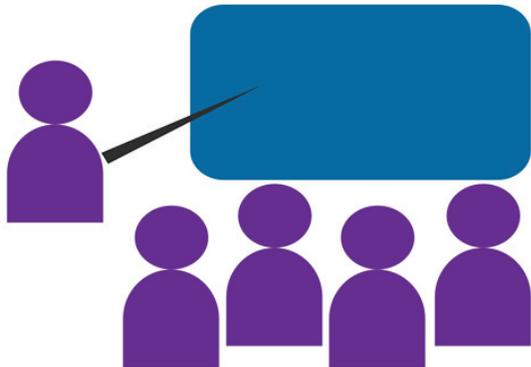


## Professional APS Training

Part of the **APS Intake Toolkit** located at <https://apstarc.acl.gov/toolkits>.



### Introduction

The [National Voluntary Consensus Guidelines for State Adult Protective Systems](#) (“Guidelines”) recommend that “APS direct service personnel and supervisors be qualified by training and experience to deliver adult protective services. It is recommended that states institute minimum qualifications for APS workers and supervisors” (ACL, 2020).

Given the complexity of APS work, training plays a critical role in job satisfaction, staff retention, and services to clients. It requires a broad base of knowledge and skills, some of which are very specific to adult protective services (APS) and not taught in general college courses or Master of Social Work programs. To promote skillful, culturally competent, and consistent APS practice, it is recommended that training be structured, comprehensive, and standardized. Supplementing training with guided supervised fieldwork promotes transfer of learning from training to actual practice.

In the past, many APS administrators struggled to secure available funding resources for the development of APS training for their program.

Thanks to the work and advocacy of APS training professionals and partner organizations, APS training is not only getting attention more broadly but also much needed funding. New funding ensures all new APS staff receive foundational training and expanded training for advanced/specialized topics, training for staff at all levels/seniority, and utilization of technology and virtual learning modalities for more flexible access and improved tracking.

Though the use of virtual learning via webinar and asynchronous (recorded) eLearning is not new, the expansion in the use of more flexible virtual platforms such as Zoom, Teams or WebEX for synchronous (live, instructor-led) training and the use of simulation training and virtual reality (VR) is very new to APS. This move to virtual modalities for some APS programs was hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic need to work remotely from home and many did a quick re-tool of existing curricula to meet the moment.

One of the important funding sources APS programs are leveraging to build training and staff development capacity is the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 formula grant funds. The APS Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC)

