

# Summary of the State Elder Abuse Questionnaire for Wisconsin

A Final Report to:  
Department of Health and Family Services

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

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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: Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin. Appendix B depicts two county maps of Wisconsin with elder abuse investigations and substantiations per 1,000 elder population for 1999.

### Results

Results are provided by individual state (Wisconsin) and the total of all 44 participating states and the District of Columbia. Wisconsin has 73 local offices. Fifty-

three (73%) questionnaires were returned by mail and ten (14%) questionnaires were completed by telephone. There is an 86% survey return rate for the state of Wisconsin.

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 Wisconsin.

### 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 |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|          | N = 1,389  | %    | N = 63    | %    |
| Yes      | 691        | 50.3 | 13        | 20.6 |
| No       | 698        | 49.7 | 50        | 79.4 |

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                |                | Wisconsin                |                |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
|   | N = 684                   | % of Responses | N = 13                   | % of Responses |
|   | Number of Responses = 718 |                | Number of Responses = 13 |                |
| Caregiver Abuse Screen for the Elderly (Reis & Nahmiash, 1995)                            | 17                        | 2              | 1                        | 7.7            |
| 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             | 12                       | 92.3           |

Other responses: "We have our own", "MMSE, ask questions on our own", "Screen for long term support and MMSE", "County created based on child abuse model", "Locally developed screen".

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

| Response               | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|------------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                        | N = 1,381  | %    | N = 61    | %    |
| 18 years and older     | 874        | 63.3 | 1         | 1.6  |
| 60 years and older     | 352        | 25.5 | 50        | 82.0 |
| 65 years and older     | 101        | 7.3  | 6         | 9.8  |
| Other, please specify: | 54         | 3.9  | 4         | 6.6  |

Other responses: "Younger for those suffering like elderly disability", "Vulnerable adults", "those individuals that suffer from infirmities of aging", "62".



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

| Response | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|          | N = 1,393  | %    | N = 62    | %    |
| Yes      | 377        | 27.1 | 3         | 4.8  |
| No       | 1,016      | 72.9 | 59        | 95.2 |

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 |      | Wisconsin |      |
|-------------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                         | N = 413    | %    | N = 12    | %    |
| Number of Investigators |            |      |           |      |
| 1 – 5                   | 318        | 77.0 | 9         | 75.0 |
| 6 – 10                  | 62         | 15.0 | 2         | 16.6 |
| 11 – 15                 | 19         | 4.6  | 1         | 8.3  |
| More than 15            | 14         | 3.4  | 0         | 0.0  |
| Mean                    | 5.10       |      | 4.29      |      |

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 |      | Wisconsin |      |
|-------------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                         | N = 1,202  | %    | N = 60    | %    |
| Number of Investigators |            |      |           |      |
| 1 – 5                   | 972        | 80.9 | 53        | 88.3 |
| 6 – 10                  | 155        | 12.9 | 6         | 10.0 |
| 11 – 15                 | 26         | 2.16 | 0         | 0.0  |
| More than 15            | 49         | 4.04 | 1         | 1.7  |
| Mean                    | 4.30       |      | 2.89      |      |

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

| Response         | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                  | N = 1,392  | %    | N = 61    | %    |
| Most of the time | 958        | 68.8 | 32        | 52.5 |
| Some of the time | 433        | 31.1 | 29        | 47.5 |
| None of the time | 1          | 0.10 | 0         | 0.0  |

8. Why? (Wisconsin selected responses)

“Return to some situation in most cases”, “Because wouldn’t proceed where situation wouldn’t be better”, “Many refuse intervention”, “Sometimes we can’t do anything because the person is competent and a rural area does not have a lot of resources”, “Stress on caregiver is lessened”, “If the person refuses the investigation, or doesn’t give sufficient info to take to law enforcement, the person may be put at risk”.

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

| Response            | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|---------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                     | N = 1,392  | %    | N = 63    | %    |
| Under reported      | 1,014      | 72.8 | 52        | 82.5 |
| Reported adequately | 350        | 25.2 | 11        | 17.5 |
| Over reported       | 28         | 2.0  | 0         | 0.0  |

10. Please list reasons why you think elder abuse is under reported? (Wisconsin selected responses) “Reporters don’t want to become involved”, “Community doesn’t see that enough changes are occurring since elder abuse legislation enacted”, “Elderly won’t report because they depend on person for care”, “Family matter privacy”, “Embarrassment”, “Cultural values”, “In rural areas many people don’t want outsiders involved in their business”, “Fear of nursing home placement”, “Pride/shame”, “Not aware of reporting system”.

