



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

Adult Protective Services

Protecting with Passion, Purpose and Persistence

Strategic Plan FY 2021-2025



TEXAS

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

OUR MISSION

To protect older adults and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

OUR VISION

Protecting with Purpose, Passion, and Persistence.

OUR CORE VALUES

We champion the SAFETY and DIGNITY of vulnerable adults.

We conduct ourselves with INTEGRITY.

We demonstrate RESPECT for all persons.

We COLLABORATE to improve outcomes.

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER

To APS and the DFPS Family:

This year's strategic plan is looking out to 2025. Essentially the plan is the road map to where we think we are going. You'll notice that plans change over time, because APS does not exist in a static environment; we are constantly adjusting.

Strategic Plan Goals will provide an idea of where we want to be, and the objectives explain how we are going to get there.

In alignment with the strategic plan, there are ways that we can be more efficient and streamlined in our practice to better meet the projected growth. For example:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to change our practice. We now have an opportunity to evaluate how those changes have affected client outcomes. Depending upon what we find, we may be able to make some of those changes, or a version of them, permanent. That said, if we do make permanent changes, we will need to provide staff with the tools and training needed to be successful in the new practice environment.
2. The change we made to our practice model in 2014 (SHIELD) helped us re-evaluate what is truly important in APS casework. That ongoing work is leading us to a new, more efficient, single stage approach. Rather than spending time progressing cases to an artificial service stage, we can build one case stage that incorporates investigation and service. By aligning our IMPACT case management system with the reality of APS casework practice, we will increase our capacity to handle cases.
3. APS is not alone in addressing abuse, neglect and exploitation. We will continue to work with communities and other governmental entities to find ways to provide services that have an impact on the problems our clients face.

In addition to the strategic plan, APS will need to work with elected officials to ensure the needs of our clients are being met. We have a mandate from the legislature to protect vulnerable people, and we have an obligation to share with the legislature what we need to fulfill that mandate. We will continue to project our needs using realistic data and work with DFPS leadership to communicate those needs accurately to the legislature.

There are additional aspects to keep in mind when discussing the future of the APS program. It is only in the past 5 years that the federal government has found a home for APS in the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Initially this has resulted in the creation of the

APS Technical Assistance and Resource Center (TARC) and the start of gathering APS data on a national level. As that data becomes available, there may be federal appropriations to support APS at the state level. This is an unknown, but it could have significant impact on our resources and also on our practice; because typically dollars come with requirements. Fortunately for Texas APS, we are a national leader when it comes to practice, funding, training, and data utilization. If the federal government begins to invest in the work that APS does across the country, we will be poised to help in developing the expectations that are tied to the funding.

Leadership is another area that is likely to look very different for APS in 2025 and certainly in 2030. Much of the APS leadership team at the PA, DD, State Office and executive levels is either eligible to retire now or will be in the next few years. While this is a threat to the program from the potential loss of expertise and institutional knowledge, it is also an opportunity as we will see new leaders emerging and bringing fresh perspectives and ideas. It is critical that as we move into the next decade we are paying attention to succession planning and identifying and developing potential leaders at all levels in the program.

Finally, APS is dedicated to improving the quality of services provided to clients no matter what circumstances we may face. The COVID-19 pandemic forced APS to change our practices for the safety of our clients and of staff. Doing so opened our eyes to innovations in the way we can ensure the safety of our clients and the delivery of high-quality services. APS will assess the effect of COVID-19 on the quality of services to determine whether some practices can be adopted on a longer-term basis. In addition, exploring opportunities to improve investigations and services on a continual basis is necessary to ensure that no matter the crisis or how the needs of clients may evolve over time, APS is prepared to respond as effectively possible.

The future is always unknown, and I like to think there are two ways to approach it. We can react to it, or we can act to shape it. The truth is that APS will always have to do some reacting, but we are committed to acting wherever we can. Protecting our vulnerable adult population is too important to leave to chance. I am proud to work in a program that chooses to lead rather than follow and prefers to plan and act rather than just react.

Thank you for all you do. Please be safe!

Sincerely,

Introduction

Every day, the staff of Adult Protective Services (APS) responds to allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable members of the community, the elderly and adults with disabilities. They investigate these allegations and coordinating services to our clients. While our staff continue to provide services around the clock, APS is also striving to ensure that these staff have access to the best tools available, that the practices utilized are the most effective and efficient and is working to maximize resources of the program.

The APS Strategic Plan is a five-year plan to provide direction to our organization. It facilitates thoughtful, planned improvement and progress for Texas APS as well as a framework to capture our efforts and define our future. Our five-year strategic planning timeframe and annual re-evaluation allows for a comprehensive plan that includes wide-ranging goals and longer time frames to optimize the quality of objective outcomes. Every APS staff member, from frontline caseworkers in the field, to District Directors, had the opportunity to provide feedback in this plan. Internal planning has helped APS identify where to focus program efforts as we move forward.

Annual re-evaluation of the strategic plan is important for the purposes of accountability, transparency and improvement. It provides the opportunity to assess additional opportunities for APS and partners to work together to protect vulnerable adults and to alleviate risk of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation in the population we serve. It also allows for changing times and allows APS to be agile enough to respond to new challenges as they arise. This plan helps to ensure that whatever comes our way, our program is moving toward a fixed point on the horizon, together.

To set the stage for the strategic plan, a brief program overview is provided that includes current APS financial and workforce data as well as information on populations the program serves. This is followed by a summary of the results of an analysis conducted across APS statewide to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program and to support the development of the strategic plan. The progress made since the last iteration of this plan is also captured. The document concludes with a summary of the 2020-2024 APS Strategic Plan.

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Program Overview

Purpose and Population Served

The Adult Protective Services (APS) division, within the Department of Family and Protective Services, is responsible for protecting older adults and people with disabilities in Texas from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.

APS clients are:

- Reported to have been abused, neglected or exploited
- Age 65 and older or age 18 to 65 with a disabling condition
- Reside in the community (e.g., private homes, adult foster homes, unlicensed board care homes)

APS receives reports of alleged abuse, neglect and exploitation from DFPS Statewide Intake (SWI). When a report is made of possible abuse, SWI gathers information provided by the reporter, and assigns the report a priority. Priority is based on the described severity the victim is allegedly experiencing. The APS priority designations for intakes are:

Priority 1	Report alleges the victim is in a state of serious harm, or in danger of death from abuse or neglect. Caseworker must attempt a face-to-face visit with the alleged victim within 24 hours of receiving the report.
Priority 2	Report alleges the victim is abused, neglected, or exploited, and is at risk of serious harm. Caseworker must attempt a face-to-face visit with the alleged victim within three calendar days of receiving the report.
Priority 3	Report alleges the victim is in a state of abuse or neglect. The caseworker must attempt a face-to-face visit with the alleged victim within seven calendar days of receiving the report.
Priority 4	Report only alleges exploitation when there is no danger of imminent impoverishment or deprivation of basic needs. The caseworker must attempt a face-to-face visit with the alleged victim within 14 calendar days of receiving the report.

When maltreatment or self-neglect is validated, APS assesses the risk of recurrence of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. Based on the victim's degree of risk, needs, and resources, APS may provide or arrange for a broad range of services to alleviate abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. APS clients may get short-term help with shelter, minor home repairs, food,