### Training Snapshot - Oregon



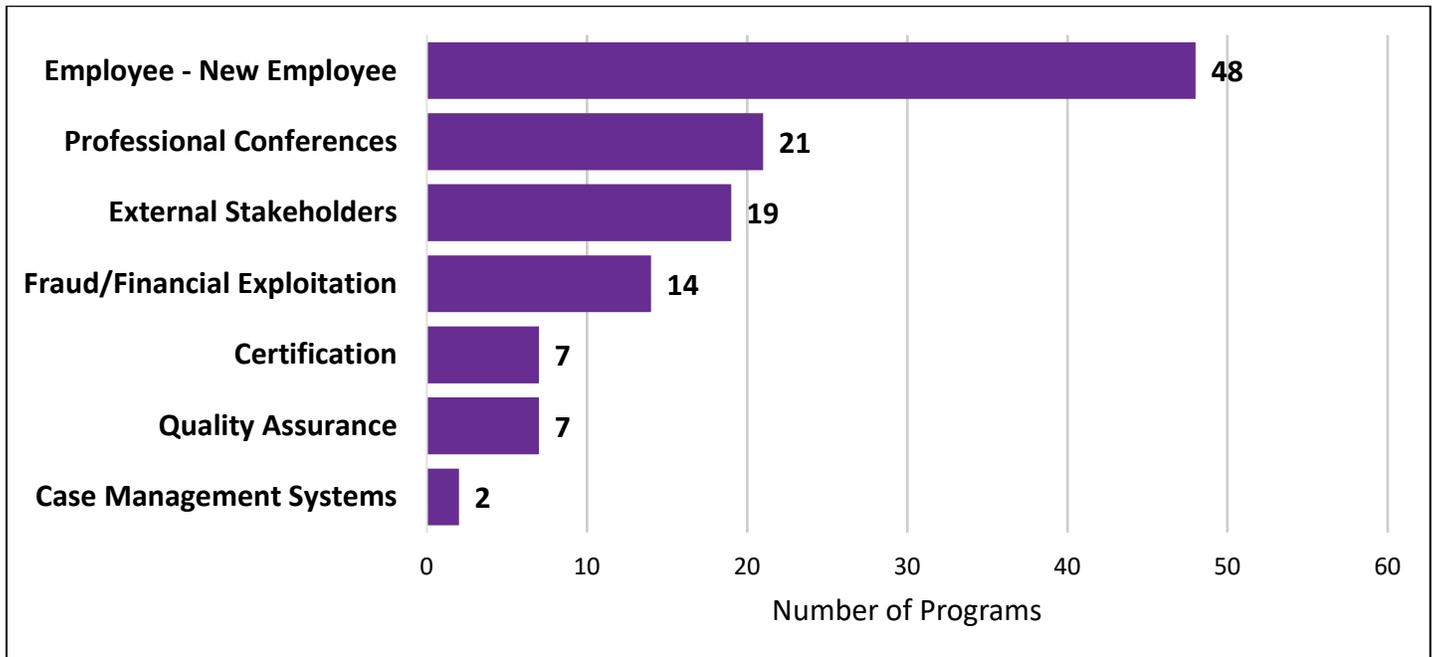
#### Decisional Capacity

Oregon is training APS staff related to safety and enhanced cognitive/behavioral interviewing, decisional capacity tool/self-neglect risk guide, and fraud and undue influence.

analyzed the initial operational plan data from 54 APS Programs and found that 52 APS programs identified training as a targeted improvement area for funding expenditures.

Further data analysis broke down APS program training projects by type:

**Figure 1 - APS Operational Plans: Training Projects by Type**



Throughout this brief, look for the training snapshots highlighting what APS programs are doing in the training sphere. These snapshots are reflective of the diversity of training plans/initiatives but certainly not a comprehensive list.

This brief outlines what is available to APS programs to use for no cost or low cost and align with the Guidelines. If your APS program has something training related to share, contact the APS TARC at <https://apstarc.acl.gov/contact>.

## Core Competency Training and Resources

The **National Adult Protective Services Training Center (NATC)**, sponsored by the Administration for Community Living and administered by the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA), provides self-paced eLearning courses for APS

throughout the United States and territories. The NATC currently has twenty-four courses about core topics important to the work of all APS professionals along with hundreds of resources that provide additional knowledge about these topics. APS professionals can take the courses individually or complete the NATC APS Core Program by taking all 24 courses.

There is no cost to register and take any of these self-paced eLearning courses. The NATC allows for individuals to track and download a record of the courses they have completed. See Appendix A for course title and descriptions for the current 24 NATC eLearning courses which may be accessed at <https://natc.acl.gov/>.

The **Adult Protective Services Workforce Innovations (APSWI)** in partnership with NAPSA and other national and state organizations, developed

the original core curricula for APS professionals. The instructor-led versions of most of the core trainings have been created, and many revised, to cover promising practices and can be customized for individual APS programs. Each instructor-led training module can be tailored to accommodate program specific APS policies – with acknowledgement of the original curriculum developer – and includes:

- a scripted trainer manual that guides the trainer with ease to facilitate the content, activities, and skill practice
- a participant manual that includes all the materials for training activities
- a customizable slide deck
- most modules also include transfer of learning activities

Instructor-led curricula and transfer of learning tools are available for download at no cost at <https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/>.

