

# Summary of the State Elder Abuse Questionnaire for Vermont

A Final Report to:  
Vermont Adult Protective Services

February 2002

Prepared by Researchers at The University of Iowa Department of Family Medicine

Grant, "Impact of Laws on State Reported Elder Abuse" funded by the Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention:  
R06/CCR718677-02.

Principal Investigator: Gerald Jogerst, M.D.

Investigators:

Jeanette Daly, RN, PhD

Jon Lemke, PhD

Margaret Brinig, JD, MA, PhD

Jim Hall, PhD

Gretchen Schmuck, MSW

Robert Olick, PhD, JD (09/30/00-06/30/01)

Research Assistants:

Jerry Ingram, MSW

Patrick Monahan, MA (09/30/00-01/31/02)

Ashley Narsutis, BA (09/15/01-12/21/01)

Denise Flory, MSW (10/01/00-05/31/01)

## Elder Abuse Investigations: Vermont Results

In September 2000, a research team at the University of Iowa was awarded a grant to investigate domestic elder abuse at the national level. This two-year award was made possible by funds from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The overall purpose of this project was to evaluate the impact of state Adult Protective Service (APS) legislation on the implementation of the investigative system for elder abuse. One of the specific aims was to differentiate investigative structure and investigator characteristics at the reporting district level for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

### Methods

#### *Study Participants*

A mailed survey was used to accomplish the aim of differentiating investigative structure and investigator characteristics. Prior to mailing, permission to conduct the survey was sought from each state's administrator of Adult Protective Services. Permission to mail surveys to each APS office was granted by 43 states and the District of Columbia. Montana allowed the survey to be sent only via email. The study's Principal Investigator accepted this method because it did not deviate from the mailed survey design.

Five states (Michigan, Missouri, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee) did not grant permission for questionnaires to be sent to each local office. Three of those states (Michigan, Missouri, and Tennessee) completed one questionnaire representing all APS offices in the state. Data collected from these states were not used in the final analysis.

South Dakota offered to complete the questionnaires in a group meeting, however, this format was not acceptable to the Principal Investigator as it would have deviated from the mailed survey design and would have increased the probability of obtaining biased or inaccurate results. North Dakota could not participate because there are no adult protective service offices in the state.

### *Instrument*

The authors developed a 23-item questionnaire entitled "State Elder Abuse Investigations" for use in this study. Demographic items included respondent's position title, age, gender, length of employment in current position, level of education, and full-time or part-time work status. Other items pertained to investigations conducted by the agency such as the use of abuse screens, number of full time equivalent investigators, and curriculum for elder abuse investigation.

The questionnaire underwent initial revisions following suggestions generated by the geriatric assessment clinic team (physicians, nurse practitioner, social worker, and nurse) and the research review team (University of Iowa Department of Internal and Family Medicine). The questionnaire was then piloted by ten social workers, each of whom conducts elder and adult abuse investigations in the Iowa City, Iowa area.

Following feedback from the social workers, final revisions were made to the survey.

### *APS Office Address Database*

Office addresses for each state were obtained during two different time periods. Prior to funding of the study, a research assistant began to develop a database for each state's APS office addresses. These databases were obtained from a variety of sources: state web sites, administrators of state APS programs, and phone calls to district level

office supervisors. By the time funding had been received, 23 state address databases had been developed. These 23 state administrators then received a copy of their APS office addresses for verification purposes. The remaining 28 state's administrators provided their APS office addresses to the research team. Initially, the research team thought there was one office per county of the United State's 2,916 counties. After compiling all the databases, there were 1,860 office addresses.

When the office address list was received from state administrators, some administrators provided a contact person's name while some did not. See Appendix A for a list of states, number of participating offices, and if a contact name was provided.

#### *Mailings*

An APS supervisor, director, or adult protective service investigator from each APS office were sent a questionnaire. The first mailing was sent in March 2001 to 1,860 offices resulting in a return of 728 (39%) surveys. A second mailing was sent in May 2001 to those who had not yet returned the first survey. Of the 1,191 offices that received the second mailing, 366 (31%) returned the survey. Following the second mailing, surveys from the first mailing were received, thus some APS offices inadvertently received a second mailing. Surveys returned from the second mailing were cross-referenced with those received from the first mailing. In cases of duplication, surveys returned from the first mailing were used. In total, 1,056 (60%) surveys were returned by mail.

