It’s Dangerous Out There!

Building a safety program to protect your APS workers
Topics for today

• Background information
• Executive leadership
• Survey details and findings
• Building a case
• Action steps
• Safety coordinator tasks
• Lessons learned
• Conclusion
OAAPI’s mission: Partnering to achieve service equity by preventing abuse, protecting people in need, engaging our communities, valuing those who do the work and committing to quality in all we do.

OAAPI’s primary responsibilities:

- Responding to health and safety needs
- Developing and implementing policies, rules, legislative concepts and programs
- Developing and implementing abuse prevention strategies
- Engaging partners and stakeholders
- Providing data analysis and research
Who we serve

Number of allegations*

- Adults with physical disabilities: 3,880 (21.3%)
- Children in residential treatment: 216 (1.2%)
- Adults with mental illness: 484 (2.7%)
- Adults with developmental disabilities: 1,445 (7.9%)
- Adults over the age of 65: 12,165 (66.9%)

*Numbers are based on 2014 investigations and involve allegations of financial exploitation, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, wrongful restraint, verbal/emotional abuse, involuntary seclusion, abandonment and self-neglect.
Who we support

Investigations
- 25 county MH investigators
- OAAPI analysts, trainers, and administrative staff support approximately 215 state/county/AAA abuse investigators and 80 managers who receive more than 38,000 reports of abuse every year (2014 data)

Research & Prevention
- 30 county DD investigators

Policy, Program & Training
- 160 APD investigators (state/AAA)

Operations/Program Support
I think it is important for people to know the dangers we face — but it’s also important they see the good we do as well. How about the positive impact we make: the change we bring about in our communities, the people we help, how we help improve the lives of a population that is underserved.

— APS worker

Meeting the need
Executive Leadership
Process

- “Know your why”
- Safety survey
- Building a case
- Action steps
- Position description
- Hiring process
- Agency coordination
“Know your why”

“On a ‘routine’ call, I faced a woman pouring gasoline over her head and attempting to set herself on fire, while a perpetrator jumped off the porch to assault me. Before police arrived, I had to physically prevent the perpetrators from pushing the elderly victim to the ground. Unknown to me, Child Welfare had just been to the home and removed children. In other words, I walked without warning into a powder keg.”
A report is received regarding a 99 year old woman who is missing from her home. Information available leads law enforcement to believe the woman is buried in her back yard and the son is living off of her retirement income. There are also concerns of weapons on the property. Law enforcement requests APS to do further investigation.

“Know your why”
Why a survey

• One of the top challenges noted on our Workforce Strategy Plan was “keeping our protective services and investigations staff safe.”

• A survey would identify current and area-specific safety issues and concerns of field workers and investigators.

• The results from the survey will help with recruitment of the right person with the right skills to address the identified safety concerns and needs of those working in the field.
Survey details

• Survey was administered January 2014 to receive feedback regarding safety needs of field workers in Oregon.

• Solicited responses from field workers in all counties in Oregon and OAAPI investigators.

• Respondents were primarily from APD/APS, OAAPI, CDDP and CMHP.
Do you have concerns regarding your safety as it relates to the protection of vulnerable people or investigations?

- Yes, and safety risks/concerns are getting worse: 61
- Yes, but safety risks/concerns are NOT getting worse: 24
- No: 10
- Yes, but safety risks/concerns are improving: 2
How often do you encounter or experience each of the following as part of your work?

Survey of 100 people

- Threats (phone)
- Threats (in person)
- Physical contact
- Dangerous animals
- Weapons present
- Potential weapons present
- Drugs/drug-making equipment

- More than once a week
- More than once a month
- Less than once a month
This is a suggested list of possible formats that the safety coordinator could use to provide assistance. Which would be of value to you?

Training

Clarify DHS policies regarding expectations and worker’s rights in assaultive situations

Liaison between law enforcement and Adult Protective Services

Networking with law enforcement and other agencies to line up resources

Research national “best practices”
This is a suggested list of possible formats that the safety coordinator could use to provide assistance. Which would be of value to you?

- Critical incident debriefing
- Develop screening questions to ask when called out to investigate
- Develop guidelines for sharing incident
- Trauma response/peer support
- Develop action plans
What do you feel are the most important aspects of safety the coordinator should prioritize first?

1. Training
2. Ensure worker safety
3. Policy clarification
4. LEA partnership
5. Research best practices
What do you feel are the most important aspects of safety the coordinator should prioritize first?

6. Risk assessment
7. Ensure client safety
8. Develop guidelines/protocols and critical incident debriefing
9. Action plans
10. Screening and trauma response
On which of the following topics would you be interested in receiving training or resources?

