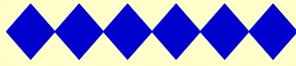


Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor ~ Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner



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FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Office of Children and Family Services

Honoring A Great Legacy of Service

This issue features articles that express our appreciation for the many Adult Services / Protective Services for Adults caseworkers, supervisors and other staff of the local districts who have recently retired. There is a reminiscence piece from Deb Myers of Washington County, an interview with Liz Norton of Tompkins County, as well as a list of the names and years of service of our recent retirees.

We thank all the retirees for their many years of dedicated service. They investigated referrals of abuse and neglect of some of our neediest citizens, working with many other agencies and providers of services. They often went to bat for their clients, advocating for services and using creative approaches to protect clients in the least intrusive way possible. We know their agencies will miss the experience, expertise and the camaraderie of those who have retired. We also know that many of the senior caseworkers, supervisors and others who have recently retired spent years training those who remain on the job, and that their legacy of service to vulnerable adults will remain as a daily reminder—and inspiration—for those dedicated Adult Services professionals who follow in their footsteps.

Also in this issue is an article from Rich Holcomb, Adult Services Supervisor, Clinton County DSS, describing the tireless work of one of the caseworkers on his staff to assist clients during the recent flooding in the North Country. We honor not only those PSA workers who are retiring, but also Judy Ryan and the many other PSA professionals who continue to serve so well in times of need, day after day.



From the Director:

Alan J. Lawitz

Bureau of Adult Services

Thank You, Uncle Fred! (And More)

A relative of a staff person at OCFS became concerned when he noticed a stranger going into the home and on the grounds and using the property of his elderly neighbor, who he knew was in the hospital. His suspicions aroused, he made a call that resulted in a Protective Services for Adults referral. This led to a PSA investigation and a subsequent referral to the police. The homeowner had asked the individual to watch over her home while she was in the hospital for an illness. The police charged the “friend” with using the homeowner’s checkbook to write herself checks, and using the homeowner’s personal information to open credit card and cell phone accounts. She was alleged to have stolen over \$10,000 in funds.

Thanks to the action taken by Uncle Fred (not his real name) to alert authorities to the possible exploitation of his elderly neighbor, PSA was contacted, and an investigation which led to the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrator followed. This points out how important it is that we continue to work to increase public awareness of what elder abuse is, and what actions to take when abuse, neglect or exploitation is suspected. The outreach we do, whether to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June, or throughout the year, can truly help to save a life, and protect the assets and well-being of our clients.

*** New GAO Report on PSA / Elder Abuse**

On March 2, 2011, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report (GAO-11-208) based on a survey of state PSA programs, a visit of six states, and a review of budgetary and other federal documents. These were among the GAO’s findings:

- ◆ PSA programs nationally report higher and increasingly complex caseloads.
- ◆ Resources available to PSA are not keeping pace with the increased and more complex caseloads; it is therefore difficult to maintain adequate staffing levels and training.
- ◆ States report they have limited access to information on interventions and practices on how to resolve elder abuse cases, and may struggle to respond to abuse cases appropriately.
- ◆ Many PSA programs also face challenges in collecting, maintaining and reporting state-wide case-level administrative data, hampering their ability to track outcomes and assess effectiveness of services provided.

The GAO recommends that the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) determine the feasibility of providing PSA-dedicated guidance, and facilitate the development and implementation of a nationwide PSA data system.

For the complete GAO report, see www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-208

It may be of some comfort to know that across the country PSA units are facing many of the same challenges that we are experiencing in New York, and that the survey results are being widely publicized and shared with Congress. It is also heartening that the GAO is among the many voices recommending that the federal government assume a leadership role in the area of elder abuse.

***Gone But Not Forgotten, and Welcome!** In keeping with this issue's theme of pausing to express our thanks to our recently retired colleagues, our bureau bid a bittersweet farewell in April to **Rich Piche** and **Deb Schwencke**. We will greatly miss them both, and we wish them the very best in the future. We also welcome **Lisl Maloney** to our staff. Lisl is working on both the PSA and Family-Type Home for Adults programs.*





Adult Protective Services – How Things Have Changed!

