

# 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 contain a wealth of data that can contribute to the understanding of, among other phenomena:
  - » Safety and risk factors for victims and perpetrators;
  - » Initial onset characteristics;
  - » Reporting patterns and gaps;
  - » Investigation outcomes; and
  - » 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:

- Cooperate to the fullest extent possible with research requests;
- Initiate the development of research goals and protocols in regard to internal agency data;
- Use the following guidelines to clarify concerns and promote positive relationships between administration, direct service providers, and researchers; and



- Discuss these guidelines with all concerned in order to reach a mutual focus and consensus on the work to be done.

For research projects that involve **data collection by direct service staff**, the research plan will establish via extensive discussion among all involved research and APS staff, prior to the onset of the research, how the knowledge to be obtained and shared will benefit the quality and outcome of protective services.

In addition, for research using **aggregate data from individual case records**, the researchers will:

- Maintain confidentiality of all research data, including all personally identifying information of case records, research participants, and staff;
- Abide by all applicable regulations in the use of client data by researchers;
- Promote candor and reduce concerns about the possible consequences of negative research outcomes;
- Ensure that the purpose and use of the data are clearly understood by APS staff prior to the researchers' requesting access to data;
- Divulge to all staff the parties with whom the outcome(s) will be shared, in what context, and with what purpose; and
- 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.

In addition to the above, when research uses **direct client interviews**, the research design must:

- Clearly demonstrate that the research presents no significant risks to the safety and well-being of clients;
- Be reviewed by a formal institutional review board prior to the final decision by APS staff to participate, resulting in examination of any or all risks to clients; and
- Include procedures for discussing risks and obtaining informed consent from clients, which must also be shared with APS staff.

This statement was developed by the NAPSA/NCPEA Research Committee and approved by the Boards of Directors of NAPSA and NCPEA.