11. Please list reasons why you think elder abuse is over reported. (Wisconsin 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 |      | Wisconsin |      |
|--------------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                          | N = 1,362  | %    | N = 61    | %    |
| Under substantiated      | 184        | 13.5 | 8         | 13.1 |
| Substantiated adequately | 1,168      | 85.8 | 52        | 85.2 |
| Over substantiated       | 10         | 0.70 | 1         | 1.6  |

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

| Response           | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|--------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                    | N = 555    | %    | N = 17    | %    |
| <b>Child Abuse</b> |            |      |           |      |
| 1-10 cases         | 214        | 38.6 | 9         | 52.9 |
| 11-20 cases        | 216        | 38.9 | 4         | 23.5 |
| 21-25 cases        | 60         | 10.8 | 4         | 23.5 |
| 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 |      | Wisconsin |      |
|--------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                    | N = 1,339  | %    | N = 58    | %    |
| <b>Adult Abuse</b> |            |      |           |      |
| 1-10 cases         | 766        | 57.2 | 51        | 87.9 |
| 11-20 cases        | 315        | 23.5 | 3         | 5.2  |
| 21-25 cases        | 91         | 6.8  | 1         | 1.7  |
| 26-30 cases        | 60         | 4.5  | 0         | 0.0  |
| 31-35 cases        | 39         | 2.9  | 0         | 0.0  |
| 36-40 cases        | 27         | 2.0  | 1         | 1.7  |
| > 40 cases         | 41         | 3.1  | 2         | 3.4  |

### Education

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

| Response | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|          | N = 1,389  | %    | N = 63    | %    |
| Yes      | 835        | 60.1 | 6         | 9.5  |
| No       | 554        | 39.9 | 57        | 90.5 |

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

| Response                                 | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|--|------------|------|-----------|------|
|  | N = 825    | %    | N = 5     | %    |
| Less than one day                        | 11         | 1.3  | 1         | 20.0 |
| One day                                  | 38         | 4.6  | 2         | 40.0 |
| Two to four days                         | 308        | 37.3 | 2         | 40.0 |
| One week                                 | 182        | 22.1 | 0         | 0.0  |
| Two to three weeks                       | 180        | 21.8 | 0         | 0.0  |
| More than three weeks,<br>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 |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                      | N = 1,395  | %    | N = 63    | %    |
| High school graduate | 55         | 3.9  | 3         | 4.8  |
| Associate degree     | 44         | 3.2  | 2         | 3.2  |
| College graduate     | 1,240      | 88.9 | 55        | 87.3 |
| Some graduate work   | 11         | 0.80 | 0         | 0.0  |
| A graduate degree    | 16         | 1.1  | 1         | 1.6  |
| A doctoral degree    | 1          | 0.10 | 0         | 0.0  |
| Other                | 28         | 2.0  | 2         | 3.2  |

Other responses: "SW license"

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

| Response | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|          | N = 1,363  | %    | N = 62    | %    |
| None     | 532        | 39.0 | 18        | 29.0 |
| 1-25%    | 405        | 29.7 | 20        | 32.3 |
| 26-50%   | 149        | 10.9 | 5         | 8.1  |
| 51-75%   | 64         | 4.7  | 4         | 6.5  |
| 76-99%   | 59         | 4.3  | 6         | 9.7  |
| 100%     | 154        | 11.3 | 9         | 14.5 |

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

| Response         | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                  | N = 1,360  | %    | N = 63    | %    |
| Social work      | 895        | 65.8 | 54        | 85.7 |
| Nursing          | 8          | 0.60 | 0         | 0.0  |
| Criminal justice | 41         | 3.0  | 1         | 1.6  |
| Aging studies    | 13         | 1.0  | 1         | 1.6  |
| Education        | 30         | 2.2  | 0         | 0.0  |
| Other            | 373        | 27.4 | 7         | 11.1 |

Other responses: “Criminal Justice, Aging Studies, and Education”, “Social Work, Aging Studies, Education”, “Family social science, social science”, Sociology, Psychology”.

### Demographic Data

19. What is the title of your position in the department? (Wisconsin selected responses)  
 “Manager Elder Abuse & Neglect Office”, “Social Worker II”, “Division Administrator”, “Social Worker I”, “Service Unit Supervisor”, “Elderly Abuse Prevention Coordinator”, “Supervisor LTC”, “Social Worker”, “Adult Protective Service Worker”, “Crisis Worker”, “Elder Abuse Investigator”, “Director”, “Senior Social Worker”.

20. What is your level of education?

| Response             | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|                      | N = 1,400  | %    | N = 63    | %    |
| High school graduate | 33         | 2.4  | 3         | 4.8  |
| Associate degree     | 28         | 2.0  | 2         | 3.2  |
| College graduate     | 672        | 48.0 | 24        | 38.1 |
| Some graduate work   | 243        | 17.4 | 14        | 22.2 |
| A graduate degree    | 403        | 28.8 | 20        | 31.7 |
| A doctoral degree    | 4          | 0.30 | 0         | 0.0  |
| Other                | 17         | 1.2  | 0         | 0.0  |

21. Are you employed?

| Response  | All States |      | Wisconsin |       |
|-----------|------------|------|-----------|-------|
|           | N = 1,406  | %    | N = 63    | %     |
| Full-time | 1,385      | 98.5 | 63        | 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                 | Wisconsin                   |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|          | N = 1,388                  | N = 63                      |
| Mean     | 113.0 months (9.42 years)  | 127.44 months (10.62 years) |
| Range    | 423.0 months (35.25 years) | 376.0 months (31.33 years)  |

23. What is your age?

| Response | All States  | Wisconsin   |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
|          | N = 1,337   | N = 61      |
| Mean     | 46.40 years | 48.74 years |
| Range    | 53.0 years  | 30.0 years  |

24. What is your gender?

| Response | All States |      | Wisconsin |      |
|----------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|          | N = 1,396  | %    | N = 62    | %    |
| Female   | 1,055      | 75.6 | 41        | 66.1 |
| Male     | 341        | 19.4 | 21        | 33.9 |

## 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         |

Appendix B



