

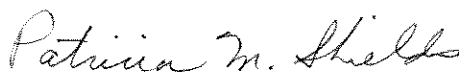
**The Challenges of Accountability in the Human Services:
Performance Management in the
Adult Protective Services Program of Texas**

By

Stephen Este

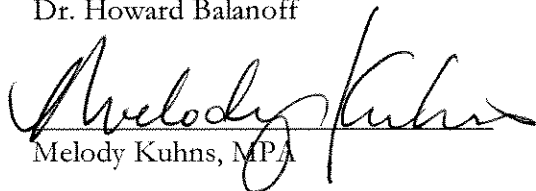
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Abstract

Measuring and managing performance is a critical part of public sector management, but the human services have lagged behind other government functions in implementing organizational accountability. Texas Adult Protective Services (APS) is the state program responsible for addressing abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly and disabled. APS is used as a case study to explore the challenges of organization accountability in the human services. The APS efforts began in 2004, when the organization was under extraordinary scrutiny for poorly handled cases, inconsistent policy expectations, and poor client outcomes.

Looking at both the literature of performance management and the case of the APS program, the research found that some of the challenges in managing performance in “people programs” lie in organizational culture, an emphasis on direct interaction with clients over the effective documentation, and a pervasive opinion that the most personal, qualitative interactions with clients are simply not measurable. Public human services agency functions are often hampered by an inadequate emphasis on the collection and use of performance information and a frequent lack of clarity or agreement as to their core missions. Further, they often do not have proven technologies for achieving desired outcomes and promote best practice models based on anecdote and conventional wisdom, as much as well-supported evaluation of program outcomes.

The research explored strategies that the APS program developed for building sustainable and accepted systems. The stated primary objectives of the APS leadership were to increase accountability at all levels of the organization, mitigating the weakness of existing external performance measures, and having performance standards that directly supported organizational goals of better client services. In developing a performance management system, the research found evidence that the APS program put a strong emphasis on field employee participation; ease of use, relevance and consistency, and in developing tools to measure what had previously been ruled immeasurable.

Finally, the research looked at the impacts of these strategies, and delved into quantifiable improvements generated, in part, by the efforts of the APS programs to bring accountability throughout the organization. Improvements in the timeliness and quality of case actions and related documentation were observed, even though the APS performance management system in its early stages of deployment.

Evidence was found that the challenges to implementing accountability in the human services could be overcome with the appropriate planning, organizational commitment, and resources. The APS case study may serve as a guide for human services agencies and other public organizations with complex missions and dynamic social conditions.

About the Author

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Chapter I. Introduction

Scenario: a person in need

On a clear spring morning, Donna McGill walks out into her suburban Dallas front yard with a coffee cup. As she picks up the newspaper, she looks around the middle-class neighborhood and takes stock of who has already gone to work, which neighbors cut their grass over the weekend, and the recently purchased minivan of the young couple up the street. Her eyes eventually drift directly across the street, toward the house of Edith Anderson.¹ Mrs. Anderson has lived in the neighborhood for as long as anyone can remember. Widowed some twenty years earlier, the septuagenarian neighbor now lives alone. Stubbornly independent, she worked every day for the county appraiser's office until just a couple of years ago. It is rumored she stopped working only because she was forced to retire. Neighbors routinely invite her to cookouts and family gatherings, help her trim overhanging branches, and clean the gutters of her house. Many have spent early evenings on her front porch talking about the changes in the community, her late husband, and a life seemingly well lived.

Over the past six months or so, neighbors have seen less of Edith Anderson. She no longer spends evenings watering her flowerbeds and the once lush landscape of her front yard has wilted and browned. She no longer invites friends for coffee and a sample of her latest baking effort. When neighbors stop by to invite her to a child's

¹ *This case situation is a composite based on interviews with Adult Protective Services (APS) caseworkers in 2006 and 2007. While based on actual APS cases, names and specific details were removed to protect client and reporter confidentiality.*

birthday or graduation party, Mrs. Anderson increasingly will not open her front door. She says she is busy or tired or not feeling well. As Donna McGill looks at a week's worth of newspapers scattered on Mrs. Anderson's lawn, she realizes she has not seen her elderly neighbor in many days, perhaps weeks. She begins to worry.

After getting the McGill youngsters on the school bus, Donna walks across the street and knocks on Mrs. Anderson's front door. She plans to use the excuse of borrowing some pruning shears. She hears shuffling in the house, dishes clanging together, and what sounds like the scrape of furniture on the floors. But no one answers the door. After several minutes of knocking and doorbell ringing, Donna hears a faint, "Go away." Donna walks off, taking note of a foul odor coming from the house.

Donna calls a couple of neighbors. While Mrs. Anderson is thought to have grown children, no one recalls ever seeing or meeting them. That evening, a couple of other neighbors try to check in on her. Again, she will not answer the door. The next day at work, Donna McGill calls the local police and explains she has an elderly neighbor that has not been seen lately. The dispatcher indicates he will "have a cruiser go by and do a welfare check."

The dispatcher later calls Donna back. The police officer did get Mrs. Anderson to answer the door. Though somewhat upset by the officer's visit, Mrs. Anderson appeared to be safe. The officer did relay to the dispatcher that the home was "pretty trashed." Of course, there's no crime in that.

