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Procedure 1

General Procedures

This procedure contains general procedures and definitions affecting APS actions.

Call Center.

1. The Call Center is the statewide central registry (§47-7-7 (6)) for receiving reports of vulnerable persons in need of protective services.
2. The responsibilities of the Call Center are:
 - a. Receiving-calls from reporters regarding potential abuse, neglect and exploitation (A/N/E) of vulnerable persons;
 - b. Entering the information received from the call into the registry,
 - c. Screening the report to determine its eventual handling, and
 - d. Disseminating the reports to field personnel.

Key positions and responsibilities

1. **Operator** is the first person to whom a reporter will normally speak. The APS Operator receives calls from reporters and performs the initial input of information into the registry (WELLSKY).
2. **Operator Supervisor Screener** performs the following functions:
 - a. Review and process reports taken by Operators,
 - b. Screen the report and decide further handling,
 - c. Electronically transmit the report to the appropriate APS Supervisor.
3. Adult Protection Services Supervisor performs the following functions:
 - a. Review the report to determine if the screening decision of the Supervisor Screener is valid.
 - b. Assigning reports to APS workers.
 - c. Monitoring the progress of investigations.
 - d. Monitoring the status of open reports, investigations and cases.
 - e. Approving or disapproving the extension of open investigations.
 - f. Approving or disapproving care plans
 - g. Supervising the progress on open investigations and care plans.
 - h. Complete the Supervisor Case Review Form for each reviewed investigation.
 - i. Providing advice and guidance to APS workers.
 - j. Providing supervisory review and approval on other matters described in APS Policies or Procedures.
 - k. Handle after-hour calls. (APS Call Center will follow established after-hour protocol)
4. Adult Protection Services Worker performs the following functions:
 - a. Investigates, assess, and document the report.
 - b. Reports the findings of the investigation to the APS Supervisor and other parties as appropriate and directed in procedures.
 - c. Conducts field investigations on reported cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
 - d. Develops and monitors care plans for vulnerable adults based on substantiated reports.
 - e. Prepare court summaries for cases that require court intervention. Attend court.
 - f. Handle after-hour calls. (APS Call Center will follow established after-hour protocol)

5. Absence of specific procedure.

Whenever there is an absence of specific policy or procedure covering a situation that an Adult Protective Services employee may encounter, the APS employee or personnel is directed to rely upon and proceed based on the best practices in the social work and human services fields in place at the time. In all such cases, the APS employee should inform his or her supervisor of the situation for which the specific policy or procedure does not exist. All instances in which action is taken in which there is no applicable policy or procedure, or the action departs from existing policies and procedures shall be documented.

6. Complaints and inquiries.

Complaints and inquiries about APS personnel shall be immediately forwarded to the appropriate Regional Supervisor for investigation. Complaints or inquiries regarding any Regional Supervisor will be forwarded immediately to the Division Director. The Division Director may set up administrative procedures for further handling of complaints and inquiries regarding APS personnel.

Procedure 2

Call Center Procedures

This procedure governs the general operations of the call center.

Incoming calls.

All reporter calls, statewide, come to the Call Center. The call center is staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Calls to county APS office from reporters come to the Call Center.

1. APS Intake Reports

The following protocol is hereby established to provide guidance for the APS Hotline Call Center staff in handling APS intakes and screenings. The APS Hotline Call Center staff is the entry point for all APS Intakes and Investigations.

Good Customer Skills - professionals are responsible for addressing customer needs and ensuring they have a good experience. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Active listening
- Empathy
- Problem-solving
- Communication
- Patience
- Attentiveness
- Knowledge
- Ability to use positive language

Phone Etiquette - is the way you use **manners** to represent yourself and your agency to customers via **telephone** communication. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

Immediately introduce yourself using your employee name (no names unknown to the agency).

- Be sensitive of your tone of voice.
- How you say something is just as important as what you say.
- Speak clearly.
- Only use speakerphone when necessary.
- Actively listen and take notes.
- Use proper language.
- Remain cheerful.
- Ask before putting someone on hold or transferring a call.

Remember all calls should be confidential.

Intake Worker Role:

- Enter information received from caller on the Intake form (See Attachment). Demographic information is **VERY** vital to our work.
- Provide referrals if necessary.
- When transferring a caller make sure you ask or inform them first before you do so. (use warm transfers skills always).
- Enter information from the intake form into WELLSKY within 30 minutes of the end of the call.

- APS reports are an official record for the agency i.e. records can be subpoenaed, the reports you take can be used in court, they go to the AG office, etc.
- Check your spelling and grammar on reports.
- Never advise reporters about what they should or should not do.
- Never tell the reporter whether the report meets the criteria for an APS investigation. Instead keep it general and explain the process.
- When inputting information into WELLSKY make sure each section of the “WELLSKY Intake” is completed.
- Keep in mind that reporters keep records and could be using recording devices.

2. Initial Intake

- a. The Operator will manually enter information received from the caller on the Vulnerable Adult Intake Form (Figure 1).
- b. Before the end of the call, the Operator will provide the reporter with referrals to other agencies and services based on information received by the Operator.
- c. The operator will enter the information from the Vulnerable Adult Intake Form within 30 minutes into WELLSKY at the end of the call.
- d. Completion of the entry of the information by the Operator causes the report to be sent electronically to the Screener.

3. APS Screening Role

- The screener’s role is very important to ensuring that intake reports received include all necessary information to make the best screening decision.
- Review the report in WELLSKY. Review report for missing information. Check spelling and grammar and correct as needed.
- Screener will open each tab under the section “Intake” and make sure it is filled in.
- If information is not clear or is not complete, the screener should contact the reporter for clarity, including web intakes. (Omit this part if reporter is “anonymous”)
- Check WELLSKY for history on the AV, if found; link the reports.
- Decide if the report meets the criteria.
- Screen in or out. (Screener should write a note in the “**note section**” for the reasoning for their decision)
- Screener should screen a report in or out within the hour of receiving the report into WELLSKY.
- A good practice: Priority calls received on Fridays, go ahead and screen to stay in keeping with the worker’s initiation timeline for 48 hours.

Handling WEB INTAKES:

- Review reports for accuracy.
- Ensure that all information is included.
- If there is missing information, the screener will contact the reporter for additional information before screening.
- Enter note(s) regarding contact with the reporter.

Category	Condition	Action
Screened In	Report does not meet the criteria for being screened out.	Report is sent to the APS Supervisor through WELLSKY
Screened Out	Report meets one or more of the conditions described in Procedure 2.4	No further action is taken. The report is NOT sent to the APS Supervisor through WELLSKY. Screened out reports are sent via fax or other means to other agencies as required.

4. Screening out. If a report does not meet the criteria for being screened out, the report will be considered to be screened in. The following types of reports may be screened out:

- a. **Pervasive lack of information.** The reporter has a lack of information that is so pervasive that it makes completing a report impossible. This would include reports with information so insufficient that APS cannot locate the alleged victim and in which additional information cannot be secured through sources such as utility companies or local government offices.
- b. **Confusion.** The reporter is confused regarding clues or indicators of suspected adult abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- c. **Lack of authority.** This category includes calls that clearly regard matters that are more appropriately handled by another State agency, or are not dealing with matters of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. This would include reports regarding consumer scams and fraud.
- d. **Eviction requests.** This category includes reports requesting the eviction of specific family members or other persons from the vulnerable adult's home.
- e. **Care facility.** Any report concerning abuse, neglect or exploitation in a care facility as defined in §43-47-5(b). These reports are under the authority of the State Department of Health and the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Attorney General's office.
- f. **Refusal of treatment.** This category includes refusal of medical treatment by a mentally capable adult. If there is any doubt whether the adult is mentally capable, the report should be screened in.
- g. **Incarcerated individuals.** This category includes reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation of prison inmates in local jails or at the State Penitentiary or any other facility under the authority of the Department of Corrections.
- h. **Overcrowding.** This category includes reports of crowded conditions or too many people living in a home, with no indication of abuse, neglect or exploitation occurring.
- i. **Requests for preventive services.** This includes reports where the reporter has no knowledge or suspicion that abuse, neglect or exploitation has occurred, but for

which preventive services are requested. In this case, APS personnel may direct the reporter to other support services.

- j. **Native American Reservations.** Reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation occurring on Native American Reservations shall be screened out but shall be reported to the appropriate social service agency at the reservation.
- k. **Certain cases of rape or sexual molestation.** Calls involving rape or molestation of an adult may be screened out if all of the following conditions:
 - 1. The alleged victim is mentally capable.
 - 2. The alleged perpetrator is not a caretaker, friend of a caretaker, relative other person living in the home, or employee of a school or adult day-care facility where the adult is enrolled.
 - 3. No caretaker neglect is suspected.
 - 4. Law enforcement has been informed of the report.If the Screener has any doubt that all four conditions are met, the report should be screened in.