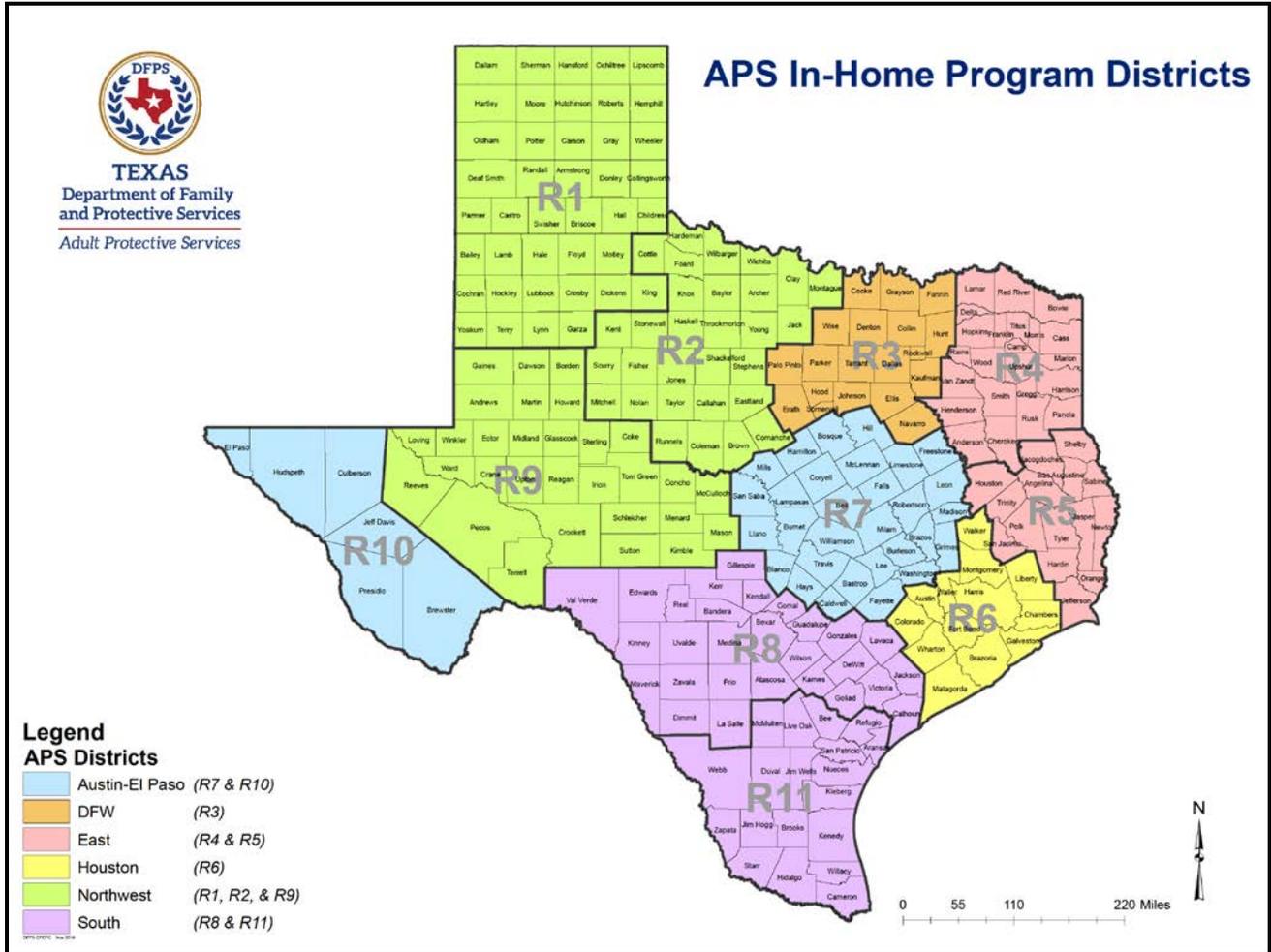
medication, transportation, home cleaning, restoration of utilities, money management, medical or mental health assessments, or services including referrals to HHSC Guardianship Program, or other legal intervention.

Administration

APS is organized into six Districts, which are comprised of 11 Regions (see **Figure 1** below). This structure supports efficient administration, equalized support for staff throughout the state, and effective delivery of services to clients with the program resources available.

- Houston District (Houston and surrounding counties)
- Dallas/Fort Worth or DFW District (Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and surrounding counties)
- Northwest District (Three regions that include Lubbock, Midland, Abilene, and multiple rural areas in North West Texas)
- Austin-El Paso District (Two regions that include Austin and surrounding counties, and El Paso and surrounding counties to the east)
- East Central District (Two regions that include Beaumont, Tyler, and much of east Texas)
- South District (Two regions that include San Antonio and surrounding counties, Corpus Christi area, and the Rio Grande Valley and surrounding counties)

Figure 1: APS In-Home Program Districts and Regions



Program Need and Services

Statistics in **Table 1**¹ help describe the need for APS services in the state. Table 1 provides the most recent data year available (FY 2019) going back five years to FY 2014, the percentage change over the 5 years, and a 10-year trend line. While important, historical data and year-to-year comparisons can hide longer-term trends.

¹Data source for all statistics in table, unless otherwise noted, are the DFPS Online Data Book, APS section, which can be found at: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/

Table 1: Selected APS Statistics FY 2014 - FY 2019

Program Need	FY 2014	FY 2019	% Change	FY 14-FY 19
Texas population 65+ ²	3,067,192	3,750,939	22.3%	
Texas population 18-64 with a disability ¹	1,660,357	1,745,240	5.1%	
Total Texas population served by APS	4,727,549	5,496,179	16.3%	
APS intakes ³	103,240	117,073	13.4%	
Clients who had an investigation close, then a new one open in the same year ("recidivist" clients) ⁴	12,553	14,875	18.5%	
"Recidivism" rate (recidivist clients as a % of clients with an investigation open during the year) ³	15.9%	15.4%	-3.1%	
Investigations	FY 2014	FY 2019	% Change	FY 14-FY 19
Investigations completed (total alleged victims) ⁵	81,681	85,047	4.1%	
Clients with an investigation open during the year ³	78,921	96,586	22.4%	
Validated victims ⁶	54,731	51,429	-6.0%	
Validation rate (validated victims as % of alleged victims) ⁵	67.0%	60.5%	-9.8%	
Services	FY 2015	FY 2019	% Change	FY 14-FY 19
Clients with a service stage that closed ⁷	29,154	36,965	26.8%	
Clients with a service stage that closed as a % of clients ⁶	37.3%	43.5%	16.6%	

² http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Populations_at_Risk.asp. These percentages may underestimate population increase due to changes in estimation methods in FY 2016.

³ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Intakes/Priority.asp

⁴ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Outcomes/Recidivism.asp

⁵ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Investigations/Activity.asp

⁶ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Investigations/Victims.asp

⁷ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Services/Activity.asp.

Service stage data for FY 2015 to the present cannot be compared to prior years due to changes in case documentation systems. As of FY 2015, cases with services provided during the investigation may not have a separate service stage.

Discussion

Population

As shown in **Table 1**, the estimated population eligible to be served by APS in FY 2019 is 5.5 million, an increase of 16% over FY 2014. Over two-thirds of this population is comprised of adults who are age 65 and older (3.7 million); the remainder is adults who are age 18 to 64 with disabilities (1.7 million). From FY 2014 to FY 2019, estimates increased by about 22% for those 65 and older and 5% for those 18 to 64 with disabilities.

The estimated population served by APS rises at a gradually increasing rate every year; the growth rate over the most recent data year (FY 2018 to FY 2019) was 3.5%, as seen below:

Table 2: Population Eligible to be Served by APS

Annual Increase FY 2018 – FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019	% Change
Texas population 65+	3,603,423	3,750,939	4.1%
Texas population 18-64 w/a disability	1,705,903	1,745,240	2.3%
Total Texas population served by APS	5,309,326	5,496,179	3.5%

Intakes

As shown in **Table 1**, APS had 117,073 intakes in FY 2019. An increase of about 13% from FY 2014 to FY 2019, trailing the 16% growth seen in estimated population served. Typically, intakes rise at a gradual pace from year to year, tracking population growth. From FY 2014 to FY 2019, intakes increased on average 2.6% annually.

Changes in the program environment can affect the number of intakes. For example, in FY 2015, intakes increased above the normal annual rate of increase in coastal, north central, and central Texas, areas with record-breaking storms and flooding in that year. Intakes declined in these regions in FY 2016, then returned to a normal rate of increase. The disruption was enough to impact the statewide intake trend, as can be seen in the line graphic for APS Intakes on **Table 1**.