## Field Guide

The Field Guide for APS, developed by APSWI in partnership with California counties, is intended to provide an agency or an individual APS supervisor with an organized system to ensure that the new APS worker gains the experiences and formal training needed to be an effective professional. This updated guide outlines 23 Knowledge Areas identified as comprehensive for APS field work. These Knowledge Areas include basic field skills, as well as working with unique types of cases/situations. The Field Guide for APS is available for download at <https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/field-guide-for-aps/>.

## APS Training Videos

In an effort to provide additional training aids to APS professionals, the development and use of videos has increased across the field. A few no cost

## Training Snapshot – New Jersey



### Forensic Investigation

New Jersey is increasing the use of forensic specialists in investigations and having nurses and forensic accountants train staff to build “forensic” investigation capacity.

resources are provided below. Please note, this list is not exhaustive and focuses on APS specific content.

**APSWI Videos** - Videos developed for APS programs to stream or download at no cost and use as demonstration tools, discussion prompts for staff meetings or in training sessions, and provide an opportunity to discuss agency specific policies.

Foci of the free videos include:

- Supporting Conversations on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Within APS Programs - Observing an APS professional meeting with their supervisor to discuss a recent client interview that brought up complex reactions. Models how supervisors can help staff process personal reactions and develop a supportive plan of action to address both client and staff needs.
- Asking Inclusive Demographic Questions - Observing an APS professional during an interview with a client establishing rapport and demonstrating respect while asking inclusive demographic questions.
- Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators: Financial Abuse Allegation - De-escalating conflict, clarifying conflicting answers, having difficult conversations.

- Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators: Caregiver Neglect Allegation - Addressing cultural differences, recovering from mistakes while conducting an interview, redirecting the interview, starting conversations on resources and education.
- Self-Neglect Home Visit Interview - Rapport building, risk assessment, engaging with clients who are hesitant, active listening, asking open-ended questions.
- Addressing APS Professional Safety - Screening for common safety concerns such as weapons, animals, others in the home, etc. Please note that this video was developed before the current pandemic.

All training videos are available at <https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/apswi-videos/>.

## Training Snapshot – Guam



### Professional Development

Guam is planning to leverage the National APS Training Center and other training resources to increase staff training and build training protocols into policy and procedure.

**National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) Video Library** – A comprehensive video library featuring streaming and downloadable video clips of subject matter experts and older survivors discussing topics related to abuse in later life including intimate partner violence, financial exploitation, sexual assault, sexual abuse and stalking. Available at <https://www.ncall.us/resources/video-library/>.

**National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI)** – A comprehensive video library featuring streaming videos of varying lengths on topics related to working with indigenous elders and communities and the specifics of disrespect (abuse) in indigenous communities. Available at <https://www.nieji.org/videos>.

**Training Resources on Elder Abuse (TREA)** – A collaboration between the University of Southern California Department of Family Medicine and Geriatrics and National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) provides a searchable database of elder abuse related videos and other training materials designed for professionals, caregivers and the community inspired by the Elder Justice Roadmap. Available at <https://trea.usc.edu/resources/>.

**NCEA Reframing Elder Abuse Project** – A communications strategy and toolkit with graphic and videos that reimagines our cultural dialogue on elder abuse developed by the NCEA in partnership with the FrameWorks Institute. All resources available at no cost at <https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/Reframing.aspx>.

## Advanced Training

Professional development and continuing education are imperative for APS professionals to ensure that staff have the most up-to-date skills, knowledge, and resources needed to investigate these sensitive cases. APSWI collaborates with NAPSA and other national experts in the aging and adult services field to develop advanced training for advanced level APS professionals, supervisors, and their [multi-disciplinary partners](#) (e.g. public guardians, public

health nurses working with the elderly, mental health professionals, etc).

For all in-person training, curricula come complete with the following free materials to download and tailor to meet the needs of APS programs:

- a scripted trainer manual that guides the trainer with ease to facilitate the content, activities, and skill practice
- a participant manual that includes all the materials for training activities
- a customizable slide deck

Modules are available for no-cost download (for instructor-led modules) or fee-based eLearning for participants outside CA.