5. **Determination of Priority.**

The Screener will determine if the report meets the criteria for being classified as a Priority I or a Priority II report using the following criteria:

Category	Criteria	Time from Reporting to Initial Report to AG
Priority I	Vulnerable person is in immediate danger	48 hours
Priority II	Vulnerable person is not in immediate danger	72 hours

See Procedure 8 for additional information on timeframes.

Expectations of the APS Intake Worker and Screener: When calls are reviewed, the following will be evaluated:

Intake Worker:

- 1. Did the APS Operator use good customer skills/professionalism?
- 2. Did the APS Operator good phone etiquette?
- 3. Were the questions asked of the Reporter from the Intake form provided? If not, were efforts made to gather the information?
- 4. Were the efforts entered in the note section?
- 5. Were all sections completed on the report? Any missing information?
- 6. Was there a hold time? If so, how long?
- 7. Was the report entered into the system and sent to the screener in a timely matter?

Screeners:

- 1. Was the report screened properly?
- 2. Was there any missing information? If so, was it addressed in the note section?
- 3. Did the screener contact the reporter?
- 4. If the vulnerability and/or ANE unclear, were efforts made to get clarity?
- 5. Was the report screened in a timely matter?

6. Call Center action.

When the Screener completes the screening procedure, will notify the APS Supervisor via email and an update to the APS Supervisor's case records that a report has been assigned for potential investigation. This action begins the 48- or 72-hour period for investigation and preliminary report to the Attorney General described in Procedure 2.3 and Procedure 8.1.

7. APS Hotline Call Center Training:

APS Hotline Call Center Staff will receive required on-going training throughout the year.

This training will include but not limited to:

- Certificate Training
- Annual Trainings
- Webinars
- Virtual Trainings
- National Trainings
- WELLSKY Training

Recordings: Currently all APS Hotline Calls are being recorded. The APS Hotline Call Center Supervisor will monitor the calls weekly on each operator and will submit a weekly supervisor review report. As a result, this monitoring tool will be used to evaluate each operator's performance. If areas of improvements are noted, the APS Hotline Call Center Supervisor will give the operator a counseling sheet and discuss/address the areas that need improvement. The operator will be given an opportunity to make the necessary corrections. If the identified problem(s) continues, the operator will be given two additional counseling sheets to make the necessary corrections. If there are still no improvements, the fourth course of action will be an official write-up.

Complaints: All APS Hotline Call Center complaints that are received via mail, fax, email, or phone will be forwarded directly to the APS Hotline Supervisor for handling. Once the complaint is received the APS Hotline Call Center Supervisor will do the following:

1. APS Hotline Call Center Supervisor will complete a complaint form. (See attachment)
2. Listen to the call(s) of the operator(s) the complaint is on.
3. Complete Counseling Sheet with the operator
4. Determine if the complaint is valid or not valid.
5. If the complaint is valid, it will be made a part of the Operator's file and included in the number for the three strikes rule.
6. The valid complaint will be completed via counseling sheet in DocuSign
7. Copies will be provided to the Operator, assigned QA Specialist, and the APS Director.
8. After three valid counseling sheets, the fourth complaint will result in an official write up.

Disciplinary Actions: will include:

- Three (3) Valid Counseling sessions
- Fourth (4) Valid Official Write Up per State Personnel Disciplinary Action for one of the group offenses

*Some complaints may be investigated by MDHS's Organizational/Internal Affairs Ombudsman if it was received from a governmental official. A copy of those complaints will be forwarded to the Organizational Ombudsman by the APS Director and/or QA Specialist assigned to the area of the complaint.

Procedure 3

Report Assignment and Overview

This procedure shall govern procedures employed when reports are referred from the Call Center to the APS Supervisor.

1. Report review and assignment.

- a. As described in Procedure 2.3, WELLSKY will transmit the report to the appropriate APS Supervisor. The APS Supervisor will receive an email from the Call Center (generated by) to alert the Supervisor that the report has been referred to the APS Supervisor. The WELLSKY will also populate the APS Supervisor's WELLSKY records with the report.
- b. The APS Supervisor will review the report for completeness.
- c. The APS Supervisor may contact the Call Center if anything in the report is unclear or appears to be missing.
- d. The APS Supervisor reviews the report for any known hazards that may be indicated by the report.
- e. The APS Supervisor may contact the reporter to clarify items in the report if necessary. Because of the confidentiality and safety issues that may involve the reporter, the APS Supervisor should use discretion and caution in contacting the reporter for additional information.
- f. The APS Supervisor may add notes to the WELLSKY report on the case, including matters of which the APS Supervisor wants the APS Worker to be aware.
- g. The APS Supervisor assigns the report to an APS Worker.
- h. The APS Supervisor will assign the case in WELLSKY, which will then populate to the APS Worker's caseload.
- i. The APS Supervisor will email the APS Worker with notification of the report referral.

2. Initial investigative procedures.

1. Upon receipt, of the report, the APS Worker will review the report noting particulars about the alleged vulnerable person, the situation, the caretaker and any hazards that may be involved in the case.
2. The APS Worker will prepare a folder containing forms to be used in the case investigation, including:
 - a. Vulnerable Adult Checklist
 - b. Functional Assessment
 - c. Mental Status Questionnaire
 - d. Mini Mental Status Examination
 - e. A supply of Consent to Disclose Information forms to be used in the field
3. The APS Worker will go to the field and begin the investigation. The investigation is deemed to be formally initiated when the APS Worker makes first contact with one of the involved adults (i.e., victim, caretaker, or other party indicated in the report).
4. If initial visit is unsuccessful, a second attempt should be made within five business days.
5. Normally the alleged victim is the first person to be interviewed by the APS Worker.
6. After interviewing the alleged victim, the APS Worker will interview:

- a. The caretaker(s)
 - b. Alleged perpetrator(s)
 - c. All other persons in the house,
 - d. Collateral witnesses such as neighbors or financial advisors, or the initial reporter.
7. The APS Worker will interview the alleged victim alone, without other parties present, especially the alleged perpetrator.
8. The APS Worker will take handwritten notes on the interviews and will fill in appropriate parts of the Vulnerable Adult Checklist, Functional Assessment, Mental Status Questionnaire and Mini Mental Status Examination as the interviews are taking place.
9. Third parties (i.e., physicians, care facility operators, financial institutions) from whom information is needed to complete the investigation shall be presented with **the Consent to Disclose Information** form. The **Consent to Disclose Information** form will be signed by the alleged victim or caretaker before being presented to the third party.
10. The APS Worker may take photographs of the alleged victim and the home with the permission of the alleged victim and other persons present in the home.
11. Upon return to the office, the APS Worker will update the case notes in WELLSKY. See Procedure 6 for additional procedures regarding documentation.
12. Updating the case notes and recording initial contact with the alleged victim will be followed up by a report to the Office of the Attorney General (AG). This action fulfills the Attorney General notification requirements of the Vulnerable Persons Act. The report to the AG will be made using the APS Report/Investigation Checklist for VAU.
13. The APS Worker forwards the case back to the APS Supervisor for review and determination on next steps.

3. Eligibility. As part of the initial investigation of reported abuse, the APS Worker shall determine if the alleged victim meets the criteria for protective services.

- 1. The alleged victim must meet the following three criteria to be eligible for protective services:
 - The alleged victim must be a vulnerable person. §43-47-5 of the Vulnerable Persons Act defines a vulnerable person. To be considered a vulnerable person, a person must be a minor or an adult who:
 - Has impaired ability to perform the normal activities of daily living, or
 - a. Has impaired ability to provide for his or her own care or protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation or improper sexual contact, or
 - b. resides in a private home setting, unlicensed personal care homes with 3 or fewer residents unrelated to the operator and unlicensed boarding homes.
 - c. Exceptions: A/N/E occurred in home setting prior to admission into the nursing home and/or A/N/E occurred while visiting a home setting or exploitation perpetrated by family member.
 - d. The alleged victim must be harmed or threatened with harm.
 - e. The alleged victim must be present in the State of Mississippi.

2. If the APS Worker determines that the alleged victim meets the criteria described in Procedure 3.3.1, the APS Worker shall continue with the investigation. If the APS Worker determines that the alleged victim does not meet the criteria described in Procedure 4.1, the APS Worker shall discontinue the investigation, inform the APS Supervisor, and note the determination in WELLSKY.

Procedure 4

Investigative Procedures

This procedure shall govern the conduct of field investigations.