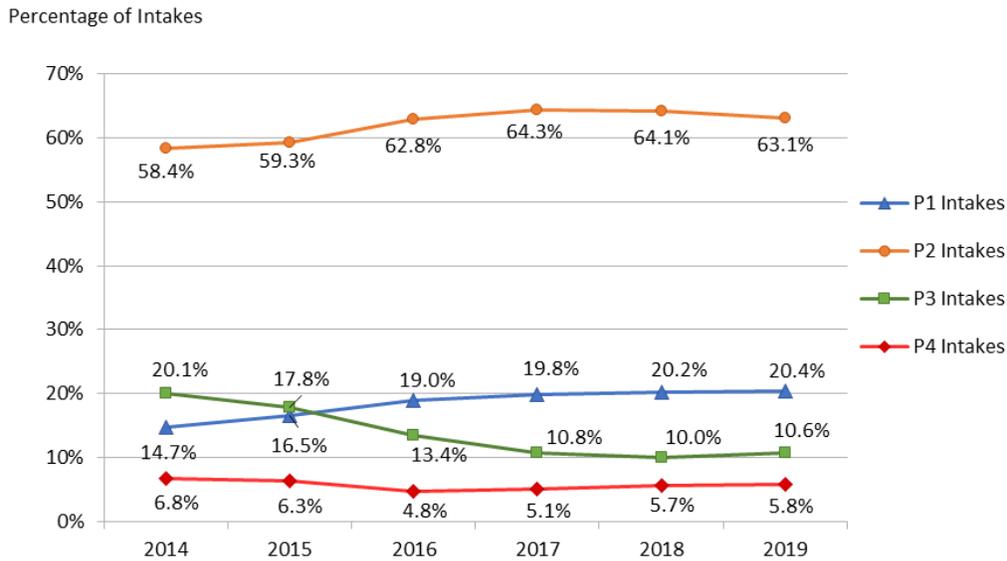
In the most recent data year (FY 2018 to FY 2019), the rate of growth in intakes slowed to 0.4% as compares to the increase in the estimated APS-eligible population (3.5%), as shown below:

Table 3: Population Eligible to be Served by APS Relative to Intakes

Annual Increase FY 2018 – FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019	% Change
Total Texas population served by APS	5,309,326	5,496,179	3.5%
APS intakes	116,578	117,073	0.4%

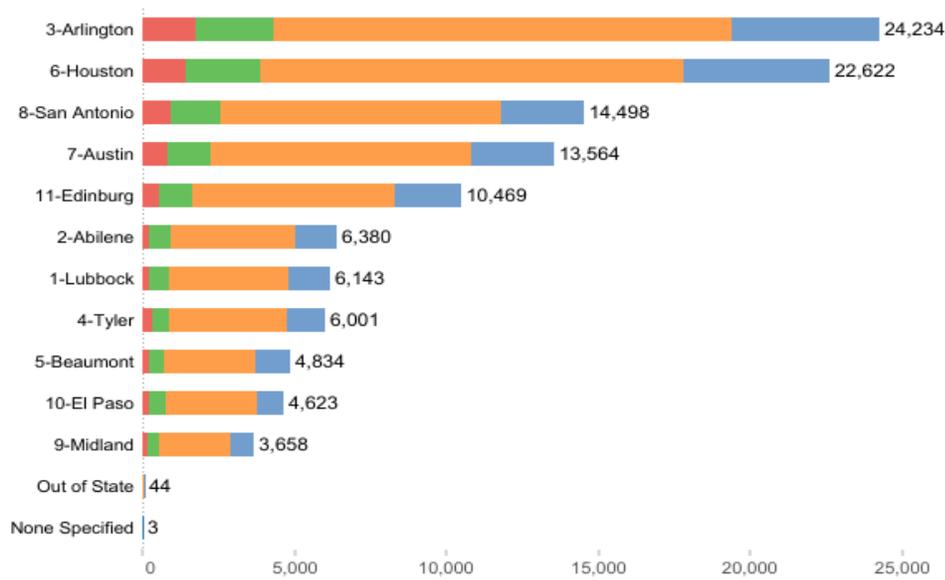
The great majority of intakes are either Priority 1 or Priority 2. As seen in **Figure 2**, the number and percentage of intakes that are Priority 1 or Priority 2 increased steadily, then stabilized from 2014 to 2019. The number of intakes varies widely across the state, reflecting relative size of populations, yet the distribution of priority levels is similar across regions, as shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 2: APS Intakes by Priority, FY 2015 – FY 2019 ⁸



⁸ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Intakes/Priority.asp

Figure 3: APS Intakes by Priority, by Region FY 2019⁹



Recidivism

“Recidivism” in this document refer to when a client from a past APS case becomes a client in a new APS case. APS identifies recidivistic cases as those in which an alleged victim becomes involved in more than one investigation within a 12-month period. As shown in **Table 1**, the recidivism rate was 15.4% in FY 2019, a slight decline from 15.9% in FY 2014.

The recidivism rate varies little and is strongly influenced by relative change in intakes and investigations completed. A slight increase, decrease, then recovery in recidivism is visible in the line graphs for recidivist clients and recidivism rate on **Table 1**. This pattern resulted from decline, recovery, then stabilization in investigations completed, occurring with ongoing annual increases in intakes.

Investigations

As shown in **Table 1**, APS completed 85,047 investigations in FY 2019, 4% higher than in FY 2014. However, intakes rose over three times as quickly (13%). During the period, the number of caseworkers declined by nearly 5% and caseloads increased over 9%. As a result of these factors, the number of clients with an investigation open increased by 22% from FY 2014 to FY 2019. The relationships among these program characteristics are visible in the line graphs on **Table 1**. The decrease in caseworkers and increase in caseloads from FY 2014 to FY 2016, which contributed to these trends in investigations open and completed, are visible in the line graphs in **Table 6** on page 19.

⁹ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Adult_Protective_Services/Intakes/Priority.asp

As seen in **Table 4** below, over the most recent data year (FY 2018 to FY 2019) the numbers of investigations completed and clients with a case open during the year have become relatively stable (increases of 0.7% and 1.3%, respectively), due in part to a slowing of the annual increase in intakes (0.4%). Also contributing to this stability are an increase in caseworkers and decrease in caseworker turnover (discussed in the **Program Resources** section).

Table 4: Number of Intakes, Investigations, and Clients

Annual Increase FY 2018 – FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019	% Change
APS Intakes	116,578	117,073	0.4%
Investigations Completed	84,439	85,047	0.7%
Clients with an open investigation	95,388	96,586	1.3%

As shown in **Table 1**, in FY 2019, 51,429 victims were validated by APS investigations, a 6% decrease from 54,731 validated victims in FY 2014. The validation rate decreased from 67% to 60.5% during the same period, a 10% change. The number of validated victims and the validation rate tend to rise and fall from year to year, following trends in intakes and investigations completed, in a manner similar to trends in recidivist clients and the recidivism rate.

Services

As shown in **Table 1**, 36,965 clients received some type of service in conjunction with a case that closed during FY 2019. This represents 43.5% of all clients with a closed investigation that year, including 71.9% of validated victims. Due to procedural and information system changes, service stage data for FY 2015 and later years cannot be compared to data for prior years. Under the case practice model introduced in FY 2015, services may be recorded during the investigation stage of a case, as well as during the service stage. This means that the number of clients with a service stage understates the number of clients receiving services.

As shown in **Table 1**, from FY 2015 to FY 2019, the number of clients with a service stage that closed during a given year increased by nearly 27% and the percentage of all clients who had a service stage close increased by nearly 17%. Both indicators increased from FY 2018 to FY 2019:

Table 5: Number of Clients with a Closed Case Relative to All Clients

Annual Increase FY 2018 – FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019	% Change
Number of clients with a closed service stage	34,902	36,965	5.9%
Percentage of all clients	41.3%	43.5%	5.2%

Program Resources

Resources critical to APS service delivery include the size of the program’s staff, particularly caseworkers, funds that support staffing, and funds available for the purchase of client services. **Figure 4** gives a fiscal overview of APS resources in FY 2019, summarizing these key program resources.

As shown in **Figure 4**, as of August 31, 2019, 512 caseworkers worked for APS. Entry level monthly salary for caseworkers was \$3,498. Projected expenditures for FY 2019 are \$9,711,818 for Purchased Client Services and \$59,218,976 for total APS expenditures. Expenses for FY 2019 are still accruing.

Figure 4: APS Fiscal Overview, FY 2019^{10, 11, 12}



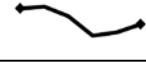
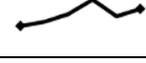
¹⁰ On Aug. 31, 2019

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Employee_Statistics/APS/Staff_Demographics.asp

¹¹ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Finance/Program_Summaries.asp

¹² FY 19 \$9,515,602 PCS expenditures and \$58,631,767 total APS expenditures as of August 31, 2020, per August 2020 Monthly Financial Report, Schedule 1b. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Budget_and_Finance/Budget_Reports/FY20/default.asp

Table 6: APS Staff Resources FY 2014 - FY 2019

Staffing	FY 2014	FY 2019	% Change	FY 14-FY 19
Caseworkers ¹³	538	512	-4.8%	
Average daily caseload ¹⁴	29.4	32.2	9.5%	
Caseworker turnover ¹⁵	25.2%	20.7%	-17.9%	

As shown in **Table 6**, with 512 APS caseworkers in FY 2019, the average number of cases assigned to each caseworker each day, also known as the average daily caseload, was 32.2 and the turnover rate was 20.7%. As noted previously (**Table 1** and **Discussion**), in the five years from FY 2014 to FY 2019 there were substantial increases in both the estimated population served by APS (16%) and APS intakes (13%). Over the same period, as shown in **Table 6**, the number of caseworkers decreased by nearly 5%, average daily caseload increased by nearly 10%, and turnover decreased by 18%. As discussed earlier under **Investigations**, year-to-year trends in caseworkers, caseloads, and turnover contributed to changes in numbers of investigations completed, validated victims and recidivist victims, as well as recidivism and validation rates.

