

NAPSA Advocacy Toolkit

Questions? Contact: Bill Benson (bill.benson@napsa-now.org) or Kendra Kuehn (kendra.kuehn@napsa-now.org)

Now is the time to ask Congress to fund APS via the Elder Justice Act ([42 U.S.C. 1397m-1\(b\)](#)). NAPSA urges Congress to at least provide appropriations of \$100 million for grants to directly support APS program operations and \$3.7 million for development of the National APS Training Center. A greater commitment is needed from Congress and the President to address abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation of older adults and people with disabilities.

We need to tell Congress why funding for APS is a critical part of the FFY 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. Ask your Congressional delegation to support this funding. Help send a message to Congress that APS needs to be a part of yearly funding considerations not just during an emergency. Consider passing the message on to other colleagues and to your own agency's government affairs team. We need to get the message out.

You can find your Representative here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> and your Senators here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>. You can also email or call Congress here: [Email a message or make a phone call](#). Voice your thoughts through contacts you have, their contact form, by calling their DC office, and by calling their district office.

Key Points:

- Federal funding for APS needs to be part of the regular appropriations process to build infrastructure and capacity.
- Funding should allow for diversity of programs, including bifurcated systems (separate APS programs for older adults and adults under 60 with disabilities), and funding for tribal APS programs.
- Encourage your Representative and Senators to support APS funding in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Keep your message to the point and tailor to your experience as much as possible.

- Let them know who you are and that you are a constituent (a resident of the state).
- Tell them what APS is and who you serve. Let them know that ongoing funding for APS is a critical need. Elaborate on why it is important to you and your clients. Be sure to share impact, data, and stories of what the new funding has meant. Share what would happen if the funding stopped.
 - Administrators and managers: consider elaborating on specific parts of the strategic plan you are developing, what outcomes/impact you have seen, any data, and the impact of not continuing this level of funding.
 - Field staff and investigators: talk about how APS impacts your community and clients. What is the direct impact of funding on you and your work? What would happen if it was not continued?
 - Partners and friends of APS: talk about what you see as the impact of APS with those you work with and how funding would help.

- Ask your Representative & Senators to support the Senate bill and increase the funding level.
- Say thank you!

NAPSA encourages you, APS partners, family, and friends to contact your Congressional delegation. Hearing from constituents make the biggest impression. You can also consider letters to the editor or other opinion pieces.

Let us know what you are doing and sharing so NAPSA can elevate your efforts.

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Benefits of Federal Funding for Adult Protective Services

In 2023, the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) asked members about the impact of direct federal funding on Adult Protective Services (APS) and what they want Congress to know. Members described how funding has helped intervene in abuse, neglect, and exploitation while fostering the independence of clients. One territory reported that it was because of the funding that they were able to start an APS program. Loss of funding would mean the services described below may be discontinued.

- **Direct Support.** A majority of programs used funding to directly support critical client needs. While often small amounts, these efforts address and prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as helping adults stay in their community. Initiatives included:
 - Deep cleaning services
 - Food and nutrition support
 - Transportation support
 - Home repair including chair lifts
 - Emergency housing support
 - Basic needs such as clothing, bedding, and kitchen utensils
- **Workforce.** To fully address and prevent maltreatment of older adults and persons with disabilities we must invest in the workforce out in the field and support them in a difficult and often dangerous job. Initiatives included:
 - Additional staff and overtime pay
 - Recruitment
 - Training
 - Experts such as forensic accountants and neuropsychologists.
- **Public Awareness.** Abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults and people with disabilities is an overlooked and underreported problem. Programs have used federal funding to build public awareness of this issue and its detrimental effects on the community. Initiatives included:
 - Billboards
 - PSAs
 - Awareness campaigns
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness.** Upgrading data systems and technology allows programs to report and utilize improved data. Upgrading systems allowed workers to be more efficient in their investigations and case management and programs are better able to target innovations. Initiatives included:
 - Case management system upgrades and enhancements
 - Improved data collection and dashboards
 - Upgraded technology to allow workers for efficiency in the field

APS Calls to Congress:

“None of these people would have been helped without these funds. ... There are so many needed things with no other program to fill this gap.”

“One care package recipient accepted her package and exclaimed ‘I know there is a God because you are here!’”

“This funding demonstrates that Congress understands the importance of the work done in APS programs across the country.”

“This funding is one of the most positive and beneficial funding streams used in the department.”

“Vulnerable adult abuse, neglect and exploitation is an epidemic and our relatively small forces stand for vulnerable and senior adults. Support us. Fund us.”