After several more days and several more tries at checking on Mrs. Anderson, Donna McGill and her neighbors begin looking for some organization that may be able to intervene. Searching the Internet for resources in her community, she finds a hotline number. She calls and makes a report of her concerns. The agent on the other end of the line tells her it sounds like a possible case of “self-neglect.” The information will be forwarded to an Adult Protective Services office in her county.

In Texas, Adult Protective Services (APS) is a state program operated by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). APS is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities. In terms of a potential client base for Texas APS, there are almost 2.4 million elderly persons in the state. There are 1.7 million people between the ages of 18 and 64 with disabilities. (DFPS 2006, 11-12) ² In FY 2006, over 82,000 reports of adult abuse, neglect and exploitation in Texas were made to a centralized abuse hotline, resulting in almost 75,000 investigations.³ (DFPS 2006, 14) APS is often viewed as the bottom tier of the social safety net, called in when family and community resources have been exhausted. APS workload is perceived to increase as resources for other community services are reduced. ⁴

A day later, Donna McGill receives a call from Oscar Benavides, who identifies himself as the APS caseworker assigned to work on Mrs. Anderson’s case.

² Information on population in the DFPS Data Book originates with the Texas State Data Center at the University of Texas, San Antonio.

³ The program has experienced a steady rise in the amount of cases it is investigating; in 2002 there were just fewer than 57,000 investigations. Some cases reported to the hotline are routed to other agencies for investigation; nursing home or hospital complaints, for example, are not handled by APS.

⁴ Interview with APS Assistant Commissioner, February 2007.

After gathering some additional information, Mr. Benavides expresses his concern that Mrs. Anderson appears to be isolated. The words “depression” and “dementia” are rattled off as possible concerns. He speaks with a familiarity that tells Donna McGill he has probably seen many similar situations. The caseworker indicates he will go by to check on Mrs. Anderson within the next 24 hours.

It takes a full 45 minutes of bargaining, explaining, cajoling and promising before Mrs. Anderson finally opens her house to Oscar Benavides.⁵ As his eyes adjust to the darkness of the house, he struggles not to gag on the strong ammonia smell he knows to be cat urine. Mrs. Anderson begins to cry and disappears down a narrow hallway toward the back of the house. As the caseworker follows her, he realizes the “hallway” is actually a narrow passage framed by stacks of boxes and newspapers reaching the ceiling. He tries not to think about what substance his feet are slipping on. When he emerges into the living room of the home, the scene is gloomy but not foreign to him. It is one of a once normal life gone somehow terribly awry.

APS caseloads like that of Oscar Benavides are divided almost evenly between elderly and disabled clients.⁶ There is no “typical” APS case. Situations may involve a mentally ill person unable to afford psychotropic medication, “hoarders” like Mrs. Anderson with newspapers and junk mail piled to the ceilings of their homes,

⁵ According to APS policy, caseworkers lack the authority to enter a property where notice is given that entry is forbidden, unless permission is granted by the person who owns or lives on the property. Verbal permission to enter takes precedence over any form of notice. When caseworkers encounter any form of notice that trespass is forbidden, they attempt to call the owner and/or resident of the property and ask permission to enter. If the person living on the posted property is the client and if permission to enter is not granted, the caseworker asks a family member, neighbor, or other person with access to the client for help to make contact.

⁶ Some clients, of course, fall into both categories of elderly and disabled.

grandmothers whose life savings are being squandered by their offspring, paraplegics unable to get to doctor's appointments, an Alzheimer's patient being abused by his wife, or an elderly woman whose attic is being torn apart by raccoons with no family members to assist. The range of possible scenarios is as diverse as the population. Family members are often the perpetrators of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, but so-called "self-neglect" situations like that of Mrs. Anderson account for the majority of APS cases. (DFPS 2006, 24).⁷

Oscar Benavides visits Edith Anderson four times over the next two weeks, slowly gaining her trust. As neighborhood gossip increasingly focuses on Mrs. Anderson's situation, neighbors alternate between communal guilt and speculation about what, if anything, the APS caseworker plans to do. Each time he visits the home,⁸ Oscar makes observations about Mrs. Anderson and the surroundings. The home has at least four cats that seem to have the run of the house.⁹ The shag carpet is beyond saving. The situation has moved well beyond lackluster housekeeping to one of a potential health crisis. A large brown stain on the ceiling of the kitchen indicates there may be a leak in the roof. He notes stacks of utility bills unopened. Mrs. Anderson tells him the gas was shut off two months earlier. Mrs. Anderson's

⁷ The majority of the APS program serves elderly persons (aged 65 or older) and people aged 18-65 who have a disability, and reside in community settings. A smaller APS "Facility" division is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of clients in institutions. These clients are receiving services in state-operated settings serving adults with mental illness or mental retardation, such as state schools and state hospitals. The focus of this paper is on the larger program of APS, known variously as "Community" APS or "In-Home" APS.

⁸ APS policy (section 3410) indicates that the caseworker must visit to monitor the client's status every calendar month that the case is open to determine the client's current status, if any new problems have developed, and if further investigation is needed. Monthly status contacts are conducted in both the investigation and service delivery stages.