#### *Phone Calls*

In August 2001, follow-up telephone calls were made to 701 offices that had not returned a survey from either mailing. During this first series of telephone calls it was

found that, in some states, the APS office address list was incorrect. Some states provided office addresses for *all* offices in the state including those that do not provide adult protective services. For those states, additional telephone calls were made to determine which offices did not provide APS services so we could delete them from the original database of 1,860 APS offices. After revising the working database, there were 1,757 offices in the US that provide adult protective services.

Following completion of the first round of telephone calls, 216 (12%) surveys were completed by telephone. In September 2001, a second series of telephone calls were made to 569 offices resulting in another 129 (8%) surveys being completed.

#### *Emailed Surveys*

Twenty emailed surveys were sent to investigators in Montana; all were housed in different offices. A “reminder” survey was emailed a month later to the 12 investigators who did not return the first emailed survey. None of the second emailed surveys were returned.

#### *Summary*

After both mailings, both series of telephone calls, and surveys by email, a total return of 1,409 surveys were completed. This resulted in an overall return rate of 80%. This report describes the survey results received from APS workers in the state of Vermont.

### Results

Results are provided by individual state (Vermont) and the total of all 44 participating states and the District of Columbia. Vermont has one local office. One

(100%) questionnaire was returned by mail. There is an 82% survey return rate for the state of Vermont.

Nationally, the average respondent was female, 46 years old, working full-time with a college degree and had been in their current position for nine years. The following is the questionnaire with responses from the composite national survey and for the state of Vermont.

### State Elder Abuse Investigations Questionnaire Results

1. Are abuse screens or risk factor instruments used when investigating an alleged elder abuse report in your service area?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,389	%	N = 1	%
Yes	691	50.3	0	0.0
No	698	49.7	1	100.0

2. Which abuse screen or risk factor instrument is used for assessment of an alleged elder abuse report? (**check all that apply**)

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 684	% of Responses	N = 0	% of Responses
	Number of Responses = 718		Number of Responses = 0	
Caregiver Abuse Screen for the Elderly (Reis & Nahmiash, 1995)	17	2	0	0.0
Elder Abuse Detection: Indicators (Bloom, Ansell, & Bloom, 1989)	10	1	0	0.0
Indicators of Abuse (IOA) Screen (Reis, & Nahmiash, 1998)	22	3	0	0.0
Sengstock-Hwalek Screen (Sengstock-Hwalek, 1987)	8	1	0	0.0
Screening Protocol for Identification of Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly (Johnson, 1981)	18	3	0	0.0
If another instrument is used, please specify the name:	643	90	0	0.0

3. What is the minimum age of persons covered by your state's laws addressing elder abuse?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,381	%	N = 1	%
18 years and older	874	63.3	1	100.0
60 years and older	352	25.5	0	0.0
65 years and older	101	7.3	0	0.0
Other, please specify:	54	3.9	0	0.0



4. Do the same investigators review child and elder abuse reports in your service area?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,393	%	N = 1	%
Yes	377	27.1	0	0.0
No	1,016	72.9	1	100.0

5. Please list the number of investigators (FTEs) in your service area who investigated child and elder abuse reports during your last fiscal year.

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 413	%	N = 0	%
Number of Investigators				
1 – 5	318	77.0	0	0.0
6 – 10	62	15.0	0	0.0
11 – 15	19	4.6	0	0.0
More than 15	14	3.4	0	0.0
Mean	5.10		0.00	

6. Please list the number of investigators (FTEs) in your service area who investigated elder abuse reports during your last fiscal year.

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,202	%	N = 1	%
Number of Investigators				
1 – 5	972	80.9	0	0.0
6 – 10	155	12.9	1	100.0
11 – 15	26	2.16	0	0.0
More than 15	49	4.04	0	0.0
Mean	4.30		5.50	

7. After an elder abuse investigation and interventions have been implemented, do you think the elderly person is better off?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,392	%	N = 1	%
Most of the time	958	68.8	1	100.0
Some of the time	433	31.1	0	0.0
None of the time	1	0.10	0	0.0

8. Why? (Vermont selected responses)

“Interventions and investigations are conducted at the elder’s individual needs and wishes in mind. Risk factors are directly targeted and either eliminated or significantly reduced”.

