

Frequently Asked Questions about APS Transition

Issue #2 - April 30, 2004

1. "I have seen the agency APS will be transferring to in July referred to as Office on Aging, Council on Aging, Older Americans Office, AAA and Division of Aging Services, which is correct?"

The correct name of the agency is the Georgia Division of Aging Services (DAS). APS will be transferred from the Division of Family and Children Services to the Division of Aging Services (both are Divisions within the Department of Human Resources). The 12 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are contractors of the Division of Aging Services. The AAAs are responsible for planning and administering the provision of the wide variety of aging services and programs, other than APS, statewide. APS will not be contracted, but will remain a state administered program under DHR, within the Division of Aging Services.

Prior to becoming the Division of Aging Services more than 10 years ago, DAS was the Office of Aging. The Georgia Council on Aging, which is administratively attached to the DAS, is a quasi-independent advisory council established by law to advise state officials and others on policies, laws and issues related to aging. Its members are appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House and the DHR Commissioner. The Council also supports the Coalition of Advocates for Georgia's Elderly, CO-AGE.

The Division of Aging Services administers a variety of services and programs for elderly and /or disabled persons. You can find additional details on the website for DAS: <http://www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/aging.html>

2."How will you choose which aps staff will transition and which will not?"

APS case managers providing services to APS clients in 12/03 and 2/04 have been identified. From that group workers meeting specific criteria have been identified. The criteria included such things as: the worker was full-time APS and carried a full APS caseload; the worker(s) carried the County's APS caseload of greater than 15 clients; or the worker carried the County's APS caseload and the county had more than 7 APS cases. Specific full-time APS Supervisors have also been identified. The identified workers will receive a Transfer Preference Letter and be asked to indicate if he/she wants to transfer with the Adult Protective Services Program to the Division of Aging Services effective July 1, 2004. From affirmative responses the staff to transfer will be selected and notified. These positions are expected to be lateral transfers.

In addition, we expect to establish some new unclassified positions that will be filled on a competitive basis.

3. "I am concerned about the APS positions over and above the 168 line staff now working in the different counties. What will become of them?"

A specific number of APS positions are being budgeted for transfer with the APS Program to DAS. While this number is on the lean side of an ideal Service Delivery structure, budget issues are impacting all areas of state government. Staff will be identified and selected to Transfer to DAS or will remain with DFCS. County DFCS management will make decisions on the new roles of staff who do not transfer to the DAS.

If someone has a strong desire to work with APS we anticipate that there will be opportunities in the future to make the move to the APS program, as staff turnover occurs and possibly additional resources are gained in the months and years ahead.

4. "I would like some better understanding as to what is meant by the last aps transition memo regarding the sentence, which read the following "By the end of May, we hope to complete the process of determining which APS staff will transfer to the Division of Aging services." I thought that all APS case managers would continue to be APS case managers but just fall under the Division of Aging? Is this correct or is there a chance that some of us APS cm's will not have a job transferring over to the division of Aging? Please clarify? Thanks?"

The Transition Team hopes that by the end of May 2004, we will have completed the process described above of identifying staff, receiving Preference Letter responses, completing selections for competitive positions and officially notifying each staff person who will Transfer to DAS effective 7/1/04.

The budget for Transfer of the APS program is not at a level such that every worker that carried one or more APS cases can transfer. Primary APS staff are being identified by using the criteria listed in the answer to question #2 above.

DFCS staff who do not transfer to DAS with APS will continue to work with DFCS.

5. "In the smaller counties, as I am sure you are aware, APS and CPS caseloads are carried by the same worker. If a casemanager leaves DFCS to do APS under DAS, what happens to their position at DFCS? Does the county DFCS office retain a whole or partial CPS position? To smaller

counties, losing a worker who carries a mixed caseload can be a real hardship.”

When the APS workers that are to transfer are chosen and the transfer is complete, how will this effect the position allocations for FY'05 for DFCS?

In the smaller counties in Georgia where the APS worker performs other duties, and should the APS worker from our county not be chosen for transfer, what happens to that position in DFCS?

Yes, we are aware that in smaller counties a worker may be handling both APS and CPS cases. The decision to transfer APS staff does affect both programs. A specific number of positions are allocated to APS and will be transferring to DAS. DFCS management will determine the duties assigned to remaining DFCS staff.