1. Initiating an investigation.

An investigation is considered initiated, and a *report* is converted to an *investigation* when the APS Worker makes personal contact with any adult involved in the report. The initiation of an investigation does not require the alleged victim's consent. Adults involved in the report may include, but are not limited to:

- a. The alleged victim(s)
- b. The caretaker(s)
- c. The alleged perpetrator(s)
- d. Any household members
- e. Collateral contacts such as neighbors, home health care workers, the vulnerable adult's physician, or living facility employees.

2. Initial visit unannounced. The initial visit to the alleged victim in response to a report shall be unannounced. Do not alert the alleged victim, caretaker(s), alleged perpetrator(s) or any other person when the initial visit will take place. This is to ensure that the caretaker(s) or alleged perpetrator(s) do not have the opportunity to harm or threaten the alleged victim, move the alleged victim, or alter conditions in the residence of the alleged victim.

3. Interviewing the alleged victim.

- a. Unless prevented from doing so or unless there are extenuating circumstances, the APS Worker should interview the alleged victim first. Reasons for not interviewing the victim first should be documented in the case note file.
- b. An alleged victim of abuse who appears mentally capable of making his or her decisions may not be interviewed without his or her consent. If the alleged victim refuses consent, documentation and notes shall be made of this fact.
- c. The alleged victim should be interviewed alone if possible.
- d. Upon meeting the alleged victim, the APS Worker shall:
 - i. Identify himself or herself with his or her State Identification
 - ii. Explain the reason for the investigation
 - iii. Explain the responsibility of the Department to investigate reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation
 - iv. Seek the full cooperation of the alleged victim
- e. In the interview, allow the alleged victim to respond to the allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Encourage the alleged victim to give a complete account of the situation in their own words.
- f. Determine and document the relationship between the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- g. Document the attitude of the alleged victim toward the perpetrator.
- h. Determine and document if the alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation is a one-time occurrence.
- i. To initiate the investigation, three attempts will be made to contact the alleged victim. Documentation of these attempts will be kept in WELLSKY.

4. Visual examination of the alleged victim.

- a. The alleged victim should be examined for signs of physical abuse or neglect.
- b. The permission of the alleged victim or his or her caretaker must be obtained before any physical examination of the alleged victim's person is examined. However, no permission is needed for the observation and documentation for signs of neglect or abuse that may be readily observable upon meeting the alleged victim and seeing his or her environment.
- c. A caretaker or other adult witness must be present when an alleged victim is examined.
- d. If the adult lacks the capacity to consent to a physical examination or the caretaker refuses to cooperate, do not examine the alleged victim. Report the inability to examine the alleged victim to the APS Supervisor for further guidance. Document the inability to examine the alleged victim in the case notes.
- e. See Procedure 7 regarding procedures to be used if it is necessary to physically touch the alleged victim.

5. Interviewing the caretaker or alleged perpetrator.

- a. The initial interview with the caretaker or alleged perpetrator should be in an unannounced visit (see Procedure 4.2). This visit may be at the initial contact with the alleged victim. Preferably, the initial interview with the caretaker or alleged perpetrator should be at the location where the alleged victim lives.
- b. Upon meeting the caretaker or alleged perpetrator, the APS Worker shall:
 - i. Identify himself or herself with his or her State identification
 - ii. Explain the reason for the investigation
 - iii. Explain the responsibility of the Department to investigate reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation
 - iv. Seek the full cooperation of the caretaker or alleged perpetrator.
- c. Each caretaker or alleged perpetrator shall be interviewed privately.
- d. The APS Worker may share details of the report with the caretaker or alleged perpetrator but may not divulge the reporter's identity.
- e. Document the results of the interview into WELLSKY.

6. Observation of physical premises.

- a. The physical premises of the alleged victim should be observed, and their condition noted in WELLSKY.
- b. If the alleged victim or any other adults attempt to prevent the APS Worker from observing the alleged victim's premises, the APS Worker shall explain that observation of the home environment of the alleged victim is a necessary part of the investigation, and again seek their cooperation. If permission is still refused, the refusal shall be documented in WELLSKY and the APS Supervisor should be notified. The APS Supervisor will advise the APS Worker on the possibility of seeking court intervention to facilitate the examination.
- c. If law enforcement or the District Attorney request that the APS Worker not interview the caretaker or alleged perpetrator, then that request should be noted in WELLSKY and the APS Supervisor should be notified for determination if additional action should be taken to obtain an interview.

7. Interviews with other household members.

- a. All other household members, including children, should be interviewed.
- b. All interviews should be conducted in private.
- c. If the APS Worker suspects that children present in the home are victims of abuse or neglect, then the APS Supervisor should be immediately notified and the appropriate agency having authority to investigate cases of neglect or abuse of children should be notified.
- d. Results of these interviews should be documented into WELLSKY.

8. Interviews with collateral contacts.

- a. Collateral contacts include human services agencies, doctors, home health professionals, neighbors, adult children, family members, law enforcement and others who may have knowledge regarding the health and well-being of the alleged victim.
- b. The consent of the alleged victim, guardian, or caretaker is not necessary to interview collateral contacts. However, in some situations dealing with privacy of information in the possession of the collateral contact, a Release of Information Form may be required. In these cases, the Release or Information form shall be obtained and presented to the collateral contact before beginning the interview.
- c. Meetings or conversations with all collateral contacts shall be documented. Findings derived from collateral contacts shall be documented into WELLSKY.

9. Taking photographs, audio and video records.

- a. The APS Worker may take photographs of the alleged victim to document abuse, neglect or exploitation only with the permission of the alleged victim or his or her caretaker. If the APS Worker believes that photographs are necessary for documentation, but permission cannot be obtained from the alleged victim or the caretaker, then the APS Supervisor should be notified. The APS Supervisor has the option of pursuing judicial permission to obtain photographs if necessary.
- b. Another adult should always be present when photographs are taken of the alleged victim.
- c. Audio and/or video recordings of interviews may be made with the permission of the alleged victim or caretaker.
- d. All photographs, audio recordings and video recordings taken will be made a part of the investigation record.

10. Refusal of investigation

The alleged victim has the right to refuse an investigation. If the alleged victim refuses an investigation, the APS Worker will complete the Documentation of Investigation Refusal form and will update the appropriate fields in WELLSKY.

11. Lack of capacity to consent.

If there are questions about whether the mental status of the alleged victim impairs his or her ability to consent to an investigation or services, the APS Worker will complete the Capacity to Consent fields in WELLSKY. The APS Worker will also complete the Mini Mental State Exam as well as speak with a collateral contact to determine the victim's mental capacity.

12. Prohibited actions. While conducting an investigation, creating a care plan or monitoring a care plan, an APS Worker may not take any of the following actions:

- a. Enter the alleged victim's home against his or her will and without his or her permission.
- b. Remain in the home after the alleged victim, member of the family, or other person entitled to make such a request has asked the APS Worker to leave the premises.
- c. Provide social services when the alleged victim is mentally competent and has stated that he or she does not want the services.
- d. Look through the personal possessions of the alleged victim without his or her permission.
- e. Remove the alleged victim against his or her will from his or her living quarters to another living arrangement without proper authority from law enforcement or the court.
- f. Place the alleged victim in a mental institution.
- g. Arrange for the alleged victim's admission to a hospital, nursing home or other care facility against his or her will.
- h. Manage the alleged victim's property or money.
- i. Direct the alleged victim's actions against his or her will or without his or her permission.

j. Discuss case situations which violate confidentiality.

Procedure 5

Supervisory Review

This procedure shall govern the points at which supervisory review is mandatory. Supervisory review of reports and cases will take place at the following points:

1. Receipt of report from call center. Review of the reported event takes place when the APS Supervisor receives a notice from WELLSKY that a report has been made. This is the initial supervisory review of the report prior to the report's assignment to an APS Worker. During this review, if it is discovered that a report has been assigned to the wrong coverage area, the APS Supervisor must take the following course of action:

- a. Document in narrative form, how it was determined that the report was assigned to the wrong coverage area.
- b. Draft an email to the receiving coverage area supervisor explaining that they will be receiving an investigation that had been assigned to you in error. Include the Regional Supervisor and Program Director in said email.
- c. Once the email and documentation is complete, the APS Supervisor can then reassign the investigation to the correct coverage area APS Supervisor.

2. Prior to report assignment. Prior to assigning the case to the APS Worker, the APS Supervisor will review the report and note in the file any matters that need to be brought to the attention of the APS Worker. If the APS Supervisor believes it is necessary, he/she will contact the APS Worker to jointly plan the investigation or review any unusual matters before the investigation begins. The APS Supervisor will assign the report to the APS Worker via WELLSKY.