9. Do you think the reporting of elder abuse in your area is?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,392	%	N = 1	%
Under reported	1,014	72.8	1	100.0
Reported adequately	350	25.2	0	0.0
Over reported	28	2.0	0	0.0

10. Please list reasons why you think elder abuse is under reported? (Vermont selected responses)

“Lack of knowledge in general public”, “Ageism attitudes which creates an environment in which abuse is-part condoned-tolerated, ignored.

11. Please list reasons why you think elder abuse is over reported. (Vermont responses)

No responses

12. Do you think the number of elder abuse reports that have been investigated in the last year by your department are?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,362	%	N = 1	%
Under substantiated	184	13.5	0	0.0
Substantiated adequately	1,168	85.8	1	100.0
Over substantiated	10	0.70	0	0.0

13. What is the average number of caseload investigations an investigator in your area carries per month?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 555	%	N = 0	%
<b>Child Abuse</b>				
1-10 cases	214	38.6	0	0.0
11-20 cases	216	38.9	0	0.0
21-25 cases	60	10.8	0	0.0
26-30 cases	25	4.5	0	0.0
31-35 cases	10	1.8	0	0.0
36-40 cases	11	2.0	0	0.0
> 40 cases	19	3.4	0	0.0

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,339	%	N = 1	%
<b>Adult Abuse</b>				
1-10 cases	766	57.2	0	0.0
11-20 cases	315	23.5	0	0.0
21-25 cases	91	6.8	1	100.0
26-30 cases	60	4.5	0	0.0
31-35 cases	39	2.9	0	0.0
36-40 cases	27	2.0	0	0.0
> 40 cases	41	3.1	0	0.0

## Education

14. Does your department have a formal curriculum in elder abuse evaluations for employees?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,389	%	N = 1	%
Yes	835	60.1	0	0.0
No	554	39.9	1	100.0

15. If the department does have a formal curriculum in elder abuse evaluations, how long is the course?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 825	%	N = 0	%
Less than one day	11	1.3	0	0.0
One day	38	4.6	0	0.0
Two to four days	308	37.3	0	0.0
One week	182	22.1	0	0.0
Two to three weeks	180	21.8	0	0.0
More than three weeks, please specify	106	12.8	0	0.0

16. What is the minimum academic level required for elder abuse investigators in your service area?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,395	%	N = 1	%
High school graduate	55	3.9	0	0.0
Associate degree	44	3.2	0	0.0
College graduate	1,240	88.9	1	100.0
Some graduate work	11	0.80	0	0.0
A graduate degree	16	1.1	0	0.0
A doctoral degree	1	0.10	0	0.0
Other	28	2.0	0	0.0

17. What percent of the elder abuse investigators in your service area have educational preparation beyond the minimum requirements?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,363	%	N = 1	%
None	532	39.0	0	0.0
1-25%	405	29.7	0	0.0
26-50%	149	10.9	1	100.0
51-75%	64	4.7	0	0.0
76-99%	59	4.3	0	0.0
100%	154	11.3	0	0.0

18. What is the area of educational training for the majority of the elder abuse investigators in your service area?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,360	%	N = 1	%
Social work	895	65.8	0	0.0
Nursing	8	0.60	0	0.0
Criminal justice	41	3.0	0	0.0
Aging studies	13	1.0	0	0.0
Education	30	2.2	0	0.0
Other	373	27.4	1	100.0

Other responses: "A variety of disciplines: Human Services, Psychology, Nursing, Criminal Justice, and Aging Studies".