Topics include:

- Effectively Working APS Cases for Persons Experiencing Homelessness Series (instructor-led)
- Enhanced Cognitive Interviewing for APS Professionals (instructor-led)
- Enhancing Your Investigative Skills: Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators (blended)
- Estate Planning and Financial Abuse Issues (instructor-led)
- Including Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification Questions in APS Practice (eLearning)
- Investigating APS Criminal Cases (instructor-led)
- Undue Influence Committed by Professionals (eLearning)

California-specific curriculum:

- Consistency in Determining Findings (blended)
- Determining Dependent Adult Status (eLearning)

## Training Snapshot – Oklahoma & Mississippi



### Partnerships

Oklahoma is engaging tribal partnership/APS training with Oklahoma University.

Mississippi is training the fire departments and city officials on the intersection between their responsibilities and APS.

Training materials can be found at

<https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/advanced-training/>.

## Supervisor Core Training

As outlined in the APS TARC Brief, [Training Supervisors in APS: Guidance and Resources](#), APS supervisors are vital to the success of APS programs and their role is fundamental in assuring the safety and well-being of APS clients. The APS supervisor role is multi-faceted and challenging, and to be effective the supervisor must be able to perform tasks within multiple domains including administrative, educational, and support. Too often, APS supervisors often come to their position with little or no training on effective supervision and start their role without an understanding of the wide array of responsibilities the position entails.

Fortunately, the field of APS is at an exciting and critical juncture and recognition of the need for training and support for APS supervisors is at the forefront. The APSWI and Arizona Division of Aging and Adult Services are collaborating with NAPSA to develop a standardized, competency-based APS Supervisor Core Academy that builds from the initial competency and training work from 2012/2013 and incorporates research, national needs assessment data, and other evidence-informed topics and practices such as modeling trauma-informed

interviewing during supervision. The goal is to make these curriculum materials available nationally, following the model of APS Worker Core Curriculum.

For all instructor-led training, curricula come complete with the following free materials to download and tailor to meet the needs of APS programs:

- a scripted trainer manual that guides the trainer with ease to facilitate the content, activities, and skill practice
- a participant manual that includes all the materials for training activities
- a customizable slide deck
- transfer of learning activities

To date, the following APS Supervisor Core training modules are available for no-cost download (for instructor-led modules) or fee-based eLearning for participants outside CA. Note: some modules are “blended” meaning instructor-led, eLearning, and transfer of learning modalities are utilized.

#### Competency 1 - Understanding Self as Supervisor

- Module 1A – Understanding Trauma Informed Care for APS Supervisors (blended learning)
- Module 1B – The Unique Role of the APS Supervisor (instructor-led)
- Module 1C – Strengths-Based Development/Supervision (blended learning\*)

#### Competency 2 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/Transformation

- Module 2A – Implicit Bias, Structural Racism (instructor-led)
- Module 2B – Building Cultural Humility & Responsiveness (instructor-led)
- Module 2C – How to Talk About Elder Abuse (blended learning)

#### Competency 4 - Case Consultation and Critical Thinking

- Module 4A/4B – Effective Case Consultation (instructor-led)
- Module 4E – Supervising Complex Cases (instructor-led)

Additional training modules will be made available on a rolling basis as they are finalized. To learn more, visit

<https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/supervisor-training/aps-supervisor-core/>.

#### Conclusion

This brief outlined many training resources that APS programs can access at no or low cost. These training resources can be used to develop a program’s full training program with a minimum of development costs and high confidence that the trainings will meet program needs. Please [let the TARC know](#) if these resources have been useful to your program’s training program.

**APS TARC**  
Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center



What did you think of this brief?

[Take our five-question satisfaction survey](#) to let us know.

## References

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- National Adult Protective Services Training Center (2022). NATC APS core program courses. Unpublished.