Recent changes in numbers of caseworkers, caseloads, and turnover have moderated longer term trends. The number of caseworkers began to increase, rising to 498 in 2018 and 512 in FY 2019, shown in the table below. Average daily caseloads increased slightly from 31.0 in FY 2018 to 32.2 in FY 2019, as shown in **Table 7** below. Finally, caseworker turnover decreased from 25.2% in FY 2018 and 20.7% in FY 2019, as shown in **Table 7** below.

Table 7: Number of Caseworkers, Caseloads and Turnover

Annual Change FY 2018 – 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019	% Change
Caseworkers	498	512	2.8%
Average daily caseload	31.0	32.2	3.9%
Caseworker turnover	25.2%	20.7%	-17.9%

¹³ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Employee_Statistics/APS/Caseload.asp

¹⁴ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Employee_Statistics/APS/Caseload.asp

¹⁵ http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Employee_Statistics/APS/Staff_Turnover.asp

Training and Development

Training for APS uses blended learning, which combines computer-based training, hands-on learning, and classroom time. New caseworkers are provided with comprehensive training, allowing them to handle a limited caseload within a few months of hire and a full caseload one month after that. In addition, DFPS provides new APS caseworkers with ongoing opportunities to expand their skills and knowledge through regional trainings, the annual APS conference, and ad hoc development trainings to address specific needs. APS regularly seeks feedback on the type of training that would be beneficial for staff. On an annual basis, all employees can give feedback on training through a strategic planning survey. The evaluation for the annual APS Conference, which is attended by many staff, also includes a question about what additional training is needed.

Coordination with Partners

The task of protecting vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation, cannot be done by APS alone. APS coordinates with numerous state and local partners to conduct investigations and provide protective services. These partners include but are not limited to law enforcement, the judicial system, forensic injury assessment partners, medical and mental health care and assessment providers, residential and home care service providers, and the Health and Human Services Commission.

Public and Partner Education

Public awareness of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation is also critical. Because of this, APS partners with the DFPS Faith Based and Community Engagement division to conduct public awareness campaigns, including

- [“It’s Everyone’s Business,”](#)
- “If It’s Not Your Money, It’s a Crime” in October, and
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June.

APS must work with DFPS community engagement staff to inform and educate the public and partner organizations through local workshops, trainings, and conferences. The Texas Partners for Adult Protective Services nonprofit and local volunteer boards and coalitions around the state assist in awareness-raising activities, fundraising, and resource development for supplies and other assistance to APS clients. Moreover, these organizations assist with APS staff recognition and appreciation events.

Mission, Vision, and Values

APS developed its mission, vision, and core values to reflect and help guide APS services, organization, and management. Protecting older adults and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation is our vision and our main goal.

SWOT Analysis

Since 2017, APS has evaluated the current effectiveness of APS and continuing to implement the strategic plan by conducting an annual analysis of the division's strengths and weaknesses. APS utilizes a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of all APS staff across the state to gather this information. The SWOT framework helps organizations identify internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats to achieving its goals.

Once the SWOT analysis feedback is received, a meeting is held with APS leadership, comprised of District Directors, State Office Management, and the APS Associate Commissioner, to further inform a review of APS as a division. In 2020, all APS staff were invited to participate in a webinar where the Associate Commissioner and State Office Management presented the SWOT analysis results and answered questions from staff. The SWOT analysis and the complementary reviews were designed to refine organizational strategies and objectives toward strategic plan goals.

The objective for this analysis was to develop information and insights that will help APS to:

- Identify and understand issues affecting caseworkers
- Set or reaffirm APS strategic goals
- Identify the issues or problems APS intends to change
- Create an action plan to guide APS efforts over the next 5 years

In August 2020, APS staff across the state were sent an anonymous survey collecting data on APS strengths and weaknesses. The survey gathered respondent perceptions and ideas on APS' current strengths and weaknesses. 311 of approximately 750 APS staff responded to the survey for a response rate of about 41%. The response rate is high enough to suggest that the results are representative of the views of the target population of the state.

Given that this year's SWOT analysis was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, APS included a question on the subject. Given that DFPS is completing an evaluation on the overall agency response to COVID-19, APS wished to ask a question to supplant and not overlap with the agency evaluation. As such, staff were queried on how the program leadership was communicating during the pandemic.

The results were summarized in aggregate form and reviewed and analyzed during a strategic planning meeting in September 2020. Prior to the strategic planning meeting, the survey results and comments were shared with meeting participants. High level themes identified in the survey results and the review session are summarized in italics in the **Figure 5** (see APS 2020 SWOT Themes) and discussed in the following pages.

After the survey results were organized into categories, APS leadership engaged in a planning meeting to identify accomplishments and to refine the objectives and strategies according to changes and progress in the past year. Opportunities and threats were also identified. The goals were refined and updated to reflect feedback received in the SWOT as well as current conditions.

The feedback from the 2020 all-staff survey added to our understanding of APS' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, a review of progress since our first strategic plan, adopted in 2017, has highlighted new insights and lessons that inform our current strategic plan. What follows is a summary of our updated analysis, reflecting on what we have learned in the past year, and helping our leadership develop and implement plans to execute strategies in the upcoming FY 2021.

In the last two years, scores on the SWOT have improved in every area that is assessed. The three areas with the most improvement with the percentage improvement are:

- APS staff morale is positive increased by 37%
- My workload is management increased by 35%
- APS salaries are competitive with similar jobs increased by 32%.

Although APS takes pride in the improvements in scores, it is important to note that staff responses were not unanimous. Staff dissent in some areas also increased when we look at responses from two years ago. For example, the percentage of staff who disagreed with the following statements remained high:

- APS salaries are competitive with similar jobs – 41% of staff disagreed
- Community resources are sufficient for APS clients – 26% of staff disagreed
- APS staff morale is positive – 16% of staff disagreed.

To be as successful as possible, it is important that APS not only monitor the significant achievement of the program in the last two years but also the voices of staff who continue to identify the challenges they and the program must face.

In the analysis below, we explain the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in this year's SWOT analysis. In addition to including the trends, we also provide statements from staff (provided anonymously) in each category.

Figure 5: APS 2020 SWOT Themes



What are Strengths of the APS Program?

Strengths are internal characteristics that are unique, special, highly valued, and positive. Something we can control. In 2020, three new strengths were recognized, as reflected in italics above:

- Proud to work for APS
- APS staff work together
- APS visible to stakeholders
- Client focused
- Passionate, resilient, and dedicated staff
- APS policy

Results of the 2020 staff survey support the view that among APS' greatest strengths are its pride, its focus on clients, resilience, and dedication to the mission.

Statement	Percent of staff agreement
I am proud to work for APS.	94%

APS is focused on its clients.	93%
APS staff are resilient.	92%
APS staff are dedicated to the APS mission.	91%
APS staff are passionate.	88%
APS staff work together toward achieving our common goals.	88%

Staff scored other categories high as well. The vast majority of staff also agreed that APS has an innovative casework practice model (82%) and that APS policy provides sufficient guidance to staff. Moreover, 84% of staff agreed with the following statement: I have the training needed to perform my job to the best of my ability.

Strength Statement

I am proud to work for an agency that is concerned not only about the clients but me as well.

What are weaknesses that the APS In-Home Program has?

Weaknesses are internal challenges that we can control. Weaknesses limit APS from achieving our mission and goals. Compared to the previous year, the percentage of staff disagreement with statements on the SWOT decreased significantly. While this year’s observations regarding APS weaknesses continued to be focused on resource challenges, these perceptions were less universal than they were in 2019. Training and turnover continue to be top concerns among the staff.

