



# OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING

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**DISTRIBUTION: ALL SOCIAL WORK STAFF**

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## **ASSISTING CLIENTS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this procedure is to instruct social work staff on engaging clients who are victims of financial exploitation. This policy bulletin is informational for all other APS staff.

### ■ **OVERVIEW**

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a state-mandated program that provides services to adults 18 years of age and older, without regard to income, who are:

- Mentally and/or physically impaired and
- Due to the impairment, are unable to manage their own risks and
- Have no one available who is will and able to assist them responsibly.

Individuals who meet the above criteria, including the inability to manage and prevent financial exploitation by others, may be eligible for APS. New York Social Services Law (SSL) §473 defines financial exploitation as follows:

The “improper use of an adult’s funds, property or resources by another individual, including but not limited to, fraud, false pretenses, embezzlement, conspiracy, forgery, falsifying records, coerced property transfers or denial of access to assets.”

APS social work staff provides services to individuals eligible for APS who are victims of financial exploitation to prevent reoccurrence by offering resources to resolve trauma resulting from the financial exploitation and a service plan that will enable the client to remain in the community safely.

### ■ **SOCIAL WORKER ACTIONS**

The APS Field Office director, deputy director, or designee identifies cases in need of social work intervention and refers the case to the Social Work Unit. The case is conferenced with the social work staff in person or via any form of teleconferencing. Upon evaluating the potential risks of the client, when possible, the caseworker will coordinate an initial joint visit with the assigned social work staff.

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## **Client Visit**

Prior to the initial social work visit, the social work staff will prepare the following tools to be completed during the client visit:

- **Social Work Assessment form** (not required if a current psychosocial evaluation, conducted within 180 days, is available).
- **Interview for Decisional Abilities Tool** unless the client:
  - declined to participate,
  - has a neurocognitive disorder and is unable to participate,
  - has a psychiatric disorder and is unable to complete reality testing, or
  - is fluent in a language other than English and translation is required.
- Any other tools provided by the social work supervisor and are relevant to the identified issues presented which may include the following:
  - Psychosocial Evaluation;
  - PHQ-9 Patient Depression Questionnaire;
  - Mental Status Examination;
  - Suicide Risk Assessment Tool;
  - Safety Planning Tool;
  - Homes Multidisciplinary Risk Assessment;
  - Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale;
  - Cage-Aid Substance Use Screening; and
  - Resources for the client.

During the visit, the social work staff will complete an assessment to determine if the client is a victim of financial exploitation as defined by the SSL §473. A Social Work Assessment or psychosocial evaluation and Interview for Decisional Abilities tool must be completed during each client visit.

## **Social Work Plan**

The social work staff will create a social work plan with the client based upon the risk of financial exploitation which may include the following actions:

- Solution focused approach of understanding the problem and creating a solution to address the problem such as connecting the client with the District Attorney's Witness Services Unit and Crime Victims Center to possibly obtain compensation for alleged exploitation (follow-up is required);
- Addressing the client's feelings surrounding the exploitation especially if exploited by a close relative or friend;
- Solution focused approach regarding steps to safeguard client's finances in the future including connecting the client with the financial counseling centers offered by NYC and legal assistance, if needed;
- Discussing possible assistance from Silver Bills, Older Adults Technology Services, or Bill Payers programs as a preventative measure for avoiding targeted scams;

- Connecting the client with their local precinct as an effort to build community relationships and obtain information about any current targeted scams and preventative measures;
- Work on the narrative approach with the client in allowing them to tell their narrative as a form of healing and helping. Reintegrate the client into the community to avoid isolation by connecting the client with community-based organizations to increase social skills;
- Discussing coping mechanisms to use during this process which may cause additional distress for a victim who has been exploited. Highlighting and discussing motivation for change through strengths-based perspective.

Social work staff should use the Life Events Checklist tool as a guide for discussions regarding underlying trauma and distress. The Life Events Checklist tool can be found in the Social Work shared drive in the “Financial Exploitation” folder.

The social work plan should be discussed with the social work supervisor and/or deputy director or designee prior to implementation. Implementation of the social work plan will continue unless the client:

- Declines assistance;
- Does not identify as a victim of financial exploitation;
- Does not meet the definition of financial exploitation; or
- Is found ineligible for APS and the case is closed.

All interventions utilized must be documented in APSNET. If the social work plan is discontinued, enter a progress note in APSNET and indicate the reason for discontinuing the social work plan.

### **Documenting the Case**

Social work staff will enter referred cases in the Social Work Tracking tool on a weekly basis. Information to be included in the tracking tool are:

- Case Name;
- Referral ID
- Date of Social Work Service;
- Case Type;
- IDA Risk Assessed
- IDA sent (to Customized Assistance Services, VPS Clinical Intake);
- Field Office;
- Brief Case Summary;
- Social Work Plan; and
- Supervisory Comments.

Upon supervisory review of the case information provided in the tracking tool, the social worker will receive comments and next steps for the following client visit.

All notes from interactions and visits with clients must be entered in APSNET within five business days. Visit outcomes and the social work plan must be documented as progress notes. Contacts with clients and collateral sources must be documented as an interaction.

■ **SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR ACTIONS**

Social work supervisors will review the tracking tool, including related assessment tools completed by the social worker, on a weekly basis. Based on the social worker's assessment and recommended service plan, the supervisor will determine the next steps to be taken on the case. The supervisor will annotate the next steps and any changes in the service plan, if needed, in the tracking tool for the social worker.

*Effective immediately.*