



# “Adult Protective Services Ethical Principles and Best Practice Guidelines”

A publication of  
**ASAAPS**

American Society of Adult Abuse  
Professionals and Survivors

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## **(Resource review)**

**National Association of Adult Protective Services Administrators \***

**National Center on Elder Abuse**

**2001**

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Building on a full year of discussions at the local, regional, and national levels, the National Association of Adult Protective Services Administrators (NAAPSA)\* has released a consensus document entitled, “Adult Protective Services Ethical Principles and Best Practice Guidelines.”

The document says two values should guide adult protective services (APS):

1. Every action taken by APS must balance the duty to protect the safety of the vulnerable adult with the adult’s right to self-determination.
2. Older people and people with disabilities who are victims of abuse, exploitation or neglect should be treated with honesty, caring and respect.

NAAPSA\* then articulates the following principles and practice guidelines:

### **Principles:**

- Adults have the right to be safe.
- Adults retain all their civil and constitutional rights unless some of these rights have been restricted by court action.
- Adults have the right to make decisions that do not conform with societal norms as long as these decisions do not harm others.

\* *Changed to National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)*

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- Adults are presumed to have decision-making capacity unless a court adjudicates otherwise.
- Adults have the right to accept or refuse services.

### **Practice Guidelines:**

- Recognize that the interests of the adult are the first concern of any intervention.
- Avoid imposing personal values on others.
- Seek informed consent from the adult before providing services.
- Respect the adult's right to keep personal information confidential.
- Recognize individual differences such as cultural, historical and personal values.
- Honor the right of adults to receive information about their choices and options in a form or manner that they can understand.
- To the best of your ability, involve the adult as much as possible in developing the service plan.
- Focus on case planning that maximizes the vulnerable adult's independence and choice to the extent possible based on the adult's capacity.
- Use the least restrictive services first – community based services rather than institutionally based services whenever possible.
- Use family and informal support systems first as long as this is in the best interest of the adult.
- Maintain clear and appropriate professional boundaries.
- In the absence of an adult's expressed wishes, support casework actions that are in the adult's best interest. Use substituted judgment in case planning when historical knowledge of the adult's values is available.
- Do no harm. Inadequate or inappropriate intervention may be worse than no intervention.

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