Statement	Percent of staff disagreement
APS salaries are competitive with similar jobs.	41%
Community resources are sufficient for APS clients.	26%
APS staff morale is positive.	16%
The model APS uses to train new staff meets programmatic needs.	15%
APS staff turnover affects the quality of my work.	15%

Weakness Statement

Administrative staff need to have some type of pay increase. They are always left out and that brings morale down. Other state agencies have higher salaries for the same/similar positions. There should be some type of ladder for admins, even if it's in increments of 3-4 years.

What are Opportunities for APS In-Home Program?

Opportunities are external situations/things that may enhance growth and improved service. Although we cannot control them and they may be time-sensitive, opportunities inform leaders on circumstances that make action possible. Opportunities allow leaders to consider ways to leverage existing structures for support to the division.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been catastrophic with so many lives lost, creating disconnection in our society and among our workers. Like all organizations that serve the public, APS was forced to make changes to our practices, to rely on technology more than ever before to make sure that our clients were safe, to coordinate services, and also to keep our team as connected as possible. In our effort to grapple with this unprecedented phenomenon, we stumbled onto some potential improvements in the way we do business.

Opportunities Statement

Allow the ability to complete Initial Face to Face interviews by phone that currently exists under COVID to continue after the pandemic unless the allegations actually warrant direct face to face contact due to alleged unsafe conditions. This cuts down on time and money spent driving (and finding nobody home as well), facilitates same-time documentation and allows for quick follow up with other collaterals, and lowers the chance of vehicle accidents on the road.

What Threats Face the APS In-Home Program?

Threats are external situations/things that may challenge our ability to impact change. We cannot control them but hope to avoid them or lessen their impact. Commonly identified concerns from the SWOT analysis pertained to the increased workload of complex cases or financial exploitation cases as well as the size of the program to address a growing elderly population.

Other threats identified include:

- Lack of appropriate and adequate funding
- Lack of staff resources
- Political and legislative support

Threat Statement

Teams that provide services and separated exploitation teams to allow more efficient timeframes for investigations and helping those that are more in need of immediate services.

COVID-19 Response

Beginning in March 2020, APS joined other public service organizations in quickly changing our practices in response to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. APS adjusted protocols for face-to-face visits with clients to ensure the safety of our clients and of our staff. APS wished to learn more about how these changes were communicated to staff. APS utilized emails, webinars, and meetings to communicate to frontline staff on how to adjust their practices during COVID-19. Some changes in practice were communicated from State Office to every APS staff member through email broadcasts. In some instances, information was disseminated from leadership to frontline staff through supervisors. APS also began hosting monthly webinars where all staff could hear from and ask questions directly of APS leadership.

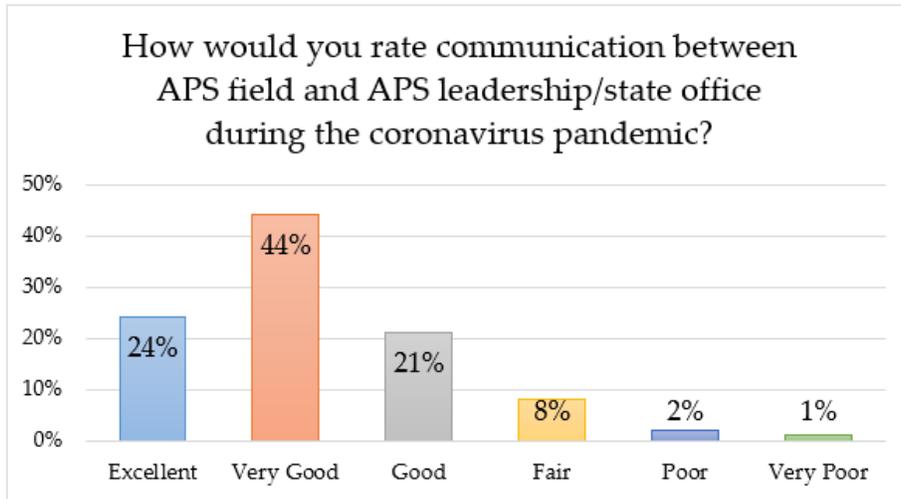
The following questions were included on the SWOT analysis:

1. How could communication between APS State Office and Field be improved as we continue to deal with the pandemic?
2. How would you rate communication between APS field and APS leadership/state office during the coronavirus pandemic?

The first question was open-ended, allowing for the sharing of unique problems and creative solutions. The responses were then coded into categories so that APS could identify trends. 131 staff opted to respond to his question. A plurality of the comments (35) were positive, with staff expressing affect for the current practices adopted by APS leadership. 28 comments pertained to the frequency of communications, with most staff requesting more regular communications or for more timely communication during the pandemic. 25 comments related to consistency, with staff expressing that communications from state office were not on the same page as field leadership or with other departments at DFPS during the pandemic. 21 comments called for clearer and/or more concise communication during the pandemic.

The second question allowed respondents to rate communication between APS field and APS leadership/state office on a five-point scale. As demonstrated in **Figure 6** below, a clear majority of staff rated communication during this time positively (89%), with 24% responding Excellent, 44% responding Very Good, and 21% responding Good. Only 11 percent total rates communication as Fair (8%), Poor (2%), or Very Poor (1%).

Figure 6: APS Ratings of Communication during COVID-19 Pandemic



More can always be done to enhance communication and to be sure that staff receive and understand important messaging, but it is heartening to see that most staff were satisfied with the level of communication during this time when information was so critical.

SWOT and the Strategic Plan Review

The SWOT was reviewed on two occasions: the APS Strategic Planning Meeting with State Office Leadership and District Directors, and all APS staff were invited to participate in a webinar. During the discussion, priority topics and strategies were identified for how APS can capitalize on program strengths, overcome program weaknesses, develop opportunities, and counter threats to the program.

Accomplishments

In the strategic planning session held in September 2020, APS leadership discussed accomplishments that were achieved from September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020. Some accomplishments are directly related to the strategic plan and some represent victories achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic. The insights below demonstrate that APS is dedicated to continually improving services for clients, even in the face of a pandemic. They responded to the global crisis with creativity and ingenuity.

Accomplishments in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Statewide Accomplishments

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged APS to do their job of seeing and assisting clients in a different way. A pandemic-specific policy was released quickly to provide guidance on

conducting face-to-face visits with clients in an effort keep clients and staff safe and healthy. This culminated in a low incidence of affected staff. Moreover, APS cut through red tape to quickly purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline staff to safely visit with clients.

APS state office exhibited leadership on the national stage through regular communication with Texas' counterparts across the country through the National Adult Protective Services Association and participated in webinars to share with other state APS programs the practices that were employed in Texas.

In response to staff feedback, APS updated policy to provide more clarity on how to work safely during the pandemic. Through case readings targeted at evaluating safety measures during the pandemic, APS continues to monitor the safety of clients and provide quality assurance.

Statewide, APS leadership at state office dedicated significant resources to communicating with staff across the state. In addition to sending guidance on policy, procedure and on staying safe during the pandemic frequently, APS leadership hosts a webinar on a monthly basis to provide updates to all staff and to answer questions. Because of this effort, 89% of staff rated communication between APS field and APS leadership as good, very good, or excellent.

As caseworkers shifted to more virtual communication with clients, some staff members reported that they were better able to coordinate and provide quality services due to spending less time traveling.

Although caseworkers are already mobile, the inability to hold in-person meetings meant that District Directors and supervisors had to hone their use of technology and come up with creative ways to communicate with and appreciate staff. Some APS Districts cover large geographic segments of the state, and technology helped to bridge the gap in these areas, enabling District Directors to engage with staff more easily than before by attending virtual meetings without having to travel hundreds of miles.

APS was innovative in showing staff appreciation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the state, staff appreciation parades provided staff with the opportunity to drive by offices and visit with leadership from a safe distance, picking up needed supplies and materials for working remotely and safely during the pandemic. Staff also facilitated staff parades to celebrate important milestones, such as retirements.

We'd like to highlight two staff who were particularly innovative in their approach to provide services during the coronavirus pandemic. One caseworker was conducting a visit with a client on their porch. When the client seemed to be disoriented, the worker called for an ambulance, pulled her lawn chair from the back of her SUV and waited at a safe distance with the client until EMS arrived. By doing so she was able to safely assist the client and keep herself safe in a socially distant manner. Another worker heard that Meals on Wheels was struggling to deliver meals to clients in her area due to COVID-19. In between seeing her own APS clients, she volunteered to assist Meals on Wheels by delivering the meals that our clients rely on.