⁹ Because this is a routine occurrence in APS cases, there is a section of the APS handbook (3323.24) dedicated to client risk due to animals.

electricity is still connected; perhaps because she seems to only use a single bare light bulb and a filthy toaster oven. Dirty plates and glasses fill the sink and Mrs. Anderson seems to be eating through the canned food in her pantry on paper plates, which litter the living room. She tells the APS caseworker that she has a son and a daughter, now both in their forties, with whom she has not spoken in months. She cancelled a planned holiday visit because she was embarrassed at the state of her home and her life. She has not seen her grandchildren in almost two years.

Mrs. Anderson does not know what happened or how she got to this point in her life. She feels anxious and sad for no discernable reason. Oscar Benavides takes notes on a tablet computer as she talks. Mrs. Anderson likes Oscar. He is respectful and does not seem to judge her. He seems to care that she cannot sleep. On the fifth visit by the caseworker, just as the neighbors' frustration at a lack of progress reaches a critical point, Mrs. Anderson agrees to accept some help from Oscar Benavides - and Adult Protective Services.

Mrs. Anderson may never see Oscar as intervening on behalf of the government, but Oscar Benavides is conducting a formal investigation for a state agency. While he does not find anyone maltreating Mrs. Anderson, he does find her to be in a state of *self-neglect*, struggling to meet her day-to-day needs.¹⁰ Having made this determination, he then must choose an appropriate intervention to try to “fix”

¹⁰ *Texas Law (Chapter 48 of the Human Resource Code) authorizes Adult Protective Services to investigate neglect of an elderly person or an adult with a disability when the person responsible for the maltreatment is the elderly person or the adult with a disability. This is a “self-neglect” case.*

the situation. In the 70% of all APS investigations in which a person is found by the APS investigator to be in a state of abuse or neglect, the program will take some actions to protect the individual. (DFPS 2006, 17-27) In this case, Oscar hires a cleaning crew and a handyman to get Mrs. Anderson's house back into a safe and livable state.¹¹ He convinces her to see a doctor to take care of a skin condition caused by her living situation and to refill some blood pressure medications. The doctor also informally assesses her mental state. There is some concern about depression but the doctor feels it may be situational and improve with her living conditions. Caseworker Benavides works with her to organize her bills and finances. He also makes some informal agreements with neighbors to check on her and call him if her situation deteriorates. The vast majority of APS cases in this "service delivery" phase are resolved in less than 60 days.¹²

When Oscar Benavides checks back in on Mrs. Anderson weeks later, she seems to have bounced back. She smiles. The house is still clean, she has begun visiting friends again, and her general demeanor and health seems much improved. A local church is trying to get her involved in a once-a-week outing for senior citizens.

¹¹The funds to pay for such work are known in APS as Emergency Client Services (ECS). APS has many small local contracts for these types of services.

¹² According to Policy Release 05-011R, when developing "service plans" APS caseworkers are taught to address client problems utilizing the "least restrictive alternative." Further, the caseworker is instructed to "involve the client to the greatest extent possible." A variety of community resources may be required to resolve the problems described in the client's service plan.

A different kind of public administration

While challenging, this case worked out well. A resolution to Mrs. Anderson's situation was simplified by the fact that she has a retirement income sufficient to meet her needs. Many of the clients Oscar sees live in dire poverty. Oscar eventually closes her case but is sure to leave his card with all of the neighbors. Program statistics indicate that about 14% of the clients will require APS services again within one year. (DFPS 2006, 17-27) And not everyone is pleased with the APS response. Donna McGill's husband is convinced Mrs. Anderson needs to be in a nursing home. Another neighbor can't believe the APS worker let Mrs. Anderson keep one of her cats.

The APS intervention into the life of Mrs. Anderson reflects an interaction far different than the majority of relationships between people and their government. There are fundamental differences in types of public organizations. There are differences in how policy is implemented and differences in perceived - and real - success in accomplishing agency missions. As a contrast, the mechanics, expectations and goals of public functions such as solid waste collection or restaurant inspection are generally understood by society. There is generally little sense that the system is "broken" or in need of major reform. The processes of successfully meeting public expectations are fairly straightforward and standardized. At the opposite end of the spectrum, human services functions (whether they be public assistance, drug treatment, care for the mentally ill, or intervention into child abuse) are perennial candidates for criticism, reform, defunding, or restructuring. Human services are

characterized by a high degree of personal interaction with individual members of society. Their organizational interventions attempt to address issues caused or affected by a variety of external factors and inputs. Often the core mission of such organizations may be subject to political or social debate.

The steps that Oscar Benavides chose to take were not the standardized steps common to many areas of public administration. Instead, the APS response was shaped by the client.¹³ If conditions were slightly different, the interaction would be different. If Mrs. Anderson's mental capacity¹⁴ did not show signs of improvement, the caseworker might have sought a formal capacity exam from a medical doctor and might have even petitioned the courts for guardianship.¹⁵ If one of Mrs. Anderson's children had been abusing her, APS may have sought a protective order. Had she fallen and broken her hip, temporary nursing home placement may have been appropriate.

¹³ According to APS Policy Section 1200, clients can refuse protective services unless abuse or neglect presents a threat to life and the person lacks the capacity to consent to protective services. They are to participate in and be consulted about all decisions concerning their welfare, if able to do so.

