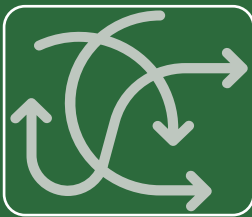


HIGHLIGHTS

Audit Purpose Laws 2022, Ch. 313, §55, directed the Arizona Auditor General to engage an independent consultant to examine the current adult protective services system and consider best practices to improve the delivery of services in this state.

Key Findings We determined several state agencies, other public entities, and nonprofit organizations have roles and responsibilities related to Arizona’s adult protective services system; however, the primary agency and program responsible for protecting vulnerable adults in the State is the Arizona Department of Economic Security’s Adult Protective Services Program (DES APS). We also identified several gaps in the system preventing the effective delivery of services that should be addressed to help ensure vulnerable adults are protected and receive the services they need. Specifically:



Arizona’s adult protective services system lacks a strategic direction which would be important for ensuring vulnerable adults are protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation and receive the services they need.



Arizona’s adult protective services system lacks a case management process for ensuring vulnerable adults receive services and key outcome data for assessing system effectiveness.



Arizona’s adult protective services system community engagement practices align with national guidance and other state practices, however, there are opportunities to more directly involve vulnerable adults and their families.

A summary of our recommendations to help ensure vulnerable adults are protected and receive the services they need during and after an investigation are presented below:

Key Recommendations

Establish a working group – DES should work with the Governor, President of the Arizona Senate, and Speaker of the Arizona House of Representatives to establish and appoint members to a working group to develop a strategic direction for Arizona’s adult protective services system.

Develop report identifying roles / responsibilities and other needs – DES in conjunction with the working group should develop a report that identifies the working group’s roles and responsibilities and identifies any authority, resources, legislation, or other action needed to ensure the working group’s ongoing success in identifying and implementing the strategic direction for Arizona’s adult protective services system.

Develop and implement a strategic direction and address system gaps – DES in conjunction with the working groups should develop and implement a strategic direction for Arizona’s adult protective service system and then take steps to address the additional gaps identified, including determining whether a specific state agency should be assigned the responsibility of case management services to help ensure that vulnerable adults receive the services they have been referred to after a DES APS investigation; and, identifying a system-wide performance reporting process that could compile performance and outcome information on an annual basis to assess the effectiveness of Arizona’s strategic direction.

Obtain input from vulnerable adults – DES in conjunction with the working group should involve vulnerable adults and their families in the development of the strategic direction for Arizona’s adult protective services system.

We also have identified the following areas for future independent review of Arizona’s adult protective services system.



Recommended Areas for Future Independent Reviews

DES APS' investigation process, including timeliness and quality;
Barriers for vulnerable adults to obtaining guardianship and the role and effectiveness of public fiduciaries;
Barriers for vulnerable adults to receive services, including availability of services in rural areas; and
Effectiveness of agreements between DES APS and Tribal authorities.