6. “What is the average caseload now that you are considering a full caseload, and how will that change when the transfer is made?”

Because some staff currently carry mixed caseloads (APS/CPS/PLC/Other) and an APS work load study has never been done, we are not able to give a specific number considered as a “full APS caseload”. The nationally recommended caseload for APS is 25. We anticipate that following the 7/1/04 transfer, APS case managers will be handling about 30 APS cases.

During the months following the Transfer of the APS program there will be a process of assessing the statewide APS caseload to determine clients that may be transferred to another service provider or closed because the risk of A/N/E is no longer present. One goal of the APS program in Georgia is to seek additional resources that will move APS caseloads toward the nationally recommended number.

7. “The metro quarterly APS meeting will be held later this month. We plan to say some contact time by compiling all our questions and sending them as a group to avoid duplication as much as possible. Thanks for allowing us to see that many of our concerns and questions have been answered.”

Great idea! We look forward to receiving your questions.

8. “As of this date I have 15 Representative Payee cases. DFCS has a separate account for these clients (which you are probably aware of). Since APS will be handled under DAS, will DAS handle those accounts? Or will DFCS continue to handle the Rep Payee cases?”

The short-term plan for APS Representative Payeeship cases is not quite finalized and will ultimately be addressed in the Memorandum of Understanding between DAS and DFCS. APS Payeeship cases have the added responsibility of financial management in Restricted Fund Accounts. We are planning for APS Payeeship cases to continue being handled with APS case managers providing the case management and designated fiscal staff (in DFCS) continuing to handle the required Restricted Fund Accounts during FY 2005.

The long-term plan for APS Payeeships includes seeking and trying to develop new resources to serve in this capacity. Also, an entity will need to be identified to serve as the Payee of last resort and ultimately benefits changed over to the new Payee.

9. "Does DAS & DHR follow the same policies & procedures concerning APS? If they don't, will APS have to learn their policies & procedures? The reason why this question is asked is because it was understood one DFCS office has had problems in the past with DAS understanding why DFCS could not take certain cases."

The APS Program will continue to follow the policies and procedures in Chapter 2000 of the Social Services Manual. The APS manual is based on Georgia law and best practices in the field of APS. APS state staff are finalizing a revised and enhanced manual chapter and appendices. This revised APS manual chapter will be distributed in coming weeks.

One of the priority goals related to Transferring APS to DAS is for all staff to understand each other's policies, procedures and strengths in order to form a partnership that will best serve disabled adults and elder persons who are abused, neglected or exploited. The Transition Team is already busy identifying opportunities in the months ahead for staff to come together to get to know each other, strengthen relationships, clarify roles and program specifics, and develop plans for working together.

In addition, efforts are already under way between the Division of Aging Services and the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases to strengthen understandings, provide cross training, collaborate more closely on cases and support each other in our mutual efforts to serve clients better.

10. "If a county has someone who supervises a full-time APS case manager but also supervises two other programs, will these supervisors be transferred to DOA also? Once the APS Supervisors are identified in each county, how will it be determined which supervisors are transferred to DOA and which supervisors stay w/ the Office of Child Protection? "

The transfer budget for APS supervisors is set at a specific statewide number. Under the new developing regional structure for APS, there will not necessarily be an APS supervisor in each county. Some current full-time APS supervisors are being identified and will be sent a Transfer Preference Letter with an offer for a lateral transfer to DAS. We anticipate that there will be a number of APS Supervisor positions to be filled through a competitive process. These jobs will be advertised and filled based on the needed areas of supervisory coverage.

Supervisors that do not transfer with APS to DAS will remain with DFCS and DFCS management will make assignments.

11. “Will any current APS positions (casemanagers, FSWs) be deleted in the transition process? In other words, will anyone lose his or her job?”

APS staff that Transfer to DAS will be full-time APS staff administered by the Division of Aging Services. Staff that do not transfer to DAS will remain with DFCS and DFCS management will make assignments.

The APS Program transfer to DAS is not in itself expected to result in current DFCS staff losing their jobs. However, as explained in a previous answer not every caseworker and/or Family Service Worker and/or Supervisor who has been involved with one or more APS cases will be transferred to DAS.

