

## **A New System of Protection The Adult Protective Services (APS) Clearinghouse Model**

North Carolina was a pioneer in enacting the first Elder Abuse Law in 1973. This law, North Carolina General Statute 108A, "Protection of the Abused, Neglected or Exploited Disabled Adult Act", has not been reviewed nor had any significant changes made to it in 30 or more years.

### **Accomplishments:**

***Comprehensive Review of North Carolina's APS Program*** - March 2002 a needs assessment of North Carolina's APS program conducted - identified strengths and weaknesses of the APS Program.

***APS Task Force Convened*** - November 2002 an APS Task Force convened to address the critical needs identified from the assessment and develop recommendations to strengthen North Carolina's APS service delivery system. The Task Force determined North Carolina's Adult Protective Services (APS) program must be strengthened and prepared to respond to the following challenges:

- Aging of North Carolina's population;
- Projected increases in the number of vulnerable and elder adults who may be victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- Increased emphasis on community-based treatment for vulnerable and elder adults with chronic mental illness, mental retardation, and substance abuse; and
- Increased incidences of financial exploitation and violence against vulnerable and elder adults.

***The APS Clearinghouse Model (CHM)*** – The Task Force, in collaboration with stakeholders, developed a new system of protection. The APS Clearinghouse Model (CHM), seeks to serve vulnerable and elder adults who are abused, neglected or exploited or are at significant risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

***Introduction of Legislation to Pilot the APS CHM*** - NC Study Commission on Aging and the House Study Committee on State Guardianship Laws supported the vision of the model by introducing Bills in the House and Senate to fund a pilot of the APS CHM. Although there was bi-partisan support, the Bills did not pass the House or Senate.

### **What Remains to be Done:**

- Clarify and strengthen G.S. 108 A to support a broader system of protection for vulnerable and elder adults who are abused, neglected or exploited or at significant risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Provide adequate funding to design, implement and evaluate a time limited APS CHM pilot.
- Provide funding for the 100 county departments of social services to hire additional staff to carry out the APS CHM.
- Provide funding to county departments of social services for the provision of essential services.
- Establish a mandatory competency-based training and continuing education program for APS social workers and supervisors.
- Establish an APS caseload standard.
- Enhance technology and data collection systems to strengthen accountability and support implementation of an APS CHM pilot and statewide implementation.
- Develop and implement a statewide public awareness and education campaign to raise community understanding about the abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable and elder adults.