3. Initiation of investigation. After the APS Worker makes initial contact with the alleged victim, the investigation is considered initiated. If a worker is unable to make contact with the AV on the first attempt, a second attempt must be made within 5 business days. If the second attempt is unsuccessful, the worker will need to mail a letter to the address listed for the AV. If there has been no response to the mailed communication within 7 days, the worker can then submit the investigation for closure. However, during that 7-day time frame, the worker must utilize every resource possible to locate AV. Examples include: calling dispatch at the local law enforcement agency for last known addresses, calling the reporter back to verify AV address or location, speaking with neighbors for possible updated address or location of AV, etc.

4. Approval of determination. After making the initial investigative contacts and entering them in WELLSKY (AV, AP, PHE, collateral), the APS Worker will update the case record in WELLSKY with the results of those findings. The result of the APS Worker findings will be to determine if the allegations of a/n/e are either substantiated, unsubstantiated, or unable to be determined. This will initiate a review by the APS Supervisor of the initial investigative findings. The APS Supervisor will document review of the findings in WELLSKY as well as complete a Supervisory Review Form.

5. Supervisory Review Form. Once the APS Supervisor has been notified through WELLSKY that an investigation determination has been submitted for approval:

- a. the APS Supervisor must use the Supervisory Review Form as tool to ensure that all steps have been followed in accordance to APS policy and procedure in completion of the investigation.
- b. If the APS Supervisor finds that there are inconsistencies after completion of the review, the APS Supervisor will pend the investigation back to the APS Worker and forward the supervisory review to the APS Worker along with notes to reflect any issues or corrective action.
- c. A copy of the supervisory review will be uploaded to each investigation.

d. Supervisory reviews will also be submitted to the Regional Supervisor on a weekly basis.

e. Service provision planning. The APS Supervisor shall supervise and approve the development and initiation of all service plans on substantiated cases. See Procedure 10 for additional information.

f. Consideration of Legal action. The APS Supervisor will approve all requests that will involve legal action, whether by MDHS legal resources or referral to the Attorney General. See Procedure 10.6 and Procedure 10.7 for additional information.

g. Consideration of other escalated action. The APS Supervisor shall approve all requests for escalated action as described in Procedure 10.

h. Case closure. The APS Supervisor will approve all requests for case closure as described in Procedure 10.8.

Procedure 6

Documentation

This procedure shall govern the documentation of findings for the case file.

1. **Importance.** It is imperative that APS maintains accurate and complete case and investigative files. Retention of accurate and complete information is essential to ensure the protection of vulnerable persons over whose care APS has authority, as well as for future investigative, protection or even legal purposes. To ensure that files contain complete and accurate information, documentation shall be updated in WELLSKY and in manual files whenever new information is received.

2. **Updates of WELLSKY.** The following items shall be noted in the participants section of WELLSKY by the end of the workday in which new information is received.

- a. Identifying Information. This includes the alleged victim's correct name, age, sex, race, physical description and social security number.
- b. Contact information. This includes telephone number(s) for cell and land lines, address(es), email and any other means of contact of which the Family Protection Specialist becomes aware.
- c. Caretaker(s) identification. This includes names, ages, telephone numbers and addresses of all caretakers and guardians of the alleged victim.

3. **Key content:** When documenting content gathered from the alleged victim, alleged perpetrators, and collateral contacts, etc, the APS Worker must make sure that the narratives reflect the following:

- a. Location and date of abuse/neglect/exploitation. In this item, the APS Worker should be as complete as possible, providing as much usable detail as the APS Worker discovers.
- b. Interview details (alleged victim) This includes when and where the alleged victim was observed and interviewed, and any visual examination of the alleged victim should be documented in the alleged victim narrative.
- c. Interview details (all other participants, collaterals, etc) when and where the interview took place, note who the person is in relation to the alleged victim, all pertinent information as it relates to the allegations in question.
- d. Interview findings. This includes findings, outcomes, and observations made during the interview.

4. **Physical home environment.**

- a. Results of observations and visual examination. Items noted during the examination of the alleged victim's location.

5. **Findings or Evaluation and recommendation.** The APS Worker should document the following conclusions and evaluations and outcomes in WELLSKY:

- i. Validity. Whether it appears to the APS Worker that the incident(s) contained in the report appear to be valid.
- ii. Risk factors. Any factors discovered by the APS Worker that would indicate that the alleged victim's safety is at risk.
- iii. Recommendation. The file should contain the APS Worker's recommendation for future action.

6. **Photographs.** If digital photographs are taken in the course of the investigation, they shall be uploaded into the WELLSKY investigation file. Any non-digital photographs shall be maintained in the paper file. Whenever possible, non-digital photographs should be scanned so that they can be uploaded into the WELLSKY investigation file.

7. Release of information. In compliance with Policy 3.7 and any Federal or Mississippi Statutes that may be in effect at the time, all information and documentation with regard to any investigation, case or Individual Service Plan, whether open or closed, shall be confidential.

With supervisory approval, reports or photographs made as part of an investigation or case may be released to:

1. A physician who is treating a person whom the physician believes may be abused, neglected or exploited as provided in §43-47-5,
2. A duly authorized agency having the responsibility to care for the person who is the subject of the report,
3. A grand jury or a court of competent jurisdiction,
4. A district attorney or other law enforcement official.

To obtain permission to release information under these circumstances, the APS Worker or APS Supervisor will request permission in writing from the Division Director or the Division Director's designee. Upon approval by the Division Director or designee, the request shall be forwarded to the MDHS legal department. Reports or photographs shall not be released without the written permission of the MDHS legal department.

8. Court Summary. When preparing a court summary, the following information is needed:

1. Identifying Information on the AV
2. Intake Report
3. Investigation Summary
4. Risk(s)
5. Documents (Attach the original evaluations from two (2) physicians or one physician and one nurse practitioner or provide the names and addresses of two (2) physicians or one physician and one nurse practitioner who have consented to evaluate the adult's mental capacity. Provide pictures, if available)

***Note:** The physicians and Nurse practitioners must sign and have notarized the Physician's Certificate/Nurse Practitioner's Certificate and Affidavit, which affirms he/she is licensed to practice medicine in Mississippi at least 3 years, and that he/she has personally evaluated the adult. The Certificate and Affidavit cannot be completed by a psychologist.*

6. Recommendations:

A. Placement

B. Conservatorship

Provide name, physical address and phone number of the person who is willing and capable of being appointed conservatorship; or

Explain ongoing efforts to locate a potential conservator, or

Explain that a diligent search has been made and all attempts have failed.

As a last resort, request that the Chancery Clerk be appointed as the conservator.

7. Income, Resources, and Insurance

Procedure 7

Caseworker Safety

This procedure shall govern actions taken to keep APS field personnel safe as they perform investigations.

1. **Initial safety concerns.** Before assigning the report received from the Call Center to an APS Worker, the APS Supervisor shall note any known safety concerns in the WELLSKY record where they will be available to the APS Worker. The APS Supervisor shall verbally or by email or text also alert the APS Worker of known safety concerns at the time of assigning the report for investigation.

2. **Location.** The APS Worker shall ensure that the APS Workers' office and the APS Supervisor are aware of the APS Worker's location at all times. This shall be accomplished by the APS Worker providing the office and the APS Supervisor with a daily schedule that includes case identification, addresses to be visited, and estimated times of arrival at each location. If the schedule changes during the day, the APS Worker shall notify the office and the APS Supervisor via telephone or text of changes in schedule.

3. **Telephones.** APS Workers shall use only cell phones provided by MDHS while conducting field investigations. APS Workers shall never provide their personal telephone number, either cell or land line, to anyone involved in the investigation.

4. **Contact information.** Identification, including business cards, given to any persons involved in the investigation shall only contain the APS Worker's office address and contact information. In no circumstances shall the Social Worker provide anyone involved in the investigation with any of his or her personal contact information.

5. **Biohazard kit.** Each APS Worker is provided with a kit containing, at a minimum, a surgical mask, protective gloves and hand sanitizer.

6. **Hazard avoidance.** The APS Worker is not required to enter or remain in any situation or location in which the APS Worker deems unsafe. The APS Worker should be aware of the following threats to safety while planning and conducting the investigation:

- a. An unsafe or threatening location. This includes buildings in secluded, unsafe or threatening neighborhoods or buildings with threatening animals that may endanger the APS Worker. It also includes buildings that appear to be structurally unsafe.
- b. Threatening persons. This includes persons in or around the location of the investigation that may menace or threaten the APS Worker.
- c. Health hazards. This includes biohazards such as blood, vomit, excessive visible mold, rotting food or animals, or anything else that could pose a health hazard to the APS Worker.
- d. Other conditions. It is impossible to list every situation that may pose a threat to the APS Worker's health and safety. The APS Worker is expected to use judgment and caution in assessing whether the situation or location poses risk to the APS Worker.