District-Level Accomplishments

District Directors maintained a presence with staff through phone calls, participation in virtual meetings, and when it was safe, traveling to offices across the state to be available to staff. District Directors had a presence in unit meetings, which was less common than prior to the pandemic.

The **East District** provided support to staff by making sure cases were covered when APS caseworkers could not work due to illness or caring for family members who were ill. In addition, APS leadership provided guidance to staff on interpreting and applying new policies and procedures in place during the pandemic.

Staff in the **Dallas/Fort Worth District** stay sharp and enhance their skills through a virtual book club, where participants share articles on leadership and best practices for working remotely and onboarding staff. In addition, district leadership participates in unit meetings and started the practice of holding appreciation parades to bring staff together safely.

In addition, communication with community partners and stakeholders in the **Houston area** was not interrupted by the pandemic. Meetings and conversations were held online. In addition, they are assisting stakeholders with producing a podcast on elder abuse. Raising awareness of elder abuse is critical to ensuring that individuals who need help or know someone who does, possess the tools and knowledge to access it.

In the **South District**, Staff Empowerment Sessions were held virtually, which kept staff connected to their leadership. Communication between leadership and frontline staff was enhanced through the use of technology, and the District Director was able to have a greater presence than before, also enhancing staff accountability.

In the **Northwest District**, the use of virtual meetings enabled APS leadership to connect with staff at all levels as well as stakeholders. Because of this, APS volunteer boards did not miss a beat, continuing to meet with and support caseworkers. These efforts carried over to wellness activities, with staff “walking across Texas.” Staff kept track of their mileage on a map of Texas and then sent a picture of the town where they virtually walked. The district also used a buddy system to check on each other during the pandemic. Moreover, the district’s Casework Efficiency Workgroup continued to meet and move forward with the use of virtual technology.

Leadership of the **Austin/El Paso District** participated in frequent huddles with staff and utilized technology to improve communication with staff across the district. When it was safe to do so, travel to offices resumed to have a presence and give staff the opportunity to provide input.

Strategic Plan Accomplishments

- Evaluated the Casework Practice Model for current and future workforce needs has shifted to making enhancements to the IMPACT case management system to ensure that the tools that APS caseworkers use will reflect the changes made in the model.

- Through an intensive review of training available for APS caseworkers and supervisors, identified some opportunities to improve training.
- Evaluated the strengths and weakness of current workforce practices to promote competency, resilience, and retention, including the New Caseworker Productivity Pilot and mentorship program.
- Launched a national certification adult protective services program for a select group of 18 experienced staff to develop well-trained professionals who will improve the safety and independence of older and/or vulnerable adults, and persons with disabilities who are victims of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation.
- Initiating a supervisor mentor program that pairs a new supervisor with a more tenured supervisor or director to help them develop leadership skills.
- Completed a staff survey to assess the relationship between state office and the field
- Reinstated monthly briefings with the DFPS executive team to highlight the good work of APS
- To build operational capacity, APS created a new position called a District Operations Specialist (DOS) to improve operations in the district level.
- Developed and implemented processes to monitor operating budgets including PCS expenditures.
- Created white papers on numerous topics, such as the Employee Misconduct Registry, to enhance staff and stakeholder understanding of APS.
- Awarded a grant from the Administration for Community Living to assist DFPS with improving its Financial Exploitation investigations, interventions and client services.
- Developed a recruitment toolkit to serve as guidance when APS attends employment fairs or other community events where potential job applicants may be.
- Documented grant opportunities that may benefit APS.

Objectives and Strategies Achieved

In FY 2017-2018, APS staff achieved all the strategies toward the first goal and first objective. The first goal was for Client Outcomes to improve practices and processes for better client outcomes, while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness. The first objective was to address CLEAR workgroup's efficient and streamlined recommendations to contribute to better client outcomes by FY 2020. APS achieved all four strategies under this goal and objective:

- **Strategy 1.1.1:** Release the CLEAR workgroup report with recommendations to APS statewide.
- **Strategy 1.1.2:** Evaluate and re-charter the CLEAR and Intensive Case Services work group to monitor and coordinate progress, an audience for policy changes, and vetting mechanism for ongoing changes.
- **Strategy 1.1.3:** Document the impact of workers and supervisors not following protocol.
- **Strategy 1.1.4:** Reinforce and identify existing policies that allow for efficient and productive casework.

APS also completed Strategy 1.3.1, an evaluation of the casework practice model for workforce needs. APS conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis to evaluate the SHIELD casework practice model that had been in effect since 2014. After reviewing the weaknesses of SHIELD, a workgroup formulated a plan to move from a multi-stage practice model to a single stage practice model in order to streamline practices and save staff time.

Objective 1.3: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the APS casework practice model to promote efficient and consistent casework practice by FY 2022.

Strategy 1.3.1: Evaluate the APS casework practice model for current and future workforce needs.

Strategy 1.4.1 was also achieved. APS completed a literature review of national studies on caseloads for adult protective services. Unfortunately, this review yielded limited results and had to be expanded to include studies of other fields, including Child Protective Services and Criminal Justice, which have limited applicability to the work of APS.

Objective 1.4: Explore opportunities for an optimal workload to provide quality client services and outcomes by FY 2024.

Strategy 1.4.1: Complete a literature review on national studies on adult protective caseloads, as part of full needs assessment.

The first strategy under Goal 2: Workforce was achieved as well. APS identified several ways to recognize and reward staff for exceptional case practice at the district level as well as at the state level. APS gathered feedback from every district to learn about existing ways that staff are recognized for high-quality work. After this feedback was gathered, it was sent to all District Directors as a way to share effective practices around the state. In addition, staff recognized at the DFPS Commissioner Awards Ceremony also receive recognition from the APS Associate Commissioner, Director of Field, and Director of Policy and Performance.

- **Strategy 2.1.1:** Assess current recognition programs and opportunities.

In addition, the first strategy under Objective 2.2 was achieved. APS made a catalog of all training tools for APS staff, including the certification process. APS also sent a survey to all staff, specific to each position type, to inquire about training effectiveness and to gather suggestions for improving training options.

- **Strategy 2.2.1:** Assess the training tools available that help caseworkers retain and execute excellent model casework practice.

APS also achieved part of the Goal 3: Teamwork, the purpose of which is to strengthen an environment that facilitates teamwork and communication around the APS mission and vision. APS was able to accomplish Strategy 3.1.1

- **Strategy 3.1.1:** Assess the relationship between state office and the field using a staff survey on communication and teamwork across APS.

APS continues to work on the remaining goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the plan.

Strategic Plan

State office staff utilized repeated themes in the surveys, review meetings, and other discussions throughout the strategic planning process to draft the FY2021 APS Strategic Plan.

In March 2020, APS District Directors and State Office leadership met for two days. Part of this meeting included the provision of updates on the strategic plan as well as possible changes needed to the strategic plan.

In September 2020, APS District Directors and State Office leadership convened for a strategic planning meeting, which was held over two days. On the first day, the group reviewed the SWOT Analysis results as well as to discuss progress of the strategic planning goals, objectives, and strategies. On a second day, the group discussed possible changes needed to the objectives and strategies under existing goals.

The new FY2021 APS Strategic Plan reformulates APS goals, objectives, and strategies to reflect current conditions and priorities. The theme of the strategic plan is to work together as a unified team to achieve efficient quality casework, leading to better outcomes. APS realizes that the program's goals are large and will require several years to achieve. Some of the objectives and strategies that are more dependent on face-to-face collaboration were extended due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Four goals have been established which are responsive to these recognized priorities:

- Goal 1 targets client outcomes.
- Goal 2 relates to statewide practice, program needs, and implementing improvements.

- Goal 3 fosters teamwork within APS.
- Goal 4 is focused on APS relationships with internal and external stakeholders, promoting APS to increase awareness, advocacy, and support.

All four goals relate to one another by cultivating collaboration within APS and communicating our vision.

Goal 1 Client Outcomes

Goal 1 is focused on clients and client outcomes. Its purpose is to enhance and leverage practices for better client outcomes, while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness.