(Some thoughts as I close out my career here)

**By Deb Myers, PSA Senior Caseworker,
Washington County DSS**

Imagine... no ASAP system, let alone a computer. You share a phone with at least three other workers. You sit in one big room with desks grouped together with no privacy. There are maybe three county cars and that is it for all DSS staff. Your notes are being hand written and letters being sent with carbon paper copies for the files. Manual record keeping is done for all caseloads. Index cards are the state of the art thing to stay organized. The typical Adult Protective reports are mostly for “dirty houses” and the occasional alcohol impaired adult needing care, but refusing. Financial management cases can be done quite informally, without many checks and balances. The bulk of the referrals are for clients well over the age of 60. Training consists mostly of traveling with a “seasoned” caseworker to learn the tricks of the trade. In Washington County back in the early 80’s, referrals were grouped all week and then all cases were discussed on a Monday morning and people got to pick which ones they wanted to take on. There was no particular time frame for assessments being completed. There was no Article 81 to protect impaired individuals and no specific Elder Abuse Laws on the books. I can remember trying to get a case prosecuted for significant physical abuse and being told that “there are no laws that pertain to this type of thing.”

Anyone else remember these kind of days in your county?

Now jump to 2011! How things have changed.

About 60 percent of our caseloads now are for younger clients, most of whom have addiction and mental health issues. Gone are the days of nice friendly visits with the “old cat lady” down the street that everyone looks out for. Cases of financial exploitation and caregiver neglect are on the rise.

Caseworkers now have computers, and the ASAP system is in place which allows us to link cases from one end of the state to another and maintain our case records in a professional and organized manner.

NYS has initiated wonderful formal training for all new PSA caseworkers and a variety of ongoing teleconferences, and trainings for all staff.

The technology is wonderful, but in my opinion, the greatest change is to have seen the recognition that PSA has received in recent years. The legal system now recognizes that adult abuse and neglect do exist as real concerns and has taken the steps to ensure that there are laws on the books to protect the vulnerable and frail population that we try so diligently to serve. Law enforcement and the financial institutions are alert and aware of these real issues and are forming wonderful partnerships with PSA all across the state. The ability to develop solid criminal cases and work with law enforcement in a partnership and see cases through to prosecution and conviction is such a change from those earlier days when abuse and neglect were just considered “a family matter.”

I marvel at how far PSA has traveled and come. It has been a road with some bumps and turns, but I am proud to have been associated with PSA all these years and consider myself very fortunate to have had a job that I loved to come to every day of my life at DSS.

Editors Note: Thanks for sharing this with us, Deb, and very best wishes in retirement.





**Peggy Locicero,
Retiring PSA Supervisor,
Cattaraugus County DSS**

**MANY RECENT PSA STAFF RETIREMENTS
STATEWIDE!**

Compiled by Paula Vielkind

When we decided to ask PSA staff in local districts to share information about recent retirements, we suspected that we'd hear from many districts. Since we were gathering information to update our PSA Supervisors list (based on the retirements we knew about), we believed that we'd have a list detailing decades of local district service and were we ever right! Not all of the service time listed below was limited to PSA but much of it was, and we as an organization are richer for the dedication shown by the following individuals:

Cattaraugus County:

Peggy Locicero— 35 years, 6 months
Rich Swift—30 years

Chautauqua County:

Bev Rickerson—36 years

Cortland County:

Charlotte Wallace—28 years, 6 months

Franklin County:

Lynn Black—23 years

Livingston County:

Barb DeMay—22 years

Monroe County:

Wendy Bolton—33 years, 11 months

Nassau County:

Phillip White—24 years

New York City HRA:

Anna Marques—47 years
Lula Strickland—21 years
Eva Medina—29 years
Oludaisi Abidakun—21 years
Cynthia Omo-Osagie—13 years
Comfort Uzochukwu—13 years
Sylvester Kayode—19 years
Walden Wimberley—25 years
Sylvester Adelokiki—20 years
Phyllis Smith—40 years
Barry Organ—30 years
Margaret Smith—22 years