May 3, 2024

Written Testimony:

**Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations
National Adult Protective Services Association**

The National Adult Protective Services Association thanks the Subcommittee for the opportunity to submit the following testimony regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 federal appropriations. On behalf of NAPSA, I thank you for your support of Adult Protective Services (APS) programs and vulnerable adults who are victims of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation. APS programs serve both older adults and younger adults with disabilities, populations that are frequently forgotten in service provision. As the national professional association representing APS programs, staff, allies, and the clients they serve we see the importance of these funds and the need to continue to invest as the population ages and cases increase in complexity.

We submit this FY 2025 testimony in support of funding in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that plays a unique role in this area. **Within the Administration for Community Living, NAPSA's request includes \$100 million for Adult Protective Services (APS) formula grants to directly support programs. NAPSA requests continuation of the National APS Training Center at a minimum of \$3.7 million. Within the Administration for Children and Families, NAPSA requests a minimum of \$1.7 billion for the Social Services Block Grant Program which provides critical funding to over 30 APS programs.** Additionally, language is needed to ensure funding goes directly to the agency overseeing the APS program. In some states this entails funding to go to an agency serving older adults and a separate agency serving adults with disabilities. Support should also be provided for tribal APS program development.

APS programs support and protect the most vulnerable in their communities, including older adults and people with severe disabilities. Abuse has significant financial, physical, and psychological impacts to the individual, community, and the nation. The Department of Justice estimates that 1 in 10 older adults will experience abuse annually and that people with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to be victims of violence. The direct medical costs of injuries and care related to elder abuse exceed \$5 billion a year and further costs to the individual and community result from lifelong injuries, moving into long-term care, and having to enroll in Medicaid. Additionally, victims have higher mortality rates than their peers. While these illustrate the costs that can be easily calculated, emotional and psychological costs are even higher.

On the services side, APS is often under resourced due to decreased budgets and rising caseloads. Administrators also note that cases are becoming more complex. Opioid and substance abuse cases can bring new safety challenges and lack of available services, particularly in rural areas. Rising financial exploitation cases test the skills of programs who often do not have the resources to hire a forensic accountant necessary to unravel such cases. Caseworkers are

stretched thin and in need of more support and training in light of these complexities. The National Adult Protective Services Training Center has provided the first comprehensive, easily available, e-learning for the APS field. NAPSAs are honored to host the Training Center and would like to highlight the importance of hosting the Training Center and the National APS Resource Center at a nonprofit dedicated to APS. The Training Center allows workers to build basic knowledge while states can shift limited training dollars to direct practical learning. We urge Congress to fund the National APS Training Center at \$3.7 million to increase the reach and expand the amount of training to the field.

We were pleased to see the first ever funding to APS programs as part of the COVID-19 emergency packages. This funding allowed programs to build critical infrastructure including provision of personal protective equipment across the country, softphones in Connecticut, and enhanced data gathering in Oklahoma. However, due to the time limited and emergency nature of the funding states were largely not able to address basic infrastructure gaps such as supporting and growing the workforce. This investment showed the work APS is capable of achieving when given the funding.

We applaud the inclusion of \$15 million in funding for APS programs through the FY 2023 & 2024 bills as well as the set aside for tribal APS programs and look forward to the possibilities for APS. But in FY2023 & FY2024 after administrative costs only a little more than \$13 million will go out to states. This is a significant cut from what went out during the COVID-19 pandemic. The average decline from one year of emergency funding would be nearly \$2 million. The lowest funded states will only receive \$103,251, hardly enough to do a significant project. Further the forthcoming regulations from the Administration for Community Living may cause additional costs to states not foreseen. These cuts are a direct threat to vulnerable Americans and result in disappearance of services and staff. Sufficient, ongoing funding is needed to sustain and expand these programs.

Staffing is the most crucial issue for APS across the nation. APS is a labor-intensive service relying upon investigators, intake workers, case managers, experts in financial abuse, capacity assessment, support personnel, and others. It is difficult if not impossible to have an effective program without trained, competent and seasoned workers. APS is hard work and requires truly capable personnel. Adequate staffing is the most important need for APS and consistent funding is needed to support these positions. Our request of \$100 million to APS programs is a down payment for sustainability and support to vulnerable Americans.

We urge Congress to provide report language calling for the Administration for Community Living to distribute funding directly to the agency overseeing the program not just through the aging entity. There are a small number of states with two different programs based on eligibility. Our understanding is when the funding is only provided to the aging organization it does not always make it over to the agency on those with disabilities.

Justice for older adults and people with disabilities should be more than a tagline, it should be a reality. Abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation exists across the nation and within each of our communities. Its prevention and remediation are core to our humanity. We look forward to the committee's support.