7. **Actions.** When the APS Worker determines that a hazard to safety exists, the APS Worker should remove himself or herself from the situation and immediately contact the APS Supervisor. The APS Supervisor and the APS Worker shall jointly evaluate the situation and determine steps to be taken, including arranging for escort by law enforcement or engagement of other agencies that may have authority over the issue causing the hazard. The APS Supervisor and the APS Worker shall then determine steps to be taken to enable the investigation to continue. APS

Supervisors shall not instruct APS Worker to enter or remain in any situation that poses a hazard to the APS Worker's health or safety.

8. Actions prohibited. APS Workers are prohibited from touching potential hazardous materials. As a practical matter, this means that APS Workers are prohibited from cleaning up biohazards such as human waste, blood, vomit or other biological material. It also means the APS Worker is prohibited from cleaning up or moving non-biological materials including but not limited to chemicals and asbestos. If a situation arises in which the Social Worker is asked to touch hazardous materials, The APS Worker shall refuse to do so. If necessary, the APS Worker shall leave the location and immediately contact the APS Supervisor for further guidance.

9. Use of gloves. If the examination of the alleged victim requires touching of the person's body, then the APS Worker shall use protective gloves provided by MDHS.

10. Judgment and situations not covered in other procedures. In all situations involving personal safety, the APS Worker is expected to use good judgment and err on the side of caution. In situations in which there is no directly applicable procedure, the APS Worker shall remove himself or herself from the situation and contact the APS Supervisor for guidance.

Timeframes

This procedure governs the timeframe for conducting investigations.

1. **Initial report.** The Screener of the original report will determine if the report appears to be a Priority I or Priority II report and will record this designation in WELLSKY. This action sends notification to the APS Supervisor of the assignment of the report. This action also sets in motion the time limit for the initial investigation of the case and report to the office of the Attorney General. The APS Supervisor will check the priority of the report as soon as it is received. The APS Supervisor will be aware of the report's priority when assigning the report to a APS Worker

The APS Worker shall check the priority of the report upon receiving the report assignment from the APS Supervisor. In planning the investigation, Priority I cases shall be given precedence over other cases.

2. **Initial Investigation and first report to Attorney General (AG).** Within 48 hours (for a Priority I report) or 72 hours (for a Priority II report) the APS Worker shall complete the APS Report/Investigation Checklist for VAU. This report shall indicate that the investigation has begun and will be sent with all relevant documentation to the AG.

Category	Criteria	Time from Reporting to Initial Report to AG
Priority I	Vulnerable person is in immediate danger	48 hours
Priority II	Vulnerable person is not in immediate danger	72 hours

3. **Completion of investigation.** The investigation shall normally be completed, and completion documented in WELLSKY within 45 days of initiation. See procedure 4.1 regarding investigation initiation. The APS Worker shall document completion of the investigation in WELLSKY. The APS Supervisor shall review the APS Worker's determination that the investigation is completed and shall document that review in WELLSKY. If the APS Supervisor determines that the investigation should continue or remain open, the APS Supervisor will note that determination in WELLSKY and will inform the APS Worker.

4. **Criteria for completion.** In accordance with Policy 3.4, investigations may be closed for the following reasons. The APS Worker shall document the reason for closing the investigation in WELLSKY.

Investigations shall be considered completed when:

1. The service plan is completed,
2. The vulnerable person's situation is stabilized,
3. The conditions causing immediate danger to the vulnerable person have been resolved or mitigated,
4. Another agency has assumed responsibility for the vulnerable person,
5. The vulnerable person has moved out of Mississippi,
6. The vulnerable person having the ability to consent refuses continued services, and
7. The death of the vulnerable person.

5. **Continuing investigations.** Investigations should be completed, and a determination made within 45 days of commencement. In extenuating circumstances, an investigation may be extended beyond 45 days. Should an extension become necessary, the APS Supervisor must request a policy exception to go beyond the maximum allowed time frame. To do so, the APS Worker will make a request for a policy exception to the APS Supervisor who may, at his or her discretion, approve the extension. This request must be

submitted prior to the end of the 45-day deadline for case closure. Extensions will not exceed thirty (30) days per request. If more time is needed, a subsequent extension must be requested by the APS Worker prior to the expiration of the original current extension.

Any request for extension must include the following information:

- a) Explanation of why extension is being requested
- b) Explanation of why required time frame cannot be met
- c) Efforts to date to resolve the risk to the alleged victim
- d) Barriers encountered preventing completion of the plan within the allowed time frame
- e) Duration of extension being requested (up to 30 days)
- f) Plans to resolve the outstanding issues during the extension period, if granted
- g) Anticipated impact if the policy exception is not granted
- h) Other relevant information.

The APS Supervisor will document approval or denial of all extension requests in the case file.

6. Investigations open beyond 60 days. The APS Supervisor will report to the Regional Director of all investigations that have been open more than 60 days. Reports of investigations open for more than 60 days shall include the following information:

- a. Explanation of the reason that the investigation has not been concluded within the expected timeframes.
- b. Barriers encountered preventing completion of the plan within the allowed timeframe.
- c. The APS Supervisor's estimate of the time needed to complete the investigation.
- d. Plans to resolve outstanding issues within the APS Supervisor's estimate.

The Regional Director will monitor the status of all investigations open beyond 60 days and may take steps to affect the completion of the investigations.

The Regional Director shall make an annual report to the APS Director of all cases that remained open beyond 60 days in a format that shall be determined by the APS Director.

Procedure 9

Investigation Determinations

This procedure governs the disposition of investigations from initiation to closure.

1. Investigation time. Policy 8.4 provides that investigations should be completed and a determination made whether abuse, neglect or exploitation have occurred with 45 days from the date of investigation initiation. All investigative activity on an active investigation should be completed within 45 days from the beginning of the investigation. The time between days 35 and 45 should be used for documentation and summary of the investigation. If the APS Worker determines that more time is needed to determine if abuse, neglect and exploitation have happened, the request for an extension of the investigation should be completed before forty-five (45) days have elapsed (see Procedures 8.4 and 8.5).

2. Determinations. There are three possible determinations that may be used to close an investigation. The APS Worker shall classify the investigation's findings and enter one of the following determinations into WELLSKY:

- a. **Substantiated.** A substantiated determination indicates the existence of enough evidence to support the conclusion that abuse, neglect or exploitation has indeed taken place. Evidence supporting the substantiated determination shall be entered into the case file and into WELLSKY as appropriate. The procedures for substantiated cases are found in Procedure 10.
- b. **Unsubstantiated.** An unsubstantiated determination indicates that enough evidence exists to support the conclusion that abuse, neglect or exploitation has not taken place. Evidence supporting the unsubstantiated determination shall be entered into the case file and into WELLSKY as appropriate. Entering the disposition as unsubstantiated will begin the investigation closure procedure.
- c. **Unable to determine.** If the APS Worker's observations, interviews and other investigative procedures fail to provide enough evidence to make either a substantiated or an unsubstantiated determination, and it is unlikely in the opinion of the APS Worker and the Supervisor that additional evidence that may support a substantiated or unsubstantiated determination will be acquired during any extension period, the investigation shall be documented as unable to determine. Reasons supporting the unable to determine designation shall be recorded in WELLSKY and in the case file as appropriate. Entering the disposition as unable to determine will begin the investigation closure procedure.

3. Review and approval. When the APS Worker enters a determination in to WELLSKY, the APS Supervisor is alerted. The APS Supervisor will then approve or disapprove the determination made by the APS Worker. The documentation of approval of the disposition will create a notification in WELLSKY to the APS Worker. APS Supervisor approval of a determination of unsubstantiated or unable to determine will close the investigation if these determinations are approved by the APS Supervisor.

4. Notification of Attorney General. Upon receiving the notification of investigation closure approval from the APS Supervisor, the APS Worker will complete an updated APS Report/Investigation Checklist for VAU (Checklist). This updated report will indicate that the case is completed and will note the findings. The Checklist shall be sent with all required documentation to the Attorney General.

Procedure 10

Substantiated Cases

This procedure governs the handling of substantiated cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

1. Actions for substantiated cases. When an investigation results in a substantiated determination, one of the following actions will be taken:

- a. Care plan. Working with the caretaker and the vulnerable adult, the APS Worker will develop a plan for caring for the vulnerable adult in his or her home.
- b. Conservatorship. If the APS Worker and the APS Supervisor agree that it is in the best interest of the vulnerable adult to have a court-appointed conservator, APS will petition the Chancery Court to appoint a conservator. This is also known as a surrogate plan. Procedures regarding conservatorships or surrogate plans are found at Procedure 10.4.c and Procedure 10.7.
- c. Attorney General investigation. If the situation warrants further investigation, APS will refer the case to the Office of the Attorney General for further investigation. See Procedure 10.6 regarding Attorney General investigations.