¹⁴ According to the APS Policy Release 05-008R, just some of the problems that may indicate a lack of capacity to consent include disorientation; disordered thought processes; paranoia; delusions; inability to answer questions coherently; unprovoked angry outbursts; unexplained laughter or tearfulness; depression; withdrawal from others; thoughts of suicide, homicide, or self-injury; bizarre behavior; inability to recall recent events or accurately report a recent newsworthy story; mental illness that is untreated; alcohol or substance abuse; failure to report or resist abuse; exploitation or neglect by others; hoarding; hazards in the home or malnourishment; and very poor personal hygiene. Caseworkers are trained to look for combinations of these factors as they assess risk to the client.

¹⁵ District courts may appoint a person or entity as guardian of the person and/or the estate. A guardian of the person is responsible for the health, well-being, and personal needs of the ward, while a guardian of the estate is responsible for managing the assets of the ward. The Department of Aging and Disability Services assumed the role of state guardianship from APS responsibility in 2005.

Measuring what works

In the case of APS caseworker Oscar Benavides, there is a unit supervisor who bears some responsibility for the success of his cases. That supervisor answers to regional administrators who in turn are responsible to statewide management of the program based in Austin. The statewide leaders of the Adult Protective Services program are under the wing of commissioners in both their own agency, Family and Protective Services and the parent Health and Human Services Commission. All of these upper-level directors routinely report on the program to the Governor and elected legislators who, of course, must answer to an electorate.

How does anyone in this long chain know whether Oscar Benavides is doing his job appropriately? How does a program specialist in Austin know if a policy change that allowed Oscar to offer services to Mrs. Anderson for an extra month is having the desired effect? On a grander scale, how do policymakers know that caseworker Benavides' superiors are managing the program's resources appropriately? How does the state senator called about an elderly constituent by Donna McGill's husband know the APS program is giving good direction and training to Oscar and his coworkers?

For the public administrators in the human services, measuring the outcomes of a program such as Adult Protective Services can be challenging (McDavid and Hawthorn 2006, Carillo 2003, Kravchuk and Schack 1996). It may not always be clear how much the program has done relative to other programs or societal factors that

are constantly changing. (Kravchuk and Schack 1996) The “right” way to do things can be hard to discern. (Hatry 2001, Wulczyn 2005, Manela and Moxley 2002) The desired outcome for the client being helped may even be in dispute (Bond 1999, Gibelman 2004, HHSC 2004a). In the case of APS, even the best possible intervention may end in an undesirable outcome as so many APS clients come into the program in a deteriorated state. How does an APS manager coach and measure the work of the individual employee when no two situations are alike? How does one measure a successful outcome for the APS client? How do policymakers and the public know their expectations of Adult Protective Services are being met?

Research purpose

Measurement can be challenging in the human services. But, as with all public administration, measurement is at the core of developing public accountability. (McDavid and Hawthorn 2006). While protecting elderly and disabled Texans seems a fairly agreeable directive, APS has been, over the last few years, fraught with controversy about its mission and performance. As part of a massive overhaul, the organization undertook a reform effort that touched almost every aspect of its policy, practice, staffing and accountability infrastructure. A centerpiece of this reform effort was a comprehensive performance management system designed to hold employees accountable for quality work and positive client outcomes. For a caseworker like Oscar Benavides, this new system was designed so that the expectations of his work mirrored that of his colleagues across the state. For Edith Anderson, the APS

program wanted her to have the same access to services as anyone else in a similar situation.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges of implementing a performance management system within the Texas Adult Protective Services program, explore the ways the APS program adapted to these challenges, and assess the impact of the program's efforts thus far. As this work will be largely exploratory and descriptive, and to a great degree introductory, pillar questions are used as a framework for approaching these purposes.

Summary of Chapters

The social, political and organizational conditions that impacted the Adult Protective Services program prior to implementing its performance management system are discussed in Chapter II. The literature review in Chapter III focuses on the public administration literature pertaining to performance management and measurement, both generally and in relation to the social services. Chapter IV explains the conceptual framework used as a tool of inquiry for this research, describes the way this framework is operationalized, and details the research methodology. The results of the research are described in Chapter V, focusing on the challenges to the APS program in implementing accountability structures, approaches taken to address these challenges, and the impacts observed so far. Chapter VI provides conclusions and recommendations for both the APS program and future research.

Chapter II. Setting

Significant Challenges in the Adult Protective Services Program

The purpose of this chapter is to look at concerns identified in 2004 that eventually led to a significant overhaul of the APS program. As noted in the prior chapter, Adult Protective Services (APS) is a state program operated by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Adult Protective Services is responsible for investigating and addressing abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities.¹⁶ As in the scenario described in the first chapter, APS interventions are prompted by a referral to the 24-hour Statewide Intake hotline in Austin. Information is gathered from reporters via phone and, increasingly, by Internet reporting.¹⁷ Reports come from a wide variety of sources. A quarter of reports originate from concerned family members and neighbors of the alleged victims; another quarter originates from healthcare providers or other caregivers. (DFPS 2006, 16) Cases are routed from the hotline electronically and assigned to a field caseworker. APS caseworkers investigate reported abuse, neglect, or exploitation to determine if the reported situation exists, and to what extent it adversely affects the elderly or disabled person. They will then use a variety of mechanisms, much like those employed by the fictional Oscar Benavides, to address the client's needs.

