding of, among other phenomena:
  - » Safety and risk factors for victims and perpetrators;
  - » Initial onset characteristics;
  - » Reporting patterns and gaps;
  - » Investigation and intervention processes and outcomes;
  - » Protection of the rights of elders and persons with disabilities.

NAPSA and NCPEA support the initiation of broad-ranging research and encourage our members to:

- Give full consideration to requests by researchers to partner with APS.
- Initiate the development of research questions, goals and protocols in regard to agency data for internal use and in pursuit of grant opportunities and research partnerships;
- Ensure that the knowledge sought from APS research seeks to benefit the protective service system and older adults;
- Provide procedures in the research design that address situations where the research participant's immediate health or safety is a concern;
- Take an active role in the interpretation of research results and provide guidance for applications;
- Promote the dissemination of research results to the APS community, the larger aging and other relevant networks, and the public;

- Discuss these guidelines with all concerned in order to reach a mutual focus and consensus on the work to be done, in order to promote positive relationships among administration, direct service providers, and researchers.

### **GUIDELINES FOR CONSIDERATION**

The research plan should establish a process for communication among all involved research and APS staff, prior to implementation of the research and throughout the project.

Researchers and APS organizations should implement a data-sharing agreement that reflects the following guidelines:

- Maintain confidentiality of all research data, including all personally identifying information of case records, research participants, and staff;
- Discuss with stakeholders and all pertinent administrative levels, prior to initiating the research, a plan for sharing these data with public figures, the media, and other participating agencies;
- Ensure that data collection is designed to involve the least burden on the clients, APS workers, and other research participants;
- Abide by all applicable regulations in the use of client data by researchers;
- Promote candor regarding concerns about the possible consequences of research outcomes;
- Ensure that the purpose and use of the data are clearly understood by APS staff prior to the researchers' receiving access to data;
- Divulge to all staff the parties with whom the outcome(s) will be shared, in what context, and with what purpose;
- Secure approval by all relevant Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and/or agency research review boards prior to data collection.;
- When the research includes direct client interviews, the researcher must ensure that the client and the client's guardian if applicable are clearly informed of the potential risks, benefits, and alternatives for participating in the study using an IRB approved informed consent process;
- When research includes direct client interviews, the researcher must emphasize to the client or the client's guardian when applicable that the strictest standards of confidentiality and privacy will be observed.