2. Consideration of risk. In determining the action called for in Procedure 10.1, the APS Worker will consider the level of risk associated with this case. The following standards will be used:

- a. Low risk. The vulnerable adult's risk of harm in the future is not significantly greater than risk faced by the general population in his or her area.
- b. Medium risk. The vulnerable adult's risk of harm in the future is at a higher than average level of risk than most adults in his or her area.
- c. High risk. The vulnerable adult's risk of harm in the future is significantly higher than most adults in his or her area.

3. Care plan opening. The APS Worker will open a service case in WELLSKY. The service case will document the development of the Individual Service Plan (ISP) as well as the progress of the ISP. The ISP documentation will include the following information:

- a. Problems or reason for the plan. This should include a summary of the investigation findings, including the behaviors, actions, circumstances or conditions that placed the vulnerable adult at risk.
- b. Tasks. This documentation should include simple, clear statements of what will be done to resolve the problem(s) or issue(s) identified in Procedure 10.3.a. The task statements should include:
 - i. Precisely what will be done,
 - ii. The person(s) responsible for carrying out that task (APS worker, caretaker, other service provider, etc.).
 - iii. Timeframe for completing the task.
- c. Expectations. This documentation will include a statement of the expected condition of the vulnerable adult or the expected situation once the issues described in Procedure 10.3. are resolved.
- d. Evaluation: Periodic evaluation of the achievement or lack of achievement of the plan.
- e. Approval: All case plans and subsequent actions shall be approved by the APS Supervisor.

4. Types of plans. In developing the ISP, the APS Worker may select from one of the following types of ISP's:

- a. Self-care plan. This is the least restrictive type of plan. This type of plan is acceptable for low-risk cases. For a self-care plan to be acceptable, the vulnerable adult must have capacity to make decisions and to carry out a plan of action. The self-care plan should be used in cases where the vulnerable adult, with resources and support arranged through MDHS and other care providers, can remain self-sufficient until the situation is stabilized. The APS Worker's role is to monitor this type of plan.

- b. Informal supportive plan. This type of ISP is acceptable when (a) the vulnerable adult has capacity to make decisions but is not able to carry out the ISP by himself or herself, and (b) there are family and friends available to help carry out the ISP. The APS Worker will mobilize support resources and monitor the situation until it is stabilized. Once the situation is stabilized and any crisis has abated, the APS Worker may monitor the situation on a short-term or long-term basis.
- c. Surrogate plan. Surrogate plans are the most restrictive and are most appropriate in high-risk situations. In a surrogate plan the vulnerable adult loses the freedom to make major decisions about his or her life. Surrogate plans include court-ordered arrangements such as guardianships or conservatorships for an indefinite period of time (Procedure 10.1b). The role of the APS Worker is to initiate the process of arranging the surrogate decision-maker and to implement the least restrictive plan for the vulnerable adult. The procedure for initiating a surrogate plan can be found at Procedure 10.7.
- d. Special plans. A preventive special plan is typically used when there is no danger or risk to the vulnerable adult, but the APS Worker is needed to arrange special services such as meals, senior activities, transportation or medical care. A preventive special plan may also be used when the vulnerable adult has capacity to make decisions and refuses MDHS help. This type of plan involves monitoring the vulnerable adult on a periodic basis.

A follow-up special plan involves following up on the vulnerable adult's situation after the crisis or danger has been eliminated to prevent it recurrence. This type of plan may involve visits or monitoring by family, friends, community groups or other service providers.

5. Monitoring the ISP. Identification of the problems or reasons (10.3.a.) creating risk for the vulnerable adult begins the implementation of the ISP. For as long as the case remains open or the ISP is in place, the APS Worker shall continue to monitor the case. During the first 90 days that the case is open, the APS Worker must make at least one home visit to the vulnerable adult every 30 days. After the case has been open for 90 days, the APS Worker must make at least one home visit every 90 days until the case is closed. Home visits must include face-to-face contact by the APS Worker with the vulnerable adult.

6. Initiating Attorney General Investigation. In the case of a substantiated case of abuse, neglect or exploitation that warrants referral to the Attorney General for further investigation, the following procedure will be followed:

- a. The APS Worker will confer with his or her APS Supervisor, who will approve escalation of the case for further Attorney General (AG) investigation. Documentation of approval for AG escalation shall be documented.
- b. The APS Worker will complete the APS Report/Investigation Checklist for VAU, and indicate that this is an additional information report
- c. On the APS Report/Investigation Checklist for VAU, the APS Worker will update all relevant information, including a request for further investigation by the AG.
- d. The APS Worker will attach the entire investigation file and documentation and will send the report to the Attorney General's office. Submission to the AG shall be done using technology and methods in place at the time of submission.
- e. Documentation of referral to the AG shall be maintained.

7. Initiating a surrogate plan. Surrogate plans are managed through the MDHS legal department. A surrogate plan is considered to be an action of last resort, to be used only if other types of plans have failed or if the risk to the vulnerable adult is considered significant enough to warrant bypassing a self-care plan or an informal plan. To initiate a surrogate plan, the following procedure shall be followed:

- a. The APS Worker shall complete the Vulnerable Adult Court Summary Guide (Court Summary). All sections of the Guide are to be completed, and all specified documentation is to be attached before sending the Guide for review.

- b. The completed Guide shall be given to the APS Supervisor. After the APS Supervisor reviews and approves the Guide, the Guide and all supporting documentation shall be sent to the Regional Director.
- c. The Regional Director will review the Guide. If the Regional Director approves the Guide, the Guide and accompanying documentation will be sent to the Legal Department. A copy of the Guide is not sent to the AG.

8. Closure. Cases may be closed when one of the following conditions has occurred:

- a. The ISP is completed.
- b. The vulnerable person's situation is stabilized.
- c. The conditions causing immediate danger to the vulnerable person have been resolved or mitigated.
- d. Another agency has assumed responsibility for the vulnerable person.
- e. The vulnerable person has moved out of Mississippi.
- f. The vulnerable person having the ability to consent refuses continued services.
- g. The death of the vulnerable person.

To close a case, the APS Worker will update WELLSKY with the reason(s) for case closure and will send the case to the APS Supervisor for approval of closure. Upon receiving approval of closure from the APS Supervisor, the APS Worker will send a final APS Report/Investigation Checklist for VAU to the Attorney General's office indicating closure of the case.

9. Consent of the alleged victim. If an alleged victim does not consent to the receipt of services in the form of plans described in Procedure 10.4.a or 10.4.b, or if the alleged victim withdraws his or her consent, the services shall not be provided. When a vulnerable adult or alleged victim who is capable of making decisions refuses the receipt of protective services, the APS Worker must respect the decision and terminate contact with the adult. The termination of contact and reason for termination of contact will be documented in WELLSKY. In this case, the APS Worker will explain to the vulnerable adult the availability of services and will leave the vulnerable adult with contact information should they decide that services are wanted.

If the alleged victim refuses the receipt of protective services and the APS Worker and the APS Supervisor determine that the vulnerable person lacks the capacity to refuse services, the APS Worker will continue to develop a plan described in 10.4.c or 10.4.d. The lack of capacity to refuse services shall be documented in WELLSKY.

Supervisory Review-

- Utilizing the supervisory review tools, choose 3 random reports per worker each week to review.
- Document your findings on the review form.
- Pend back cases that require action.

Procedure 11

1. General Teleworking Guidelines

Teleworking is an authorized work arrangement, for selected employees (APS Workers), in which some or all work is performed at a location other than the employee's primary (usual and stationary) workplace. The alternate workplace may include the employee's home, or a location authorized by the supervisor. Teleworking may be used as a recruitment and retention tool while providing positive impact on the environment, providing flexibility to the employee, and tangible savings to the employer.

Successful teleworkers have full support of their supervisors, and the selection is made based on the suitability of the job duties and the work performance of the employee. If at any time, the employee is not able to effectively perform their job duties on a teleworking schedule and environment, the supervisor can revoke teleworking privileges.

Teleworkers must be mindful at all times of the image presented during the teleworking day and must not be involved in activities during the workday that will reflect negatively on the department. Examples referenced include but are not limited to, outdoor activities i.e., yardwork, shopping, working another job during teleworking hours.

Teleworking is a management option that is permitted by the department. It is not an employee right. The duration of permission for teleworking is entirely at the will and determination of the department, which holds the grounds to determine the time, place, and manner of employment.

An employee's participation in teleworking is strictly an incentive granted by the department. The supervisor/director or other authorized official may terminate teleworking at any time; however, advanced notice will be given if feasible. Any issues or concerns regarding continuation of teleworking after it has been revoked are not able to be appealed, or able to be filed as a grievance.