¹⁶ In section 1310 of APS Policy a "disabled person" is broadly defined as a person with a mental, physical, or developmental disability that substantially impairs the person's ability to provide adequately for the persons care or protection. This could entail a temporary disability, such as a broken hip, if it significantly impairs the ability of the person to perform their "activities of daily living." When the extent of the disability is not clear, the program "errs on the side of considering that the alleged victim has a disability." (Section 1320.10)

¹⁷ The DFPS Statewide Intake hotline is one of the largest government call centers in the world. According to the DFPS statistics, it handles an average of over 43,000 calls per month and an additional 8,000 Internet reports for APS, Child Protective Services, and Childcare Licensing programs.

In 2003 and 2004, several high profile abuse and neglect cases involving elderly and disabled adults ended tragically, despite prior involvement by the Adult Protective Services program. Public scrutiny began with a high degree of media attention on local cases in El Paso. It soon evolved into a statewide crisis around “serious fundamental and systemic problems within the Adult Protective Services program”(HHSC 2004a). In response to growing public concerns, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) sent teams from its Office of Inspector General (OIG) to conduct in-depth reviews of casework in several offices.

Eventually, the review concluded:

...serious deficiencies exist in virtually all aspects of the Adult Protective Services program. Subject matter experts have identified key deficiencies in all the major areas of concern identified in the Executive Order. These findings are consistent with case review information focused in El Paso but suggest that problems with the Adult Protective Services program may be fundamental and systemic. The preliminary findings for El Paso regarding the Adult Protective Services program may be a visible manifestation of more basic system-wide deficiencies. (HHSC 2004a)

The findings of the HHSC investigations were comprehensive in scope and certainly daunting to those charged to correct them. Some of the major findings included a general lack of clarity in the mission of the Adult Protective Services organization, a lack of standardization in case process steps and decision-making, and an overemphasis on the right to client self-determination over safety (HHSC 2004b). In about a third of the cases reviewed in the course of the HHSC inquiry, it was found that Adult Protective Services investigations did not fully address all of the allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation or that caseworkers did not obtain enough evidence to reach a disposition on the investigation. Following the

investigative stage¹⁸, APS services were also found to frequently not address the client's need. The program was criticized for poor relations with the communities it served, law enforcement and the judiciary. Adult Protective Services caseworkers were found to be inadequately trained and poorly supported by management. Running through the entire review process was a general lack of accountability at all levels of the program. As the HHSC implementation plan detailed:

There are few performance standards for the APS process. Appropriate performance criteria for what constitutes a good investigation or a good service delivery plan are lacking in the APS process. Current criteria appear to be subjective; therefore, it is difficult to measure staff performance. When management does have performance indicators, such as number of days an investigation is open, there are no clear standards for staff to follow. This lack of standards impairs the ability to effectively manage time and resources, to ensure quality investigations, and maintain accountability. (HHSC 2004b,4)

All indications were that Adult Protective Services in Texas required fundamental reform to its processes, training, and philosophy and accountability structure. Texas Governor Rick Perry issued Executive Order RP 33 in April of 2004 directing the Health and Human Services Commission to oversee the systemic reform of the Adult Protective Services program. Upper-level management of both Adult Protective Services and Family and Protective Services departed the agency. Detailed recommendations were developed and presented to the Governor, who called upon the Texas Legislature to pass emergency legislation to implement these recommendations (HHSC 2004d). A year later, Senate Bill 6 funded much of this

¹⁸ *Charts of the APS case process can be found in the appendices.*

reform along with reform required to address concern in the Child Protective Services program.

APS accountability in 2004

As mentioned above, within the APS program, the HHSC reviews found fragmented or nonexistent expectations of worker performance and an inconsistent infrastructure to support accountability. But almost any endeavor in public administration has some degree of external oversight or accountability. External accountability structures *were* in place for the APS program at the point serious problems were identified in 2004 . The Texas performance-based budgeting system is often cited as a model for implementing accountability in state government (Romero 2004, Wilson 1999). In an effort to increase state agency accountability and move away from crisis management, the state of Texas adopted a strategic planning process. This was followed shortly by a performance-based budget system in the early 1990s (Broome 1995, LBB 2006).

In theory, the system was designed to recognize the relationships between accountability and funding. The Legislature soon included agency goals, strategies, and performance targets with each agency's appropriation in the Appropriations Act, the mechanism by which Texas state agencies are funded. The Legislative Budget Board (LBB) is a permanent joint committee of the Texas Legislature that develops recommendations for legislative appropriations for all agencies of state government (LBB 2006). As with all Texas state agencies, the Department of Family

and Protective Services has Legislative Budget Board Performance Measures that tie to an overall strategic budgeting framework. LBB practice develops a milieu of metrics designated as output, explanatory, efficiency, and outcome. These types are defined in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Legislative Budget Board Performance Measure Types	
Type	Definition
Outcome	a quantifiable indicator of the clients' benefit from the agency's action
Output	a quantifiable indicator of the number of goods or services an agency produces
Efficiency	a quantifiable indicator of productivity expressed in unit costs, units of time or other ratio-based units
Explanatory	an indicator of factors, agency resources, or requests received that affect an agency's performance
<i>(Texas Legislative Budget Board 2006)</i>	