PSA STAFF RETIREMENTS Continued

Onondaga County:

Amy Honig—31 years
Tony Wisneski—32 years
Sue Given—35 years
Judy Priest 23 years
Joe Kelly—22 years
Bob Beaudoin—32 years
John Hallinan—20 years
Grace Cruty—36 years

Orleans County:

Rich Neilans—30 years

Putnam County:

Andrew Pattie—33 years, 6 months

Rensselaer County:

Marta Tuthill—33 years, 4 months

St. Lawrence County:

Gail Santimaw—25 years

Saratoga County:

Carol Clark—20 years

Schoharie County:

JoAnn Timme—14 years

Schuyler County:

Onalee Stamp—24+ years

Suffolk County:

Ralph Diemer—36 years
Jerry Birtwell—36 years
Marge Sturiano—41 years
Rose Fuentes—22 years

Sullivan County:

Nancy Kracht—30 years
Gary Castle—27 years
Carl Taliani—25 years
Joanne Madden—23 years

Tompkins County:

Liz Norton—24 years

Ulster County:

Sue Bottigliero—38 years, 7 months

Warren County:

H. Bartlett McGee—31 years, 6 months

Washington County:

Debbie Myers—27 years, 4 months
Sandy Tatko—27 years (effective 9/1/11, her retirement date)

**CONGRATULATIONS
ONE AND ALL!**

You'll be missed and your contributions to the well-beings of others cannot be tabulated.

ENJOY your retirement!





Photo by Kelli Catana.
Thanks to [Press Republican](#) for permission to reprint.

Judy Ryan, PSA
Senior Caseworker
A 'Beacon of Hope'
To Clients During
Flooding in Plattsburgh

By Richard Holcomb,
Adult Services Supervisor,
Clinton County DSS

This spring has resulted in
a great deal of flooding

here in the North Country, and a particularly hard hit location was an apartment complex that housed a number of the most vulnerable and at risk individuals in Clinton County. Many do not have any other support services other than their Adult Protective Caseworker, Judy Ryan. When the waters of Lake Champlain began threatening the homes of her clients, Judy began to work with them to formulate a plan should evacuation become necessary. Working with Judy, individuals were able to reach out to other residents in the complex that were not at risk of flooding, and move their possessions to higher ground.

Judy was also working tirelessly helping to calm not only the individuals assigned to her caseload but also other residents overwhelmed by the impending crisis. Judy's efforts to help people make alternate plans for themselves and their pets prior to the actual time when it became necessary to evacuate the premises paid off. What could have been total chaos turned into an orderly and safe evacuation at 10:30 p.m. Not one to leave her job at the office, Judy was called out of her warm dry home to assist the police and other emergency personnel in getting the residents out of the path of the rising waters. Judy then returned the next day with pen and paper, as captured by the [Press Republican's](#) staff photographer, and began working with those that had not yet been evacuated to begin coordinating efforts to help them as the slow moving crisis continued to develop.

It is safe to say that without Judy's efforts, many more individuals would have had to move into an emergency shelter instead of into alternative housing. Without Judy's efforts, many more would have required more intensive mental health services than could have been provided at the shelter.

While the flood waters continue to plague the North Country, and most likely will continue for many more weeks and possibly months, Judy continues to work with her clients to help them piece together new living arrangements for themselves. It is still too early to tell if the apartment complex will be able to reopen, but one thing is for sure, and that is that Judy Ryan will continue to be a beacon of hope for those clients she is helping to move forward.

The 18th Annual New York State Adult Abuse Training Institute & The 22nd Annual National Adult Protective Services Association Conference Present:

SAVE THE DATE

SEPTEMBER 20-23 • Buffalo, NY

Stemming the Tide of Adult Abuse — National Perspectives —

Adult Abuse Training Institute (AATI)

The AATI, presented by the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging & Longevity on behalf of the NYS Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS), brings together over 400 participants from a variety of public and private agencies, including Protective Services for Adults, aging services, domestic violence intervention, housing, legal, law enforcement, health care, social services, mental retardation/developmental disabilities and mental health services. Networking and sharing expertise will be encouraged in both the formal and informal activities.