### Demographic Data

19. What is the title of your position in the department? (Vermont selected responses)  
"Program Chief".

20. What is your level of education?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,400	%	N = 1	%
High school graduate	33	2.4	0	0.0
Associate degree	28	2.0	0	0.0
College graduate	672	48.0	1	100.0
Some graduate work	243	17.4	0	0.0
A graduate degree	403	28.8	0	0.0
A doctoral degree	4	0.30	0	0.0
Other	17	1.2	0	0.0

21. Are you employed?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,406	%	N = 1	%
Full-time	1,385	98.5	1	100.0
Part-time	19	1.4	0	0.0
Other	2	0.10	0	0.0

22. How long have you worked in this position?

Response	All States	Vermont
	N = 1,388	N = 1
Mean	113.0 months (9.42 years)	21.0 months (1.75 years)
Range	423.0 months (35.25 years)	0.0 months (0.0 years)

23. What is your age?

Response	All States	Vermont
	N = 1,337	N = 0
Mean	46.40 years	0.0 years
Range	53.0 years	0.0 years

24. What is your gender?

Response	All States		Vermont	
	N = 1,396	%	N = 1	%
Female	1,055	75.6	1	100.0
Male	341	19.4	0	0.0

## Appendix A

1	Alabama	67 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
2	Alaska	3 offices	State sent us addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
3	Arizona	30 offices	Had addresses state checked	Three envelopes had no names
4	Arkansas	18 offices	State sent us addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
5	California	58 offices	Had addresses state checked	27 envelopes had no persons name on it
6	Colorado	63 offices	Had addresses state checked	No names on any envelope
7	Connecticut	14 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
8	Delaware	2 offices	Had addresses state checked	No persons name on any envelope
9	Florida	41 offices	Had addresses state checked	9 envelopes had no persons name on it
10	Georgia	159 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
11	Hawaii	5 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
12	Idaho	8 offices	Had addresses state checked	Two envelopes had no persons name on it
13	Illinois	46 offices	Had addresses state checked	One envelope had no persons name on it
14	Indiana	18 offices	State sent us addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
15	Iowa	38 offices	State sent us addresses	5 envelopes had no persons name on it
16	Kansas	12 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
17	Kentucky	123 offices	State sent us addresses	Two envelopes did not have a persons name
18	Louisiana	8 offices	State sent us addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
19	Maine	3 offices	State sent us addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
20	Maryland	24 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
21	Massachusetts	25 offices	Had addresses state checked	No persons name on any envelope
22	Michigan	Declined	Completed one survey for state	Declined to participate
23	Minnesota	87 offices	State sent us addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
24	Mississippi	84 offices	State sent us addresses	4 envelopes had no names 81 had names
25	Missouri	Declined	Completed one survey for state	Declined to participate
26	Montana	Email	Emailed 3/26 to J.S.	Survey by email
27	Nebraska	24 offices	Had addresses state checked	No persons name on any envelope
28	Nevada	4 offices	State had faxed addresses	No persons name on any envelope
29	New Hampshire	12 offices	State sent addresses	No persons name on any envelope
30	New Jersey	21 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
31	New Mexico	31 offices	State sent with cover letter	Each envelope had a persons name on it
32	New York	58 offices	State sent addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
33	North Carolina	98 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
34	North Dakota	No offices	No addresses	No addresses
35	Ohio	88 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
36	Oklahoma	58 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
37	Oregon	39 offices	State sent addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
38	Pennsylvania	52 offices	Had addresses state checked	No persons name on any envelope
39	Rhode Island	1 office	Survey is done	Survey completed by administrator
40	South Carolina	Declined	Did not complete one survey	Declined to participate
41	South Dakota	Declined	Did not complete one survey	Declined to participate
42	Tennessee	Declined	Completed one survey for state	Declined to participate
43	Texas	31 offices	State sent addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
44	Utah	11 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
45	Vermont	1 office	Survey is done	Survey completed by administrator
46	Virginia	122 offices	State sent labels	Each envelope had a persons name on it
47	Washington	19 offices	State sent addresses	Each envelope had a persons name on it
48	West Virginia	35 offices	Had addresses state checked	Each envelope had a persons name on it
49	Wisconsin	73 offices	State sent addresses	Each envelope had a name on it
50	Wyoming	28 offices	Had addresses state checked	3 envelopes had APS supervisor vacancies
51	Washington DC	1 office	Survey is done	Survey completed by administrator