12. “I am currently working 35 hours weekly, as that was the number of hours given for APS in my county, and I prefer that workload as well. Will I be able to continue that when the transfer to DAS occurs?”

All transferring APS staff will be expected to work a 40-hour week. However, we are open to considering individual situations where part-time work may be acceptable, at part-time pay levels. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

13. “Will APS casemanagers still have Emergency Relocation Funds?”

Yes, the APS Emergency Relocation Funds will transfer to DAS with the APS Program. Current policy/procedures on the use of ERF funds, documentation and reporting process will continue to be the practice in APS.

14. “My concern is how the guardianship process will be changed when DFCS goes to AAA, since the directors of the county DFCS offices serve as guardians for incapacitated adults.”

The APS guardianship cases and process present a unique challenge related to planning for change in Transferring APS to DAS. The DFCS Director is the Guardian of Last Resort under current Georgia law. A change in the law will require legislative action, which cannot occur until the 2005 session of the Georgia General Assembly.

The Transition Team's Legal Sub-group is looking at this issue closely and specific aspects of how the Guardianship cases and process will be handled in both the short term and long term. We are confident that a workable plan will be included in the Memorandum of Understanding Between DAS and DFCS.

APS staff and DFCS Directors will need to continuing working closely together on Guardianship cases through FY 2005. At this point the best fit seems to indicate that County DFCS Directors will continue as the Legal Guardian of Person and APS case managers will continue to do the casework. Specific additional details will be forthcoming as they are developed and agreed upon.

15. "I have worked in APS for eight years and am looking forward to working with people who all have the same goal. To protect disabled adults and the elderly from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, is my aim in life."

15A. "Thx for addressing our questions. I am sure you can imagine what anxiety this causes, mostly because of the fear of the unknown. When we hear stuff like "we are only funded ¾ of a position for you so I am not sure how you will transfer", it tends to make you a bit nervous. I worked child protection but transferred to APS because I believe that this is what I am called to do and have enjoyed it tremendously. We (I) appreciate your understanding during this time."

Thank you for your comments, the Transition Team is excited about the opportunities this change will provide for protective services to disabled adults and elder persons. The Transfer of APS to DAS will enable the Department to work toward achieving the recommendations made by the 'Guardian Angels' Work Group in 1999 and the BROCS APS Program Audit in 2000.

Certainly one of the most valuable resources for Georgia's APS Program is having staff that enjoys the challenge of APS and "have a heart for the Program and its clients"

16. "This office, DFCS Area X Field Coordination, did not receive this memo. One of our county directors shared it with our Field Director. It looks as if none of the Field Directors received this info and we thought you may want to share it with them."

Thank you for letting us know of this oversight. The Transition Team did not intend to exclude the DFCS Field Directors. We will ensure that Frequently Asked Questions #1 and that their names are added to our GroupWise Group setup so that all future communications are shared with all DFCS Field Managers.

In addition, these items are being posted in the DFCS Restructure Section of the www.dhrjobs.com website.

17. “Since the Title III Homemakers are employees of the Division of Aging and work with only elderly and disabled adults, is it possible that they could be supervised the APS supervisor when the transition is complete?”

17A. “We have separate program for contracted Family Services. We have a generalist case manager, a supervisor, and 8 family service workers and a program assistant. We share the family service workers and program assistant with APS. What will happen to these positions when the transition takes place? “

DAS contracts with the Area Agencies on Aging for Title III Older Americans Act programs and other funded services. In turn, the AAAs housed within Regional Development Centers subcontract with literally hundreds of service provider agencies (government, nonprofit and for-profit organizations) that actually deliver the services. The AAAs that are private non-profit agencies have the option of subcontracting for the services or providing the services themselves. Homemakers and other staff who provide these services are employees of these service provider agencies, not the Division of Aging Services.

18. “Will DAS have same policies regarding educational assignment and incentive pay for advanced degrees?”

The Division of Aging Services is committed to providing opportunities for educational and career growth. Specific policies are being considered as a part of the transition process. Due to a lack of resources, however, we will be unable at this time to replicate the new initiative in the Office of Child Protection.

19. “What effect does the changes have on the Family Service Workers assigned to CPS, FPU, and Foster Care?”