APS created the Casework, Logical, Efficient, and Responsible (CLEAR) workgroup in 2017 to review policy, practice, and rule to identify efficiencies and areas of improvement. APS is identifying practices that can be streamlined or improved, and if necessary, APS is eliminating requirements and tasks that do not contribute to better client outcomes.

The first objective is to address the CLEAR workgroup's recommendations to improve efficiency without negatively impacting effectiveness. APS has released the CLEAR report and used it as a road map to make low or no cost changes. In FY 2018 the CLEAR workgroup decided to reconvene to work on an implementation plan and a strategy to communicate progress to all staff. Objective 1.3 was created as a result of the excellent work of Objective 1.1 has accomplished and assessed.

Objective 1.3 focuses on assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the APS casework practice model as a whole to improve efficient and consistent casework practice. This new objective was created to evaluate the current APS casework practice model for current and future workforce needs and implement those changes in the long-term future. It will evaluate how to manage APS with existing resources, assess other state's models, take into consideration timing, complete a risk analysis, and determine the correct model APS needs.

Another objective under this goal is focused on identifying and promoting efficient and coordinated casework best practices across the state. APS will utilize the existing regional Process Improvement Committee (PIC) as an avenue to solicit feedback and information on things that are working within the region. This feedback will be brought back to the State PIC in Austin for evaluation and dissemination through district PICs from across the state. One strategy within this objective (1.2.3) was removed. Although it was thought that the PIC could develop content and identify speakers for the APS Annual Conference, the group did not have the subject matter expertise to do so, and this function will be absorbed within APS State Office.

The last new section of this goal is Objective 1.4, which focuses on APS taking an in depth look into the APS caseload, specifically how many cases a caseworker should maintain at one time. Since there is no national standard number indicating what an adult protective services caseload should be nor is there a reliable or recent study APS will look into avenues to complete a study. During the last fiscal year, Objective 1.4 was expanded to assess the effect of the COVID-19

pandemic on the quality of APS services, APS training, and client outcomes (Strategy 1.4.2). The objective was also refined to allow for the continuous assessment, researching, and exploring of opportunities to enhance investigations and services (Strategy 1.4.3) as well as to assess crisis planning and response to determine whether procedures that are applied could be beneficial in everyday practice (Strategy 1.4.4).

Goal 2 Workforce

Goal 2 focuses on empowering APS staff to become highly trained, practiced, and motivated. This goal concentrates on caseworker needs and casework practice.

This goal centers on recognizing and rewarding exceptional casework across the state, as well as exploring and implementing best casework practices, and developing and maintaining efficient fieldwork processes across the state. APS staff will be empowered by proactively recognizing exceptional performance across the state and promoting those best practices. Two strategies related to a recognition program for the unique needs of the APS mobile workforce (Strategy 2.1.2) and to implement the new recognition plan across the state (Strategy 2.1.3) were moved to Objective 3.1.

An additional APS objective is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current workforce practices to promote competency, resiliency, and retention efforts. This includes reevaluating our training to ensure it meets current workforce needs. APS caseworkers are mobile and supervisors are managing multiple workers across the regions and districts. The APS program is changing, and the workforce is changing; training must adapt as well.

APS will reevaluate our current positions to make sure staff are well suited to respond to the needs of our clients. This goal ultimately focuses on the success of the APS program to train, retain, and empower our APS staff.

An objective was added to strengthen APS manager development and management proficiency in cultivating and developing staff. Through this objective, APS will assess strengths and weakness of APS management practices and identify best practices across the state for APS managers. In addition, a Supervisor Mentorship Program will be established. A manager's guide will be produced to assist managers with developing their staff.

During the FY 2019 strategic planning meeting there was a focus on recruitment efforts, APS leadership stressed a need to look at recruiting top candidates for positions across the state and maintaining those positions. The newest topic of discussion was about succession planning. APS leadership agreed collectively that succession planning should be in everyone's mind when making decisions and when managing their area.

Goal 3 Teamwork

Goal 3 is about strengthening an environment that facilitates teamwork and communication around the APS mission and vision.

The purpose of Objective 3.1 is to strengthen the relationship between state office and field staff by working together and fostering communication. The team assigned to complete objective 3.1 completed a statewide survey on APS teamwork. They received excellent feedback and completed a full analysis to guide their work on completing the additional strategies.

APS under the teamwork goal also conducted a statewide strengths and weaknesses survey and invited every APS employee to participate and offer feedback. After analyzing the results, APS assessed which areas the agency needs to focus on in order to promote statewide participation. The goal of feedback is to cultivate a collaborative and productive environment between all APS employees.

Promoting respectful camaraderie among APS staff and strengthening an environment that facilitates teamwork is a priority. APS will identify what districts do to promote cooperation and recognition, leverage useful best practices and develop resources that can be replicated across the state. Districts working together, as we have seen during the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, is what makes APS excel at developing strong staff teams and providing our clients with the services they need. Opportunities for districts to build relationships with other districts will also be pursued in order to further foster a collaborative environment. This objective was enhanced in the last year to include a recognition and communication program that addresses the unique needs of the APS mobile workforce and to implement an APS recognition plan across the state.

Another objective under this goal focuses on increasing APS influence and contribution at DFPS. APS will challenge itself to build relationship with programs and departments at DFPS and seek opportunities for executive involvement by positioning ourselves for visibility. APS also will promote APS efforts that may be of interest to other programs.

Through the last objective under this goal, APS will build and strengthen APS operations within the agency by assessing APS operational strengths and needs. The objective will focus on increasing budget/finance knowledge and awareness across APS to build internal capacity for strategic management. As well as, developing and implementing processes to monitor operating budgets including purchasing of services for clients.

Goal 4: Partnerships

Goal 4 addresses relationships with internal and external APS stakeholders, including the public, agency staff, partner agencies and organizations, the legislature, and others. Promote APS to increase awareness, advocacy and support

The program would like to promote APS and increase external awareness, advocacy and support of our clients. This goal is centered on empowering all APS staff to promote the APS In-Home program across the state.

The growth of the population served by APS, alongside financial needs of the program call for increased efforts to raise awareness of the APS program, our mission, populations served, and their needs. APS will develop a communication plan that creates a unified message to our

internal and external stakeholders. In addition, the communication plan will focus on outreach efforts to increase awareness and reporting of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

This strategy was enhanced in 2020 to respond to organizational changes made at DFPS, which moved the APS Community Engagement staff into created DFPS Faith Based and Community Engagement Department to serve all of DFPS.

To further that objective, APS will foster internal skills through the creation of a statewide APS Ambassador program. The purpose of an APS Ambassador program is to elevate staff and allow them to have the flexibility and confidence to promote the agency and mission. These Ambassadors will have training to ensure a unified message across the state and within APS. This will include training for staff in the field who routinely have contact with external stakeholders.

Another objective under this goal is to address the protective service needs of the growing population by maximizing existing and new resources, for example exploring Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding or grants for exploitation. This includes an assessment to evaluate the needs of the elder population and creating a comprehensive Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) based on the results. Along with working with internal and external stakeholders and promoting the benefit of APS, comes asking for the services and resources needed to protect the vulnerable adults of Texas.

A new objective was added to this goal that would result in a Year of APS, a coordinated effort to promote the APS program and to raise awareness of abuse, neglect, and exploitation across the state. Preparing for this initiative will require preparation for several years to build the necessary infrastructure, with updated promotional materials about APS and the establishment of a speaker's bureau to make speakers from Texas APS available at conferences to enhance professional communications. APS will develop a multi-tiered plan with a strategy for distributing materials and raising public awareness about APS.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1 Client Outcomes

Improve practices and processes for better client outcomes, while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness.

Objective 1.1: Address CLEAR workgroup's efficient and streamlined recommendations to contribute to better client outcomes by FY 2020. *Achieved*

Strategy 1.1.1: Release the CLEAR workgroup report with recommendations to APS statewide. *Achieved*

Strategy 1.1.2: Evaluate and re-charter the CLEAR and Intensive Case Services work group to monitor and coordinate progress, an audience for policy changes, and vetting mechanism for on-going changes. *Achieved*

Strategy 1.1.3: Document the impact of workers and supervisors not following protocol. *Achieved*

Strategy 1.1.4 Reinforce and identify existing policies that allow for efficient and productive casework. *Achieved*

Objective 1.2: Identify and promote efficient and coordinated casework best practices across the state by FY 2022.

Strategy 1.2.1: Re-charter the PIC with a focus on promoting best casework practices.