National Adult Protective Services

Association (NAPSA) is the only national organization which represents Adult Protective Services (APS) Programs and staff who serve older persons and adults with disabilities who are abused, neglected or exploited. NAPSA, which was formed in 1989 to improve the quality of services for these victims, currently has over 600 members from 47 states, several territories and several other countries. NAPSA has a twenty year history of providing high quality annual national conferences. The NAPSA Conference is the only national conference which focuses on APS, elder abuse and abuse of adults with disabilities.

This year, the AATI and NAPSA have joined together to bring the national conference to New York State to present a rare and extremely valuable learning opportunity for those who are committed to stopping abuse and improving the quality of life for all vulnerable adults. We are very excited about the joining of these learning events! We hope to see you in Buffalo!

Who attends these events? Protective Services for Adults staff, EISEP caseworkers, attorneys, law enforcement officers, nurses, physicians and other healthcare professionals, social workers in the fields of aging, health, mental health, housing, domestic violence intervention, legal and law enforcement and justice. The commitment and energy of participants and presenters is the most critical element in the success of these annual events.

Goals - The learning goals for the AATI and NAPSA are always:

- To build the skills and knowledge of professionals working with vulnerable adults
- To promote the exchange of information, innovative thinking and best practices to improve the provision of services to protect and nurture vulnerable adults
- To nurture and sustain all those folks who are engaged in the effort to prevent and/or end abuse to adults in New York State

BROOKDALE CENTER
for Healthy Aging & Longevity
Brookdale College / The City University of New York

NAPSA
National Adult Protective Services Association

New York State
Office of
Children & Family
Services



INTERVIEW WITH LIZ NORTON,
PSA Supervisor,
Tompkins County DSS

We knew Liz Norton, long—time PSA Supervisor of Tompkins County, was retiring, so we made sure we interviewed with her beforehand. Alan Lawitz spoke with Liz shortly before her retirement.

Q. Liz, thanks for agreeing to sit down and talk with us. I understand you were a nurse before you started in adult protective services. How long were you in the nursing profession?

A. I'm still kind of in it. I've been in the nursing profession for 35 years. My first county job was for the health department doing home care for nine years. Then an opportunity came at DSS for a long-term care coordinator. I decided that was a good fit for me, so I took the position, and eventually that led into adult protective services.

Q. What drew you into adult protective?

A. The opportunity was there to make a difference with a population that doesn't have a lot of people who care about them all the time.

Q. How is Protective Services for Adults organized in Tompkins County?

A. I supervise the adult protective and the long-term care units. We work together with long-term care. The long-term care handles home care, personal care and personal emergency response. The adult protective folks have a separate caseload from the long-term care. In the adult protective unit, we have one senior caseworker who is a nurse, and four other caseworkers, plus a financial assistant. I directly supervise 15 people in both units.

Q. How many long-term care staff do you supervise?

A. Six. Two Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP) workers and four Medicaid nurses.

Q. In Tompkins County, do you serve adult preventive as well as adult protective cases?

A, Yes, we have a lot of preventive cases. Once a protective case is stabilized, we convert it to preventive if the protective needs are met. This is particularly true with rep payee cases. We have about 75 rep payee cases, and most of those are preventive.

Q. What is the overall caseload like?

A. We have 170 open cases (PSA and Preventive), with five workers, so about 35 cases apiece.

Q. For how long have you served as a PSA supervisor?

A. Since 2000, so 11 years.

Q. That's a lot of experience as a PSA supervisor! What would you like people in other parts of the state to know about providing protective services in Tompkins County? Are there any unique features?

A. In Tompkins County, I think we are fortunate to have a very broad provider network that we can work with and that can provide services for our clients. We're blessed with a lot of providers. In other ways I'm sure we're no different than other counties, in that we always feel like we have more work than we have time to do, and we wish we had more people to do it with. As a supervisor, I see that one job that I wish we had more time for was the communication with our referral sources, and working together with them to keep them on your side.