Only a certain number of Family Service Worker positions will be transferred to DAS based on the budget. DFCS management will determine the work assignments of all remaining staff.

20. "Have read and appreciated the flow of information regarding the transition. I am however, disappointed by the Department's decision to "lump" APS with AAA. I cannot speak for other counties, but in this county, my most needy Clients are generally not the elderly. _____ County has a tremendous population of persons with mental retardation and mental illness. There are no resources in this county for these individuals aside from _____ Community Services. As you are aware, people have the right to choose to participate in programming through Community Service Board Agencies, or not. The typical APS Client in _____ County is noncompliant with programming through MH/MR Services. There are no other service agencies in the county to stand in the gap for these folks. The typical aged person I work with has needs that have not been met by AAA in this region due to the fact that needs far outweigh resources. My typical Client waits years for CCSP and months or years for Meals on Wheels. While you are making necessary plans for the transition, please keep in mind the successful working relationship APS has had with CPS and Eligibility staff in house. The sharing of information has proven to be very beneficial for all persons concerned. The transition Team would be remiss in cutting a hand off the body of DHR. I would be more than happy to speak with someone regarding specific needs of the Disabled and Elderly in this county and how DHR can safely and responsibly serve these people in the community."

Thank you for your thoughtful comments on the transfer. As explained in the Commissioner's Memorandum, Adult Protective Services will be administered by the Division of Aging Services and not organized under the Area Agencies on Aging. The partnership with DAS and its programs will provide new and beneficial opportunities for serving all APS clients whether disabled adults or elder persons. Together we will all need to educate lawmakers on critical needs for funds to reduce or eliminate waiting lists and to increase available service resources. Those of us who work in human services recognize that funding appropriated by Congress and the Georgia General Assembly for these services in Georgia does not meet the demand; thus there are waiting lists for CCSP, non-Medicaid home and community based services, mental health services and others. With limited resources a reality, our challenge will be to improve collaboration among all our partners and work together to find creative solutions for complex social problems. Sharing ideas and best practices will be critical to improve service delivery.

You are so very correct that noncompliant MH/DD/AD clients present some of the most challenging and time-consuming work in APS. This is not unique to our state. APS staff has already been working for several months on strengthening relationships and collaborations with MH/DD/AD staff at both the state and regional levels. We are seeing positive changes in this area.

The Transition Team recognizes the relationships APS has with other programs in DFCS including child protection and eligibility staff. We want those positive relationships to continue. The restructuring of DFCS includes transfer of Adult Protective Services to the Division of Aging Services and we believe this will improve the visibility, resources and supports for both staff and clients. The disabled adults and elder persons APS serves are often clients involved with other Divisions and Offices of DHR. The clients are DHR clients and together in partnerships of coordination, collaboration, cross training and advocacy we can fulfill our responsibilities and mission.

21. “ I hear the new APS structure under the Division of Aging Services will consist of geographical regions. I would like to know how will the regions be divided, or better more what county will be in what region as well as where are the 12 Agencies on Aging located???? Thanks.”

The geographic regions are the same as the DHR Regions and DAS Regions. A Georgia map indicating these Regions can be found at the Division of Aging Services home page; <http://www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/aging.html> See the link for State Plan and go to page 13 for a color map of the DAS Planning and Service Areas (regions). Also, at that same Home Page is a link for Area Agencies on Aging under the item “The Challenge of Caring for Older Georgians”.

22. “How will APS staff be notified if they have the opportunity to move to DAS? Will it be in writing to our office or home or will we receive a phone call? How long will we have to respond back and to whom, where? Will all existing staff be notified yeah or nay whether they will be transferred? “

Within the next week the APS case managers and supervisors identified for potential transfer to DAS will receive an email RE: “APS Transfer Preference Form” with attachments. The e-mail will include General Information, a Map, and an APS Transfer Preference Form. The Form will need to be completed and returned to the OHRMD e-mail or FAX indicated on the Form. The due date is May 10, 2004. Staff selected for lateral transfer with APS to DAS will receive official written notification once selections are made.

There will be a similar process for identifying and selecting Family Service Workers; information about this will be shared within the next few weeks.

Also the answers given in Questions #2 and #4 of this FAQ #2 document should address you questions.