*The National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System and the Adult Protective Services Technical Resource Center is a project (HHSP 2332015000421) of the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services, administered by the WRMA, Inc. Contractor's findings, conclusions, and points of view do not necessarily represent U.S. Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services official policy.*

## Appendix A – National APS Training Center Core Program Courses

Course Title	Course Description
<b>APS Overview</b>	This course will introduce you to the profession of Adult Protective Services (APS). The course will help you know more about the profession, the people who the profession serves, the situations that require intervention, and the methods that are used to help people be safe and free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
<b>Ethics, Values, and Cultural Responsiveness</b>	APS practice is based on the application of a professional code of ethics and values that guide daily practice. This course explores what ethics are and the code of ethics that APS professionals follow. The course works through how APS professionals can be more culturally responsive and uphold our ethical obligations to the people we serve.
<b>Trauma-Informed Practices</b>	Trauma is prevalent in our world and has an impact on the many people we interact with, including the people we encounter during our work with APS. It occurs because of abuse, neglect, loss, disaster, and other emotionally harmful experiences. In this course, you will learn strategies to applying a trauma-informed approach to your work; methods you can use to be more trauma-informed when communicating and working with people who have experienced trauma; and how to identify trauma and secondary trauma that may affect you, the APS professional, and strategies to help mitigate these effects.
<b>Aging Process</b>	Aging is part of the normal physical and developmental life course that begins at birth. This course will provide APS professionals with a basic understanding of the aging process that will enhance their ability to conduct investigations and develop effective person-centered and strengths-based service plans when working with older adults.
<b>Working with People Who Have Disabilities</b>	This course explores disability in the past and present and talks about the disability movement in the United States. The course covers the types of disabilities commonly experienced by people we serve in APS. Finally, you will explore how to effectively engage people with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.
<b>Mental Health Issues</b>	Mental health is essential to a person’s overall health and well-being. This course is designed for APS professionals to become familiar with working with people with mental health concerns by introducing common terms and behaviors used to describe and identify mental health conditions. While APS professionals do not diagnose the

Course Title	Course Description
	people they serve, a solid base of knowledge will help you develop person-centered service plans, make appropriate referrals, and communicate more effectively with mental health partners in the community.
<b>Neurocognitive Disorders</b>	As APS professionals, we need to have a basic understanding on what symptoms and behaviors to expect when someone has a neurological disorder (dementia) and how it changes as the disease progresses. This information will help you adapt your interviewing styles, your ability to identify abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and person-centered service planning for people with a neurocognitive disorder.
<b>Substance Misuse and Substance Use Disorders</b>	Substance misuse and substance use disorders (SUDs) are issues that impact older adults and persons with disabilities. This course provides foundational information about SUDs and how to best help people understand and access services. You will also learn about how to address specific issues arising from substance misuse and SUDs in an APS case.
<b>Power and Control Dynamics</b>	The focus of APS intervention should be a person-centered approach. Being aware of and looking for power and control dynamics is critical for APS professionals to consider when they are providing protective services. The goal of this course is to help APS professionals understand these dynamics when applied to abuse, neglect, and exploitation cases, perpetrated by other persons, and to help offer effective person-centered services to people in APS.
<b>Self-Neglect</b>	As APS professionals, we will be involved in situations where people are experiencing self-neglect. The outcomes from experiencing self-neglect can be difficult for people to manage and have detrimental outcomes to their lives. This course explores how APS professionals can explore these situations and develop effective person-centered service plans with people experiencing self-neglect.
<b>Physical and Emotional Abuse</b>	APS professionals will be involved in both types of maltreatment of older adults and people with disabilities. Physical and emotional abuse can have significant physical, psychological, emotional, traumatic, and social effects on a person who experiences either or both. This course explores how APS professionals can examine these situations and develop effective person-centered service plans with people experiencing physical and emotional abuse.
<b>Financial Exploitation</b>	APS professionals get involved in cases of exploitation that can range from an incident of a small amount of cash being taken from an older