Q. Of course, Cornell University is in Ithaca. Have you had occasion to work with Cornell to take advantage of their resources?

A. We have had some projects with Cornell. Cornell has a group called Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging. We worked on a Transitions of Care project, with a hospital and a nursing home, and we did a conference with them. They've been a very good resource.

Q. Liz, is your caseload primarily the elderly, or do you have a significant number of younger clients as well?

A. We have both. We could use more resources for the younger client. They are a more difficult group to find reliable services and housing for.

Q. We hear that generally they are tougher to engage.

A. Especially if they are new to Supplemental Security Income. Just trying to get them to take care of the basics can be difficult.

Q. Are any of the younger clients aging out of foster care or juvenile justice and do you work with your Foster Care unit on cases they see may be Adult Services cases in the future?

A. Yes, we have been working with foster care to make sure they are thinking about this plan well ahead of time so we can be part of the plan. Sometimes these kids just want to cut loose, so if we have at least a place for them to live and some services it makes things easier.



Q. Are there services available for the younger clients that seem promising?

A. One of our local youth organizations, The Learning Web, provides housing, case management and outreach services for younger adults; that is a great resource. They have apartments and services for homeless youth who are on the street and need assistance putting their lives together. As with other services, it is never enough, and the most troublesome don't fit into their criteria, but it is a really promising organization.

Q. Is homelessness an issue for many of your clients? How do you deal with these cases in Tompkins County?

A. We work with Special Services, another part of our agency, which has a case manager that works with homeless persons. We are in daily contact and we share those clients. Our homeless shelter also has a Single Room Occupancy (SRO); there is case management and some of those are adult protective clients. There is a very strong relationship we have with the shelter staff of our agency and that makes life a thousand times easier. We also have a Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing grant, out of federal stimulus funds. We're working on that "Housing First" approach, where you get someone a place to live and then you work on the other details afterwards. We have reduced the number of day beds in our shelter significantly over the past few years. We have a case manager that actually places people before they become homeless, and that works closely with landlords. Having someone in the housing "hot seat" all the time is really helpful.

Q. Let me turn to another subject, financial exploitation. Is this a major risk factor for your clients?

A. Oh, yeah, definitely! It's a very time-consuming type of case to work on. We could use a lot more resources. For example, having a forensic accountant would be a tremendous help to the caseworkers here. Having said that, we do have a new addition to our Adult Protective Services unit. We just hired a welfare examiner to work on Medicaid applications. She'll be going into people's homes, getting the Medicaid documentation that we have no time to do. I expect it will also help us in some of these financial exploitation cases.

Q. Have you seen many power of attorney or guardian abuse cases?

A. We've had pretty good luck with the new power of attorney law. We've gotten one guardianship that resulted from that, and another case in which the person backed off after we were involved. Going through that process helped the judge in the guardianship case to know that we had done what we needed to do. It is time-consuming, though.

Q. What kind of a response do you get from law enforcement and the District Attorney's office when you refer a financial exploitation case to them?

A. We often don't get a great response from the DA's office or law enforcement; they often take the position that individuals have the right to make their own decisions about their finances, no matter whether they're bad or good decisions. However, we were just involved in a case of alleged physical abuse where a caregiver was reportedly hitting her elderly uncle who is developmentally disabled. She was arrested for that and subsequently she was also charged with financial exploitation – she allegedly took his benefit check and used it while he was gone. I'm so pleased that the DA's office has taken this case and is running with it, because I think it's really opened their eyes.

Q. How frequently do you get referrals of domestic violence or of emotional abuse involving elderly clients, and what are some of the issues in these cases?