- Stress relief
- Confidence training
- Techniques to deescalate
- Identification of characteristics of clients involved in violent incidents
- Physical escape/defensive maneuvering
- Recognizing drugs/drug manufacturing equipment
- Situational awareness (recognizing and avoiding dangerous situations or changing/deteriorating circumstances)
- Anger/aggression diffusion
- DHS safety policies (self defense, use of personal protection devices, etc.)
- Communicating with law enforcement
Building a case

Recruit for an OAAPI safety coordinator position to develop the key aspects of safety identified by staff in the survey, such as training, trauma debriefing, screening, etc., in partnership with programs we support.
Action steps

• Engage with executive leadership
  – Field visits
  – Sample reports
  – Investment in staff
• Cost of doing nothing
  – Trauma
  – Retention
  – Morale
I have been frequently sexually harassed in the field.
— APS worker

Making the shift

Safety Coordinator
Initial tasks

• Research
  – Current data
  – Information gathering
• Learning the system
• Training
  – Basic safety training
• Field visits
• Risk assessment
Field visits

• 36 counties in Oregon = 215+ investigators
• Preliminary data collection
• Safety trends
• Past safety experiences

25 county MH investigators
30 county DD investigators
160 APD investigators (state/AAA)
Personal protective equipment

MH - PPE available?
- No: 61%
- Yes: 39%

APS - PPE available?
- No: 50%
- Yes: 50%

DD - PPE available?
- No: 71%
- Yes: 29%
Vehicle use

MH - Vehicles
- Personal 27%
- Agency 67%
- Both 6%

DD - Vehicles
- Personal 23%
- Agency 59%
- Both 18%

APS - Vehicles
- Personal 27%
- Agency 73%

Non-DHS offices
Cell phones

MH - cell phones

No 48%  Yes 52%

Flip 29%  Smart 71%

DD - cell phones

No 38%  Yes 62%

Flip 29%  Smart 71%

APS - cell phones

No 13%

Flip 15%  Smart 85%

Yes 87%
Paradigm shift

• How do we change the culture of safety?
  – Multi-level systemic approach
    • Legislation
    • DHS and OHA
    • Local offices
      – APS experiences are normalized
        o “It is part of the job”
        o “Why would I report a threat?”
        o “People with guns… business as usual!”
        o “Drugs?... Oh that is normal!”
  – Going from **good** to **great**
  – How do you think about prevention?
Culture of safety

\[ Q \times A = E \]

- \( Q \) = Quality of the safety system
- \( A \) = Acceptance of the safety system
- \( E \) = Effectiveness in prevention
State policies

• Workplace Incident Response Policy
• Prevention of Violence/Weapons in the Workplace
• Employee Safety for Clandestine (Methamphetamine or other illegal) Drug-manufacturing Labs
• Reporting of Incidents
  – TINS: Any event where the situation is threatened
  – Incident Report
Reporting of incidents

- Does APS report when an incident occurs?
  - Terminology
    - Incident versus experience
Risk assessment

• Process
  – Identify hazards/events(s) of an activity
  – Determine consequences/impact and possibility
  – What controls do we have in place and what controls do we need in place?
  – What is the risk with current controls and what is the risk with proposed controls?

• Goal
  – Prioritize high level risks
  – Reduce the high level risks with proposed controls
Analysis: Field requests

• Training for all staff
• All access pass
  – Law enforcement databases
  – State databases
• Use of non-lethal weapons
• Policy clarification
Analysis: Recommendations

• Training
  – Safety planning
  – Risk assessment
  – Situational awareness
  – Self-defense/protection
  – Physical escape and defensive maneuvering
  – Vicarious trauma
  – Drug identification and weapons
  – De-escalation
  – Communicable diseases
  – CIT training
Analysis: Recommendations

• Policies
  – Self-protection
  – Non-lethal weapons
  – Language in state contracts for investigator safety
  – Authority across practice to reduce concerns of liability

• Legislation
  – Vulnerable Adult Multi-Disciplinary Team (funding, increased requirements)
  – Investigator safety training requirements
  – Formal data tracking system across all practices that include safety components
Analysis: Recommendations

• **Procedures**
  - Screening questions/form
  - Two person protocol
  - Incident reporting procedure
  - Weapons in client’s homes
  - De-briefing protocol
  - Trauma debriefing
  - Formal check in/out procedure
  - Cell phone requirements and coverage concerns

• **Other**
  - County/region specific risk assessment work group
Lessons learned

• Multi-level communication
  – Macro
  – Micro
• Documentation
• Data tracking
• Employee safety at all levels
Thank you!

Insert Quote and/or links to annual reports, FE study, safety survey
Questions?

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