Course Title	Course Description
	<p>adult or person with a disability to complex cases into the millions of dollars. In this course, you will learn the necessary and essential components for effective financial exploitation investigations. You will learn the indicators of financial exploitation; understand decision-making capacity and undue influence as they are related to financial exploitation cases; and learn how to implement the primary components of a financial exploitation investigation.</p>
<p><b>Neglect by Others</b></p>	<p>Neglect by another person is a common allegation in APS cases and can result in severe injury and even death to older adults and adults with disabilities. This course covers how neglect is defined and how to recognize that neglect is occurring or has occurred. This course focuses on neglect that is perpetrated by other people such as formal and informal caregivers. This course is designed to help you develop the tools needed to conduct a neglect investigation and develop person-centered service plans to help to reduce the risk of further neglect.</p>
<p><b>Sexual Abuse</b></p>	<p>This course will introduce you to the topic of sexual abuse of older adults and people with disabilities. Sometimes, sexual abuse will be the reason for the report and other times, the case will come in as another form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, but the person is also currently experiencing or has previously experienced sexual abuse. Regardless of how a person's situation reaches APS, this course will prepare you to explore situations involving sexual abuse and develop person-centered and trauma-informed service plans.</p>
<p><b>Case Documentation</b></p>	<p>The importance of documentation cannot be overstated in APS. Accurate, complete, and timely documentation is critical to demonstrating the work that we do and the outcomes of the case. This course emphasizes the importance of documentation and provides suggestions on how to effectively document for the purposes of APS.</p>
<p><b>Case First Steps and Professional Safety</b></p>	<p>From the moment someone starts taking down the details of a report of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, a case has begun. This course covers how to effectively collect information from an initial report and then develop a beginning plan to approach the case. The course also emphasizes the need for that plan to think through professional safety issues that could be encountered and take the proper steps to stay safe in the field.</p>

Course Title	Course Description
<b>Communication and Interviewing</b>	In this course, APS professionals will learn the basic components of interviewing. You will learn about the importance of trust and relationship building and the use of effective engagement skills. This course covers how and when to use various question types and styles including open-ended questioning. Finally, APS professionals will learn the basic structure of and APS interview.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	It is not surprising that APS professionals have identified risk assessment as one of the most difficult aspects of their work. In this course, you will learn to assess the severity, urgency, and likelihood of harm occurring for a person across five domains. You will also learn how to develop person-centered service plans to reduce risk in cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
<b>Screening for Decision-Making Ability</b>	This course will help you screen your clients' ability to make decisions by helping you tailor interview questions to identify the factors that affect decision-making ability. This course will also provide an understanding of the uses and limitations of the tools available for screening decision-making ability, and the value and purpose of a formal capacity evaluation done by a clinical professional.
<b>Case Collaboration</b>	It is essential that we learn how to collaborate effectively on a professional level across disciplines. Our clients require that we work with other disciplines to develop and implement a person-centered service plan that meets a person's needs and preferences. This course will cover the benefits, challenges, and solutions to overcoming barriers to successful collaboration.
<b>Voluntary Case Planning</b>	In APS, our job is to work with a person to determine which services they want and need. This course covers planning for the services you provide to clients with their input, agreement, and consent. In this course, you'll learn the steps for developing a person-centered service plan, while making the most of a person's strengths, resources, and readiness to engage in case planning.
<b>Involuntary Case Planning</b>	This course will explore how to identify involuntary interventions and when their use is appropriate. We will also explore some of the ethical issues using involuntary interventions. Finally, you'll learn how to make your case that an involuntary case plan is necessary and appropriate.

Course Title	Course Description
<b>Working with Criminal Justice System</b>	Some reports to APS include acts that may be criminal. APS professionals often find themselves working with the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system operates under its own laws, principles, and procedures which are very different than those of APS and can be confusing when first working cases together. This course is designed to help APS professionals develop or enhance their understanding and appreciation for the law enforcement and prosecution roles and perspectives to help you work more effectively with the criminal justice system.
<b>Case Closure</b>	Every case will close at some point. This course is designed to help you explore the natural dynamics that occur at a case closure, and the factors to consider in your decision-making process. In this course, you will learn the answer to the common question, “What do I really need to know about successfully closing a case?”