Every teleworker will be required to sign an Adult Protective Services teleworker's agreement and it will be kept on file by the employees' supervisor/director, training coordinator, and Human Resources. The agreement will be changed accordingly whenever there are changes.

Teleworking will be added to the employees Performance Review Assessment (PRA). Employees will remain under the PRA system developed by the supervisor/director and will be evaluated on the same terms as any employee who works in a county office.

Random audits will/can be performed to ensure accountability and the success of the teleworker.

2. Scheduling

Employee benefits (including leave and holidays) are not impacted by a teleworking arrangement. Teleworkers must adhere to departmental policy as it relates to approval of leave.

APS Workers who telework will **NOT** be permitted to work a **COMPRESSED** work schedule.

- The standard work schedule will be 8AM -5PM with an hour lunch; a 15-minute break on the morning side and a 15-minute break on the afternoon side.
- APS Workers **MUST** punch in/out on their laptops daily.
- All teleworkers **MUST** provide a detailed daily itinerary clearly stating what their daily duties are and what they will be doing.

- If any changes arise, (i.e., longer than expected visits, traffic issues, etc.) the employee should report those changes to their supervisor immediately.
- Must check and respond to emails daily.
- Must keep your agency cell phones charged and respond promptly to all calls and voice mails.

3. Emergency Situations

Various circumstances can affect an employees' individual situations, but the principles governing administrative leave, dismissals and closings remain unchanged. The ability to conduct work, whether at home or in the office, determines when an employee may be excused from duty.

Employees that are scheduled to telework are considered not to be impacted by the closure of offices. They are expected to telework, or request leave as usual. The only exception to this is if the employee is unable to work due to unforeseen or unusual circumstances such as a power outage or unavailability of key computer/phone system(s). These situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

If or when an emergency affects the employee's telework site (i.e., power outage, bad weather conditions, etc.), the teleworker is expected to report the issue as soon as possible to their direct supervisor. A leave request should be sent to the employee's supervisor.

When a teleworker knows in advance of a situation that may delay or halt the teleworking process, the employee must either report to their respective primary office location or request leave.

4. Use of State-Owned Property

The Mississippi Department of Human Services will provide a cellular phone and laptop to each teleworker. It is the employee's responsibility to maintain the property issued upon hire.

All maintenance of State-owned equipment will be performed by an authorized MDHS MIS personnel. If any technical assistance is needed, please contact the MIS help desk/Jira Service Management with the following link:

<https://msdhs.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portal/7/user/login?destination=portal%2F7%2Fgroup%2F39>

Personally owned software (e.g., Apple iTunes) and equipment may not be used on State of Mississippi equipment.

Any and all software must be licensed and can only be added by authorized personnel (i.e., MIS technical support).

All information is confidential. The installation of State-owned equipment increases the legal complexity of the teleworking arrangement. Before a decision is made to install state-owned equipment (i.e., landline phone, printers, fax machine), supervisors should consult with regional supervisors and approval must be obtained by MDHS MIS personnel.

All office equipment and supplies will be provided by the MDHS Division of Aging and Adult Services. MDHS will not reimburse teleworkers for out-of-pocket expenses for supplies that are normally available

in the office. If copies are needed, please consult with your immediate supervisor to make arrangement with a county office.

All equipment will have a State of Mississippi Seal. All property will be listed on a property log and will be sent to you through Docu-Sign by Brenda Hille, APS Fiscal Officer. You must check the property log to ensure that you have all items listed. Once you sign the document, you are responsible for all equipment listed on the property log.

If any property is lost, stolen, or damaged, please immediately report this to your immediate supervisor. There is an hour timeframe to report stolen items. An affidavit must be filed within this timeframe. The affidavit should be supplemented as soon as feasible with a copy of the report to local law enforcement regarding any claims of stolen property.

5. Use of Employee-owned Equipment

The Mississippi Department of Human Services will provide each teleworker with all equipment that is needed to fulfill the duties of the job.

MDHS does not assume responsibility for any personal equipment that is purchased by the employee for the use of work. Any and all expenses for such equipment will be the responsibility of the employee.

If any work is saved to an external storage space (i.e., flash drive, etc), the information must be password protected.

No software should be added to any equipment that is issued to the employee by the State of Mississippi. All software additions must be completed by MDHS MIS personnel.

All information regarding work must be properly secured at all times. Any tangible work-related items must be locked in a file drawer or lock box that is secured.

6. Dependent Care

MDHS offers teleworking opportunities with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that a proper work environment is maintained. Supervisors have the right to visit your working space to ensure that standard procedures are being met. The employee and family members must have an understanding that the designated workspace is set aside strictly for the employee to work. Responsibilities for family must not interfere with time allotted for work.

Teleworking does not alleviate the need for employees to make arrangements for childcare or dependent care during scheduled working hours. The teleworker should continue to make proper arrangements for childcare or dependent care to the same extent as though the employee was working in a county office. Failure to do so, could result in the loss of teleworking privileges in addition to other disciplinary action.

APS Teleworking Self-Assessment

A successful teleworker has certain traits, a job that is capable to be done remotely, and a teleworking workspace that is conducive to work. Read each of the following items below and circle the answer that most appropriately describes you or your circumstance. Your self-assessment will help you decide whether teleworking is right for you.

1. Successful teleworkers develop daily routines and can set and meet their own deadlines. Are you self-motivated, self-disciplined, and able to work independently; are you able to complete tasks and projects on-time with minimal supervision and feedback; and are you productive when you have little to no supervision?

Always Usually Sometimes Never

2. Do you have strong organizational skills and time-management skills; are you goal and results oriented; will you remain focused on your tasks while at home and not be distracted by television, housework, or visitors; do you manage your workload well, solve many of your own problems and find satisfaction in completing tasks on your own; are you comfortable setting priorities and deadlines; and do you keep your sights on results?

Always Usually Sometimes Never

3. Are you comfortable working alone and disciplined enough to apply yourself continuously to your job without interruption or distraction; can you adjust to the relative isolation of working at home; will you be able to adjust to the missed social interaction at the county office; do you have the self-control to work neither too much or too little; can you set a comfortable and productive pace while working from home?

Always Usually Sometimes Never

4. Teleworkers should have a good understanding of the organizations' culture. Are you knowledgeable of your organizations' policies and procedures; do you have well-established work duties?

Always Usually Sometimes Never

5. Are you adaptable to changing routines and environments; have you demonstrated an ability to be flexible about work routines and environments; and are you willing to come into the county office on a regularly scheduled teleworking day if your supervisor/director, co-workers, or clients need you there?

Always Usually Sometimes Never

6. Are you an effective communicator and team player; do you communicate well with your supervisor/director and co-workers; are you able to express needs objectively and develop solutions; and have you developed ways to communicate regularly with your supervisor/director and co-workers that you can use when you telework?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Never

7. Current and previous job performance is a great indicator of your potential to be a successful teleworker. Consider how any problems or developmental needs evident in your last performance evaluation may affect your teleworking experience. Are you successful in your current/previous position; do you know your job well; and do you have a good track record of performance?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Never

8. Do you have an appropriate work environment?

A safe comfortable workspace where it is easy to concentrate on work

The level of security required by the agency

The necessary office equipment and software that meet agency standards

Household members who will understand you are working and will not disturb.

Are you the right kind of worker? If your answers to questions 1 through 6 are “always” or “yes,” you are the kind of employee that will be likely to succeed at teleworking.

Do you have the right home environment? You should be able to check every item under question 8.

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

APS Policy Acknowledgement

I have read and been informed about the content, requirements, and expectations of the APS Policy and Procedure Manual, APS Worker Teleworking Policy, and APS Direct Services Policy for APS workers at the Mississippi Department of Human Services. I have received a copy of the above stated policies and agree to abide by the policy guidelines as a condition of my employment and my continuing employment at the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

I understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the APS Policy and Procedures, APS Worker Teleworking Policy, and APS Direct Services Policy, I will consult with my immediate supervisor or a Human Resources employee.

Please ensure to read the APS Policy and Procedure Manual, APS Worker Teleworking Policy, and APS Direct Services Policy carefully to ensure that you understand the policy before signing this document.

