

House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee

Senate Aging & Youth Committee

Public Hearing

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Provided by

Chris Dubble, MSW

Assistant Director for Training

Temple University Harrisburg

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee. My name is Chris Dubble, and I am the Assistant Director for Training at Temple University Harrisburg. Since 2014, I have also been the Director of the Institute on Protective Services at Temple University Harrisburg.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about our work at the Institute. I started working with the Institute in 2002 when we began with funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Since 2005, our work has been funded by the Department of Aging.

The Institute has always been focused on three core areas. First is our training. The Institute is the sole provider of basic training and primary provider of enrichment training for staff working in protective services from the 52 Area Agencies on Aging. The basic training is the course required by Regulation prior to someone being able to work in protective services. Enrichment trainings meet the need for annual continuing education required by Regulation.

Starting in 2016, the Institute has increased the number of training opportunities in order to reduce class size, provide better access to the Area Agencies on Aging and more effectively utilize adult learning principles. We currently provide, every year, 10 basic training course sessions, previously 2, and at least 14 enrichment sessions, previously 7. Enrichment training topics are selected every year in conjunction with the Department

and based on feedback from protective services caseworkers. Last year, we had 169 Area Agency on Aging staff in the basic course and over 650 participants in our enrichment courses.

The Institute also offers a protective services supervisor course and a 5 year refresher course. These courses target the educational needs of supervisors and experienced protective services caseworkers.

The Institute has focused this fiscal year on the development of e-learning modules. E-learning modules currently being written and produced include topics on medical issues, self-neglect, financial exploitation, and drug and alcohol abuse, to name a few.

In addition to training for protective services caseworkers, the Institute provides education for other Area Agency on Aging staff, like solicitors, and other allied professionals about the identification, referral and resolution of cases of victimization of older adults. Training for allied professionals is typically at the request of the Department, an Area Agency on Aging, or a county task force. Last year we trained over 600 allied professionals.

A second area is our work of case consultation. The Institute assists Area Agencies on Aging and law enforcement to effectively investigate and resolve cases of elder victimization. We consult on cases that either arise from the work of the Area Agencies on Aging or that law enforcement does not have the resources to move forward on their own.

While the Institute can provide consultation on all forms of abuse and neglect, the primary need has been to assist with cases of financial exploitation. The Institute helps the Area Agencies on Aging and law enforcement determine whether there are civil and/or criminal remedies to seek justice for the victimized older adult. The Institute currently has 13 active cases. In just those cases, the Institute has supported the Area Agencies on Aging in protecting \$4.6 million of older adults' assets. Our consultation is

done by our Assistant Director, Richard Albrecht, who is a former protective services supervisor and caseworker; Caroline Burnell, who is our newest staff and a Certified Fraud Examiner; and Dr. Ronald Costen, who is the former Director of the Institute and a current consultant.

The third area is our work with local task forces. From the beginning, the Institute has helped to develop task forces at the county level to address victimization of older adults. The Institute continues to support the work of the Department in developing and supporting these task forces. The task forces take many variations from close collaboration between the Area Agency on Aging and law enforcement to large multi-disciplinary groups that function as their own non-profit. The Institute has developed a task force manual that provides support to counties that want to start a task force. The Institute also provides in-person support for developing and existing task forces as requested.

These areas keep us very busy. We are also continually working on new ideas like producing a virtual reality training to simulate a case experience, increasing the evaluation metrics of our own training quality, and always trying to find new and better ways to meet the educational needs of the protective services caseworkers on the front line.

Before I conclude, I would like to return to training and briefly share our perspective on the education of protective services caseworkers. My staff and I have had the opportunity to provide training not just here in Pennsylvania but in other States as well. The importance of education for protective services caseworkers is due to the critical nature of their work and the generalist knowledge that they must have.

When I came out of social work school in the early 90s, I was taught that a generalist needs to know a little bit about a lot. I guarantee you that my professors who taught me that principle did not consider the work of modern protective services. Our protective services caseworkers need to know a lot about a lot.

Our call for more training should be seen as our recognition of the importance of the work of protective services and the daily challenges they face. We believe that education should come from a variety of sources including best practice, resource tools and on the job experience.

All training for protective services caseworkers needs to be accessible, applicable and achievable. Our goal at the Institute, in collaboration with the Department and the Area Agencies on Aging, is to provide training and consultation that support our protective services caseworkers who work to keep all older Pennsylvanians safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and abandonment.

I want to end by again thanking the Committee for this opportunity to share our work with you. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.