With input and assistance from Family and Protective Services staff, the Health and Human Services Commission publishes a five-year Strategic Plan of Operation.¹⁹ The strategic planning process forms the basis for the performance-based budget and the Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) for the next biennium. Each strategy in the plan has an appropriated budget, and most direct strategies will have at least one performance measure. For example, APS has two strategies, one for in-home services and one for state facility investigations²⁰ with independent budget and performance measures. With regard to the LBB performance measures, proposals are submitted to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) and the Governor's Office of Budget and Planning (GOBP). LBB and GOBP

¹⁹ An agency strategic plan is required by Texas Government Code, Chapter 2056. HHSC develops an enterprise-wide strategic plan that encompasses all five Texas Health and Human Services agencies.

²⁰ Interview with DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics staff. December 2006.

review the proposed changes and either accept them or propose alternatives. Table 2.2 lists all of the performance measures for the current biennium for the Adult Protective Services program.

Table 2.2: LBB Performance Measures for Adult Protective Services (FY 2006-07)			
Strategy A.3	ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES		
01-03	01	Outcome	Incidence of Adult Abuse/Neglect/ Exploitation per 1,000 persons
01-03	02	Outcome	Percent of Adults Found to be Abused/Neglected/Exploited Who Are Served
01-03	03	Outcome	APS Case Recidivism
01-03	04	Outcome	Incidence of Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation per 1,000 Persons and Receiving Services in MHMR Settings
Strategy A.3.1	ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES		
01-03-01	01	Efficiency	Average Monthly Cost per APS Investigation
01-03-01	02	Efficiency	Average Monthly Cost per APS Case
01-03-01	03	Efficiency	Average Monthly Cost per Adult Guardianship Client
01-03-01	04	Efficiency	Average APS Caseload per Worker
01-03-01	05	Efficiency	APS Workload Equivalency (WEM)
01-03-01	01	Explanatory	Percent of APS Workers with Two or More Years of Service
01-03-01	02	Explanatory	Number of APS Clients Receiving Protective Services
01-03-01	01	Output	Number of Completed APS Investigations
01-03-01	02	Output	Number of Confirmed APS Investigations
01-03-01	03	Output	Average Number of Open APS Investigations per Month
01-03-01	04	Output	Average Number of APS Cases Open for Protective Services
01-03-01	05	Output	Number of APS Clients Receiving Guardianship Services
Strategy A.3.3	APS - MHMR INVESTIGATIONS		
01-03-03	01	Efficiency	Average Monthly Cost per Investigation in MH and MR Settings
01-03-03	02	Efficiency	Average Mental Health and Mental Retardation Caseload per Worker
01-03-03	01	Explanatory	Number of Deaths from Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation: MH and MR Settings
01-03-03	01	Output	Number of Completed Investigations in MH and MR Settings
01-03-03	02	Output	Number of Confirmed Abuse Reports in MH and MR Settings
01-03-03	03	Output	Number of Victims in Confirmed Abuse Reports in MH and MR Settings
01-01-01	03	Output	Number of APS Reports of Adult Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation
01-01-01	04	Output	Number of MH and MR Reports of Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation

Source: DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics.

The metrics listed in bold are “key measures”, those the Legislative Budget Board identifies as most important. They must be reported on quarterly, while the

rest are computed and reported annually. These measures are not meant to indicate how well Oscar Benavides handled the case of Edith Anderson. Legislative Budget Board metrics are intended as aggregate measures of the entire APS program. But if one thinks the measures as a snapshot of all of the clients like Mrs. Anderson served by all of the caseworkers in the same role as Oscar Benavides, one can start to assess their validity.

Most of the LBB metrics ask a question of how many Edith Andersons there were and what percentage of Mrs. Andersons exist in the population at large. The metrics do ask how much it costs APS to have Oscar Benavides investigate a case, an important tool for managing finite resources. None speak directly to outcome.

The one metric that begins to ask whether all of the state's Oscars actually helped all of the state's Ediths is the one on case recidivism. One could speculate that if a client came back into the system, they had not been appropriately served the first time. The problem with this logic is that many APS clients are in a state of decline due to age or infirmity or at constant risk of decompensating due to mental illness. The best program intervention may well alleviate a person's immediate risk of harm in February. Dire financial straits, a failure to get needed medication, or the natural progression of age or disease may well land the individual in trouble again by July or August.

How did this group of metrics become the official measure of how the APS program is doing? In theory, the LBB metrics evolve out of negotiation between the

three entities: APS, LBB, and GOBP. ²¹ In practice, both state agency staff and researchers (Romero 2004, Wilson 1999) assert that the process is less a negotiation and more frequently dominated by the LBB. Agency staff report that the Legislative Budget Board's need to track metrics over time means that while metrics can be added, they are rarely changed or removed.²²

