

**National Adult Protective Services Resource Center
NAPSA/NCPEA Research Committee
Research to Practice Brief
Webinar Summary**

Title: Research to Practice Partnership—Taking the Guesswork Out of Findings

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Summary of Research

The September 2012 webinar presented select findings from research conducted on California APS data by the Center of Excellence on Elder Abuse and Neglect at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). The purpose of this Archstone Foundation-funded study was to evaluate statistics collected by APS for use as a possible incidence data source and to help APS agencies provide consistent and reliable information on their statistical reporting document, the SOC 242. The clearest indicator of the incidence of abuse on the SOC 242 was the number of confirmed abuse allegations; UCI's interest was to make these numbers reliable.

The research focused on sources of variation on the SOC 242 that were inconsistent with real concerns about elder and dependent adult abuse. Some of these variations were artifacts of the APS data collection process, such as different operational definitions of terms on the form. For example, "Health and Safety Hazards" had different meanings in different counties. On another level, inconsistencies arose due to each county's autonomy and limited resources for receiving, documenting, and responding to reports of abuse. This led not only to institutional or organizational differences, but to different kinds and levels of computer-based tools. Inconsistencies in data resulted from human elements as well, such as caseworkers' skill levels within APS and biases driven by prior social service experiences, training, and education.

Practice and Policy Implications

This research project grew out of California APS managers' concerns about a lack of uniformity in gathering and reporting of statistical data throughout the state. While the study found greater-than-expected inconsistencies, APS programs welcomed the information as it identified specific areas that needed to be addressed. Using the research data to target the most pressing issues, APS practitioners made improving consistency of decision making in case findings their top priority. Collectively, they developed a protocol including a guide and matrix as tools for APS workers. The guide explained the basis for findings, identified relevant information, recommended good casework practices, outlined types of evidence, and defined standards for findings. The matrix clearly delineated the essential defining elements of each type of abuse/neglect, provided direction for information gathering, and gave structure for evaluating the relative strength and integrity of that information. The protocol was developed into a skill-based eLearning, which has been delivered throughout the state to assist in implementation. Researchers are in the process of studying the protocol's efficacy by evaluating the current level of consistency in findings.

Further Reading

[Abuse in Later Life Wheel](#)
[Adult Protective Services and County Services Block Grant Monthly Statistical Report, State of California Generations](#), issue XXIV(2), 2000. "The IOA Screen: An Abuse-Alert Measure That Dispels Myths" by Myrna Reis, pp. 13–16; and "Elder Abuse Offenders: A Typology" by Holly Ramsey-Klawnsnik, pp. 17–22.

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This National Adult Protective Services Resource Center (NAPSRC) 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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