A. We get these cases on a regular basis; these are maybe 10 percent of our cases. When we get such referrals, the caseworkers like to do some background checking before they go out and do a visit. When there is any kind of abuse referral, they want to make sure who the players are, who the caregivers are, what the issues are. Typically, when we do a visit in such a case, we will approach it from the point of view of supporting the caregiver, to try to gain their trust. In most cases the client is not interested in leaving the home or in changing their living situation. Most of the time we have to make do with what we have and try to make the best of their situation. If it is a Domestic Violence (DV) case, we do make a referral to DV services and to caregiver support services. If the perpetrator is willing to talk to a therapist about what is difficult for them, we have a good ear on the ground.

Q. Have you had cases in which you had to assist a victim with an Order of Protection?

A. Yes, in a recent guardian case, the brother who was stealing this gentleman's money started threatening to come and get him and take him away. The client didn't want to leave and was afraid of him, so we assisted him in getting an Order of Protection. We have another client who has a boyfriend who keeps beating her up; we'd love to get an Order of Protection, but she's not willing to cooperate; so sometimes we succeed and sometimes we don't.

Q. What about cases where a client has to leave the house and there are not others to take them in and you have to look for temporary housing.

A. Always a challenge. We used to be able to pay for a respite bed at the local hospital, but they won't allow that now, so we will look for SROs to see if there are any openings there. If it is a homeless situation we can use the shelter and the Women's Center. Another place we use once in awhile is Alterra, now called Brookdale. They are expensive, but they can take people with dementia. The other place we have used is our Family-Type Home for Adults. We have a Family-Type Home that can sometimes take people pretty quickly.



Q. We are looking to encourage more use of Family-Type Homes as a resource for emergency housing for PSA clients. Was that for a short-term stay?

A. Last time we used it was a person who was a victim of physical abuse from a family member. He stayed there a few months, until there was an opening in a home licensed by the Office for Persons With Developmental Disabilities.

Q. Tompkins County was a recipient in 2010 of an OCFS Certificate of Recognition for its great work on the issue of hoarding. Can you talk about the Hoarding Workgroup and how it came about?

A. In talking with my commissioner about the issues we had been having with hoarding, and the need to develop additional resources for providers within the county, she thought it would be a good idea to bring together all the county agencies that work on hoarding issues and figure out how to approach it. Our commissioner contacted her counterparts in the other agencies and asked them to each send a representative to a meeting. We met and the group decided to do a conference on hoarding. The conference was held at a community college and was led by Christiana Bratiotis of Boston University. First there was education about the issue. Then time was spent setting up the task force, and coming up with county priorities to work on - and that's what we have been doing for the past two years.

Q. I know the task force has developed a great field guide that we have shared across the state with PSA supervisors and others who have expressed interest in the issue. How often does the task force meet?

A. We've been meeting quarterly, mostly working on resources, our website, and to discuss any cross-agency issues.

Q. Moving on to a more general topic, has the overall number of PSA cases expanded in recent years in Tompkins?

A. Yes, the number of cases has expanded; also the complexity of the cases, which has made it very difficult. For some of the financial cases you sometimes have to make a decision whether you have the resources to take it on, what the real safety issues are, and to what extent you can deal with just the safety issues. The complexity is a change. And how long it can take you when you first get a referral on someone who hasn't got any health care, hasn't got any ID, and on and on. You can spend a whole week to get a client put together again so they can get services.

Q. What do you consider the greatest challenge in providing Protective Services for Adults?

A. We could do a better job if we had more people to work on the cases the way we would like to. We would like to provide more one-on-one time so clients got the individual time they need. A couple of case aides would be great to help out!

Q. And what do you consider Tompkins County DSS's biggest strength?

A. We have a wonderful staff of talented and dedicated caseworkers. Our whole agency has a very strength-based approach, and that's permeated from the top down.

Q. So, Liz, you are retiring when?

A. The 9th of March. I am going with my husband to Belize for a vacation, and I am looking forward to warm weather!

Alan: Liz, on behalf of OCFS, and all your colleagues across the state, we thank you for your many years of dedicated service and we wish you all the best for your retirement.

We Want To Hear From You!

If you have ideas for articles or other features for this newsletter, we'd really like you to get in touch with us.

Please email Alan Lawitz at Alan.Lawitz@ocfs.state.ny.us.