Employee Signature:_____

Employee Printed Name:_____

Date:_____

This procedure shall outline general procedures that govern the use of the State Procurement Card (P-Card)

Direct Services

1. Direct Services is made available for the APS Program to help vulnerable clients in need of immediate assistance during an APS worker's investigation. It provides a more cost-effective method of a small dollar purchase and payment to serve the client's needs.
2. The allowable State purchases will be up to \$2,000.00 per client unless otherwise justified by documentation for additional direct services need.
3. The APS Worker will determine the need for the specific services in the home during the investigation.
4. Direct Services requests are monitored and coordinated by the QA Coordinator (Direct Services .com).
6. The Direct Services information will be requested by the APS worker into a webform for approval of the following services but not limited to:

- Homemaker
- Sitter Services
- Respite Care
- Utility Payment
- Transportation
- Home Repairs
- Adult Day Care
- Case Management
- Medication
- Shelton/ Hotel
- Medical Equipment and/ or Supplies
- Attendant/ Personal Care
- Food Assistance
- COVID testing vaccine /PPS
- Others

Roles and Responsibilities

APS Worker is the Division's employee who is issued a Procurement Card and is authorized to make the service request on behalf of the client's needs.

1. Makes a face-to-face contact and determines the need for direct services during the worker's investigation.
2. Submits direct services request on the Direct Services webform (APS Direct Services.com). Staffs with their APS Supervisor to ensure that the client's needs meet direct services criteria.
3. Ensure that purchases do not exceed limits and are within budgetary constraints along with no sales tax charged on the Division purchases.
4. Upload receipts, invoices, and signed invoices (by the worker and if possible, by the client also) for each transaction to their Supervisor and QA Coordinator for approval.
5. Upon receipt of each purchase, verify the correct number of items received and that all merchandise is in good condition by signing the invoice or receipt attesting to the quantity and condition of the merchandise.
6. Upload and maintain receipts in Well sky Note tab for the Direct Services.
7. Direct Service purchases do not include worker travel, personal services, or entertainment.
8. Ensure that the card is not used by another individual or agency.
9. Immediately report any unauthorized use of the card to your supervisor.
10. Report lost or stolen cards to Supervisor.
11. Return the card to APS Supervisor upon termination of employment or request by appropriate authority.
12. Attend all needed direct services initial and on-going trainings.

APS Supervisor is the Division's employee who is authorized to review and approve the legitimacy of the worker's direct services submission.

1. Provides advice and guidance to the APS workers regarding purchasing request.
2. Reviews and staff with the worker regarding the specified direct services request.
3. May contact the QA Coordinator for clarity of directs services program.
4. Immediately report any unauthorized use of the card to the APS QA Coordinator.
5. Report lost or stolen card to QA Coordinator.
6. Return the card to QA Coordinator upon termination of employment or upon request by appropriate authority.
7. Attend all needed direct services initial and on-going trainings.

APS QA Coordinator is the Division's employee providing program oversight at the State level and ensure that the APS worker's direct services purchasing request meets criteria.

1. The primary contact within the Division for processing request for new purchases by the worker and will notify the APS Regional Directors as needed.
2. Reviews and monitors daily for direct services request by the APS worker on the web form.
3. Provides direct services request to the fiscal officer for loading funds to the P-Card.
4. Provides to the worker what will be proper purchases and the consequences of unauthorized use and purchases.
5. Assign a card to each APS worker as a Cardholder.
6. Reviews the worker's transactions, and ensures that each purchase is supported by invoices, receipts, and signed invoices, by worker and client, if possible.
7. Provides initial and on-going trainings.

This procedure details the steps that shall be followed by APS staff for travel submissions and amount limits.

Effective December 1, 2021, Travel Reimbursement requests should be submitted every two weeks or once a month. Never to exceed a month without justification such as out sick for an extended amount of time or for some unforeseeable event such as a natural disaster, etc.

When multiple employees are traveling to the same investigation in different vehicles, only one person can claim travel. Carpooling is encouraged when traveling to the same investigation.

Workers can claim mileage to the meeting point and back between counties. However, the meeting point should be a central location and closest to everyone's starting point.

If an investigation is in the county where the Supervisor is housed, that is the meeting point for the worker.

Supervisors must review travel to include:

- Ensuring the travel is being submitted timely. If travel is not submitted in a timely matter (more than a month) the supervisor must make sure the justification memo is attached.
- Randomly checking to see if points of travel are correct.
- Ensure that notes of travel have been documented in WellSky before approving travel.
- If travel exceeds \$500.00 for the month, ensure that justification memo is attached
- A copy of the completed travel must be forwarded to the Regional Supervisor for quality assurance purposes.

Regional Supervisors will monitor travel to ensure policy adherence for budgetary purposes.

Travel will be submitted to DAAS Fiscal Officer for processing which will include (example attached):

- Travel Voucher completed in Excel format (all points of travel must be visible).
- Point of travel on separate a form (snapshots showing destination and mileage for each travel voucher submitted). There should be only one attached for points of travel for each travel voucher.
- Travel vouchers cannot overlap months (for example November and December travel cannot be on the same voucher)
- Justification (if applicable).
- E-Waiver.

Ensure that your travel reflects the attached example. If errors are found, the DAAS Fiscal Officer will notify the employee via e-mail and cc the supervisor.

Once travel has been reviewed by DAAS Fiscal Officer and is correct, the travel will be uploaded into DocuSign for signatures and forwarded for payment to the Travel Unit in Budgets and Accounting.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this bulletin, please contact Anita Ballard at 601- 359-4319 or Anita.Ballard@mdhs.ms.gov.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding travel, please contact Heike Gutierrez at 601-359- 4453 or Heike.Gutierrez@mdhs.ms.gov

Procedure 12

APS Direct Services

This procedure shall outline general procedures that govern the use of the State Procurement Card (P-Card)

Direct Services

1. Direct Services is made available for the APS Program to help vulnerable clients in need of immediate assistance during an APS worker's investigation. It provides a more cost-effective method of a small dollar purchase and payment to serve the client's needs.
2. The allowable State purchases will be up to \$2,500.00 per client unless otherwise justified by documentation for additional direct services needed.
3. The APS Worker will determine the need for the specific services in the home during the investigation.
4. Direct Services requests are monitored and coordinated by the DSP Coordinator (**Direct Services.com**).
5. The Direct Services information will be requested by the APS worker in a web form for approval of the following services but not limited to:

- Homemaker
- Sitter Services
- Respite Care
- Utility Payment
- Transportation
- Home Repairs
- Adult Day Care
- Case Management
- Medication
- Shelter
- Medical Equipment and/ or Supplies
- Attendant/ Personal Care
- Food Assistance
- COVID testing vaccine /PPE
- Others (Exterminator Services)

Roles and Responsibilities

APS Worker is the Division's employee who is issued a Procurement Card and is authorized to make the service request on behalf of the client's needs.

1. Makes face-to-face contact and determines the need for direct services during the worker's investigation.
2. Submits direct services requests on the Direct Services web form (APS Direct Services.com). Staff with their APS Supervisor to ensure that the client's needs meet direct services criteria.
3. Ensure that purchases do not exceed limits and are within budgetary constraints along with no sales tax charged on the Division purchases.
4. Upload receipts, invoices, and signed invoices (by the worker and if possible, by the client also) for each transaction to their Supervisor and DSP Coordinator for approval.
5. Upon receipt of each purchase, verify the correct number of items received and that all merchandise is in good condition by signing the invoice or receipt attesting to the quantity and condition of the merchandise.
6. Upload and maintain receipts in Well sky Note tab for the Direct Services.
7. Direct Service purchases do not include worker travel, personal services, or entertainment.
8. Ensure that the card is not used by another individual or agency.
9. Immediately report any unauthorized use of the card to your supervisor.
10. Report lost or stolen cards to the Supervisor.

11. Return the card to the APS Supervisor upon termination of employment or request by the appropriate authority.
12. Attend all needed direct services initial and ongoing training.

APS Supervisor is the Division's employee who is authorized to review and approve the legitimacy of the worker's direct services submission.

1. Provide advice and guidance to the APS workers regarding purchasing requests.
2. Reviews and staff with the worker regarding the specified direct services request.
3. May contact the DSP Coordinator for clarity of the direct services program.
4. Immediately report any unauthorized use of the card to the APS DSP Coordinator.
5. Report lost or stolen cards to the DSP Coordinator.
6. Return the card to the DSP Coordinator upon termination of employment or upon request by the appropriate authority.
7. Attend all needed direct services initial and ongoing training.

APS Direct Services Program Coordinator (DSPC) is the Division's employee providing program oversight at the State level and ensuring that the APS worker's direct services purchasing request meets the criteria.

1. The primary contact within the Division for processing requests for new purchases by the worker and will notify the APS Regional and County Supervisors as needed.
2. Reviews and monitors daily for direct service requests by the APS worker on the web form.
3. Provide direct service requests to the fiscal officer for loading funds to the P-Card.
4. Provide to the worker what will be proper purchases and the consequences of unauthorized use and purchases.
5. Assign the P-cards to each APS worker as a Cardholder.
6. Review the worker's transactions, and ensure that each purchase is supported by invoices, receipts, and signed invoices, by worker and client, if possible.
7. Provides initial and on-going trainings.