In the case of Adult Protective Services, what negotiation does occur involves APS staff, staff from the Family and Protective Services Finance Division and the DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics division. Legislative Budget Board and GOBP work with this team to approve negotiated budget changes and changes to performance measures prior to submission of the Family and Protective Services Legislative Appropriation Request. In addition to APS, Family and Protective Services includes the much larger CPS program, childcare licensing and a variety of prevention and early intervention programs. APS staff stressed in interviews that they must also negotiate internally with Family and Protective Services executive management to achieve a balance of resource requests with the other Family and Protective Services programs. While programs are distinctly funded and managed, legislators will look at the totality of the agency's funding request. ²³ Once the measures are finalized, the agency develops an operating budget and sets up the necessary systems to collect the performance management data.²⁴

²¹ *Interview with DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics staff. December 2006.*

²² *To lend some support to this idea, it is worth noting that DFPS currently has over 150 LBB performance measures.*

²³ *Interview with APS State Office staff. January 2007.*

²⁴ *During the negotiation phase of performance measures, the DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics division writes the code to create new performance measures or modifies code for measures that are revised. Legislative Budget Board and GOBP may request statistical data for new or revised measures or may request analysis of key issues in*

In Dallas, a supervisor reading over the work of Oscar Benavides and trying to assess whether Mrs. Richards is safer than she was before someone called APS. In Austin, someone is trying to figure out how successful the Dallas-Fort Worth APS region is at protecting clients. They will find little of use in the measures adopted by the State of Texas to ensure accountability of the APS programs. Indeed, the State of Texas found little use in its own metrics. The challenges of managing to these measures will be discussed in the findings section.

measures. Base data is also required for actual data published in the LAR and used to create forecasted years. During implementation, systems are set up to capture the data. This may involve modifications or additions to the agency's data collection software, modifications to data warehouse tables, and development of a structure to store and publish the performance measure data.

Chapter III. The Literature of Measuring and Managing Performance

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the academic literature of performance management in general, and in the human services specifically. There is a brief overview of the performance measurement in public organizations including purpose and history. Bourne (2000) has framed the development of performance measurement systems into three main phases: design, implementation, and use of the performance measure. This is a useful approach for this review. Literature surrounding the initial design and development of metrics will be summarized. The challenges of selecting the appropriate types and mix of metrics are examined, as is the infrastructure needed to implement and support a system. Finally, scholarly work on the challenges of implementing accountability systems in the human services is reviewed.

Why measure performance in the public sector?

Performance management as it relates to public organizations is a systematic process of monitoring the results of activities, collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward desired outcomes, using performance information to inform program decision-making and resource allocation, and communicating results achieved or not achieved. At its core, it is evidence-based, using information to guide management (McDavid and Hawthorn 2006, Carillo 2003, Kopczynski 1999, Heinrich 2002). Both scholarly and popular literature extols the

virtues of measuring and managing performance for a wide variety of reasons (Behn 2003, Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Kopczynski 1999, Heinrich 2002, Kravchuk and Schack 1996). Behn (2003) explains that performance information can be used to ensure public needs are being adequately met, determine resource allocation, promote wise expenditures of taxpayer dollars, and assess the efficacy of programs. Such information can be used to assess the potential of optimizing, consolidating or even eliminating programs. Performance information can be the start of discussions of potential outsourcing or the creation of private-public competition. Mahalland (2002) argues for integrating performance metrics as a way of directing organization strategic goals and plans. Ammons (2001) describes how standardized performance metrics allow comparisons to be made across jurisdictions or in comparison to be professionally set standards.

Telling a story through performance information

Public organizations operate in political environments. Elected officials demand things of organizations for a wide variety of reasons from a genuine concern for proper delivery of services to election-year opportunism. Ammons (2001), Patchett (2006), Gibelman (2004), and Behn (2003) all stress the importance of agency performance information in relationship to policymakers and larger communities. Public organizations may report only what they are legislatively mandated to report. Some have been slow to make performance information transparent to the public for a number of reasons. Patchett (2006, 33) recognizes the

reality that information generated by performance measurement can in some cases leave “elected officials and staff vulnerable to attack and criticism.”

For APS in 2004, public scrutiny came from the media as well. The details of cases just like Edith Anderson’s appeared in newspapers nationwide. Ammons (2001) explains the media tendency to make superficial comparisons that ignore differences in the nature, scope, and quality of services from place to place. Gibelman (2004, 139) takes this a step further and argues the tendency is not only to misinterpret performance information but also to actively seek out poor performance. Media coverage of public agency performance issues is the negative or extreme cases, as “what is newsworthy tends to be the unusual”. In Adult Protective Services, case reviews and interviews with staff revealed that one elder neglect situation highlighted in the national press in 2004 had never even been reported to the program. APS caseworkers were being held accountable in a public forum for a situation for which they were completely unaware.

In spite of these risks, the literature counsels public administrators to not cling to performance management as solely an internal resource and advises transparency. Behn (2003) explains that organizations should share honest self-assessments of performance to a wide audience. Patchett (2006, 33) concedes that in the short term, this risks drawing unwanted scrutiny. In the long run, however, it builds the public’s confidence in the organization’s managerial. “Although such criticism may occur, every effort should be made to provide opportunities to elected officials and staff to

use the information in a productive way--for learning, education, and increased performance. This will most likely result in increased commitment to the program.”

An educational tool

Behn (2003, 591) views performance information as an educational tool. “If public agencies are to accomplish public purposes, they need the public’s support. Performance measures can contribute to such support by revealing not only when government institutions are failing, but also when they are doing a good or excellent job.” Performance management affords the opportunity for an organization to “tell its story” when used properly.