Strategy 1.2.2: Identify district best practices statewide, and champions within districts by recognizing their efforts, with an emphasis on those who can teach others statewide.

Strategy 1.2.3: Gather feedback from the regional Process Improvement Committee (PIC) meetings and create a forum at the statewide PIC to promote comradery among districts.

Strategy 1.2.4: Develop a plan for the PIC to disseminate the results and recommendations statewide.

Objective 1.3: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the APS casework practice model to promote efficient and consistent casework practice by FY 2022.

Strategy 1.3.1: Evaluate the APS casework practice model for current and future workforce needs.

Strategy 1.3.2: Assess the external resources needed to complete changes to the APS casework practice model regarding: IT, rule changes, MRS resources, policy, etc.

Strategy 1.3.3: Develop a long term casework practice transformation implementation plan.

Strategy 1.3.4: Implement changes needed to begin at the start of FY 2022, such as IT and rule changes, etc.

Objective 1.4: Explore opportunities for an optimal workload to provide quality client services and outcomes by FY 2024.

Strategy 1.4.1: Complete a literature review on national studies on adult protective caseloads, as part of full needs assessment. *Achieved*

Strategy 1.4.2: Assess Covid-19 and the effect it had on APS quality of services, APS training, and client outcomes.

Strategy 1.4.3 Continually assess, research and explore opportunities to enhance our ability to provide optimal investigations and services to clients.

Strategy 1.4.4 Assess crisis planning or response techniques to determine if procedures taken can be applied to APS in everyday practice.

Goal 2 Workforce

Empower APS staff to be highly trained, practiced and motivated.

Objective 2.1: Proactively recognize good performance across APS by FY 2020.

Strategy 2.1.1: Assess current recognition programs and opportunities. *Achieved*

Strategy 2.1.2: Design a recognition program that addresses the new unique needs of the APS mobile workforce. *Moving to 3.1*

Strategy 2.1.3: Implement the new APS recognition plan across the state. *Moving to 3.1*

Objective 2.2: Evaluate the strengths and weakness of current workforce practices to promote competency, resilience, and retention by FY 2024.

Strategy 2.2.1: Assess the training tools available that help caseworkers retain and execute excellent model casework practice. *Achieved*

Strategy 2.2.2: Assess the casework training model to meet our current workforce needs.

Strategy 2.2.3: Evaluate the role of each APS position for functionality and efficiency to match the needs of the program.

Strategy 2.2.4: Implement recommendations to training model.

Strategy 2.2.5: Evaluate APS pilot programs for effectiveness and expansion. Examples: APS Mentorship Program and Immediate Caseworker Productivity Pilot.

Objective 2.3: Strengthen Adult Protective Services manager development, and management proficiency in cultivating and developing staff, to support the workforce by Fiscal Year 2024.

Strategy 2.3.1: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of APS management characteristics and management practices to identify best practices and processes across the state for APS managers.

Strategy 2.3.2: Identify effective characteristics and tools of an APS manager successful at staff development.

Strategy 2.3.3: Develop an APS Supervisor Mentorship program and a Manager's Guide with best practices of management across the state for Program Administrators and Supervisors.

Strategy 2.3.4: Develop a profile of best practices for managers to cultivate and develop their staff.

Strategy 2.3.5: Implement Manager's Guide of best practices across the state.

Strategy 2.3.6: Implement management changes across the state for successful developing staff profile.

Goal 3 Teamwork

Strengthen and facilitate teamwork, morale and communication supporting the APS mission statewide.

Objective 3.1: Promote respectful comradery among APS statewide to create an environment that enhances morale, facilitates teamwork, and proactively recognizes performance by FY 2023.

Strategy 3.1.1: Assess the relationship between state office and the field using a staff survey on communication and teamwork across APS. *Achieved*

Strategy 3.1.2: Enhance the relationship between state office and the field by seeking opportunities for the field to provide feedback to APS state office and APS state office to provide feedback to the field.

Strategy 3.1.3: Increase and seek opportunities to build relationships between districts to facilitate teamwork.

Strategy 3.1.4: Create a recognition and communication program that addresses the unique needs of the APS mobile workforce.

Strategy 3.1.5: Implement the APS recognition plan across the state.

Objective 3.2: Increase APS impact and contribution at DFPS by FY 2025.

Strategy 3.2.1: Build relationships with DFPS programs, such as CPS, CPI, and DFPS Operations.

Strategy 3.2.2: Seek opportunities for executive involvement for APS to increase program visibility and impact.

Strategy 3.2.3: Promote APS best practices that may be valuable and beneficial to other DFPS programs.

Objective 3.3 Build and strengthen APS operations by 2025.

Strategy 3.3.1: Assess APS operational strengths and needs throughout the DFPS organization.

Strategy 3.3.2: Increase APS operational knowledge and awareness across APS to build internal capacity for strategic management.

Strategy 3.3.3: Develop and implement processes to monitor operating budgets including PCS expenditures. *Achieved*

Goal 4: Partnerships

Promote APS to increase awareness, advocacy and support.

Objective 4.1 Increase APS awareness and enhance APS partnership by 2025.

Strategy 4.1.1: Continually identify APS partners to develop and strengthen relationships to further the APS mission.

Strategy 4.1.2: Develop a system to enhance communication, increase knowledge, and raise awareness of ongoing efforts by APS across DFPS, specifically the Faith Based and Community Engagement department.

Strategy 4.1.3: Collaborate and build support with APS partners to achieve APS top priorities.

Objective 4.2: Create a culture of APS ambassadors that promotes our mission and core values by FY 2024.

Strategy 4.2.1: Create a statewide APS Ambassador plan for all APS employees, as well as internal and external persons, who will positively promote the APS program, both locally and statewide.

Strategy 4.2.2: Develop the training and tools needed for a statewide plan for use by our APS Ambassadors.

Strategy 4.2.3: Create an outreach campaign that encourages responsible elder abuse reporting for the underserved and under reported.

Strategy 4.2.4: Implement the APS Ambassador plan across the state.

Objective 4.3: Address the ongoing protective services needs of the growing vulnerable adult population by maximizing existing and new resources by 2024.

Strategy 4.3.1: Evaluate the protective services needs of the growing vulnerable adult population.

Strategy 4.3.2: Develop a comprehensive Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) to address APS workforce needs.

Strategy 4.3.3: Maximize existing and new resource opportunities, for example exploring VOCA funding or grants for exploitation. *on hold due to resources*

Objective 4.4: Create a coordinated effort to promote the APS program and APS Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation across the state by FY 2024.

Strategy 4.4.1: Update APS promotional materials.

Strategy 4.4.2: Create a speaker's bureau to provide support for and make APS speakers available at conferences to enhance professional connections.

Strategy 4.4.3: Develop a multi-tiered plan with a strategy for distributing materials and raising public awareness.

Strategy 4.4.5: Develop a system to facilitate a Year of APS.

Next Steps

This strategic plan is a long-term five-year plan with broad goals as well as objectives and strategies designed to achieve those targets. The intent is to make this plan a living document – it will continue to change and become more established as we hone in on identifying our best

practices and re-examine our efforts toward achieving our goals on an annual basis. We will meet yearly to reevaluate and give updates on our goals, objectives and strategies.

In the coming year, APS will build on progress since our last strategic plan, continuing work begun as a result of the initial plan as well as initiating new efforts shaped by what we've learned last year and so far this year.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the way APS engages with clients, and we want to learn what impact these changes in practice had on client services. Accordingly, we modified Goal 1 related to client outcomes to ensure program plans and responds as effectively as possible to not only the current pandemic but to future major events and crisis that affect our clients and our staff.

Goal 2, pertaining to Workforce, was amended to prioritize manager development in response to SWOT results. Goal 3 on Teamwork was enhanced to include a recognition and communication program that addresses the unique needs of the APS mobile workforce across the state. Goal 4 on Partnerships was amended to respond to organizational changes at DFPS and to plan for a Year of APS, an awareness campaign on the program.

The strategic plan provides a framework for more detailed action planning that will enable the monitoring and refining of our efforts. Each quarter, APS documents progress on each active strategy with an action plan template.

The APS Strategic Plan is meant to be a document for everyone at APS, because together we protect our clients. As such, this document will be shared across APS and feedback will be solicited prior to every annual evaluation.

For questions or comments on the APS Strategic Plan, please contact the APS Associate Commissioner Kezeli Wold at kezeli.wold@dfps.texas.gov.