As organizations become more complex, so do the challenges of explaining how things work. Performance information can provide a consistent framework for helping external parties understand the processes, clients and terminology of an organization. In turn, this leads to better-informed policy makers and reduces the risk of selected measures being used for political ends without proper context (Behn 2003). External entities can become not only more informed about the agency but also proponents of the organization’s performance management efforts. “Political support for performance measurement programs is enhanced by sharing the information with the public...Communication fosters political support because the information, both positive and negative, provides elected officials and staff with stories about public service excellence and explanations about how areas of concern are addressed”(Patchett 2006, 33).

External stakeholders may adopt a longer-term frame of mind instead of making erratic calls for shortsighted changes. As Behn describes, stakeholders and legislators, once assured the agency is actively working on a plan for ongoing improvement, develop a greater degree of patience. “Performance measurement programs take time to develop. Strong signals of support from elected officials and managers are often needed so that staff members know that the organization is going to stay the course of continuous improvement”. Behn (2003, 591) argues that openly sharing performance information does more than laying the groundwork for more than additional legislative support or financial resources. Transparency also can attract “dedicated people who want to work for a successful agency that is achieving important public purposes.... [and] even attract potential collaborators from other organizations that have not received as much attention, and thus seek to enhance their own sense of accomplishment by shifting some of their energies to the high performing collaborative.” Oscar Benavides may well find that the church he linked Mrs. Anderson to may want to create a formal outreach for elderly people who live alone. Based on her experience with APS, neighbor Donna McGill may decide to volunteer with Meals on Wheels or even explore a career as an APS caseworker. In the case of Texas APS, reports of the program’s improvements have led to a new statewide strategic plan for engaging community stakeholders. APS has new collaborations with banks and law enforcement agencies to combat financial

exploitation of the elderly. Other collaborations include partnering with academics and the medical community to develop new tools to assess risk and client capacity.²⁵

The tradition of managing public sector performance

Underlying all of these purposes are basic concepts of rationality and accountability. The public, elected officials, consumers of government services, the media, stakeholders of all sorts, and public administrators all claim that they want publicly-funded programs to be accountable. Kravchuk & Schack (1999) and Julnes and Holzer (2002) argue that the roots of performance measurement are an effort to bring a rational, scientific approach to what can be an irrational and political process. Most researchers assert that the practice of measuring and managing performance in the public sector has firmly taken hold and is growing (Behn 2003, McDavid and Hawthorn 2006, Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Patchett 2006, Kopczynski 1999, Heinrich 2002, Kravchuk and Schack 1996). However, Coplin (2002, 700) asserts that while there are excellent examples of the public sector improving performance management, “that sentiment has hardly been inspirational to most government officials and citizens...measuring government performance is far from a common practice” As managing performance is as much philosophy as it is process, its true prevalence is a challenge to gauge. Research interest indicates it is at least widespread, if not deep.

²⁵ *Interviews with APS and DFPS community engagement staff, December 2006.*

Performance management as an idea is not new, with various efforts at developing accountability systems dating to the first half of the last century. Lynch and Day (1996) explain that municipal governments were some of the first to develop systems for appraising progress toward desired goals. Auditing and budgeting systems in public organizations are largely responsible for building the foundation for accountability frameworks. Early government performance efforts assessed the relationships of inputs to costs and sought ways to achieve fiscal efficiencies. Kopczynski (1999) indicates that the 1970s were a time of some organized initiatives aimed at developing accountability systems, such as the Nixon administration's management by objective and zero-based budgeting, but most efforts were largely process focused. Heinrich (2002) explains that 1980s were a decade of considerable movement toward managing performance in the private sector, and the field soon began to include metrics of quality and customer satisfaction. Several popular books on the quest for quality were best sellers as business sought new ways to remain competitive. Reagan-era New Federalism shifted much responsibility for public programs to the state and local levels of government, which prompted an increased interest in new management theory. Desktop availability of statistical analysis tools also laid an important foundation for future efforts (Heinrich 2002).

The 1990's saw a general reform movement designed to make government more responsive and accountable for outcomes. Job training programs moved to the forefront of managing for outcomes and were the subject of much study and emulation (Kopczynski 1999). Kravchuk & Schack (1996) argue that the

Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 institutionalized outcomes-based evaluations for federal programs. A vice presidential committee on government accountability was formed during the Clinton administration, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board argued that the time had come for reporting on performance progress, and Osborne and Gaebler's (1993) *Reinventing Government* became an unlikely bestseller. In it, the pair argued that government should measure and manage for results, that information was underutilized the governance of public organizations and that a creative spirit of committed practitioners had yet to be fully harnessed. In the decade since the new wave of performance management enthusiasm, it has been sustained in the United States as much by cost-saving efforts as any higher motivation and has often suffered from an emphasis on outputs over outcomes. But there are many examples of effective use of metrics in the States and strong adoption in the UK, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand (Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Kravchuk and Schack 1996, Kopczynski 1999).

Measuring as a prelude to managing

McDavid and Hawthorn (2006) make the point that any effort to manage performance must begin with measurement. There can be no accountability without a scale by which action can be measured or benchmarked. But measurement, despite its complexities (and in some cases, controversies), is only the beginning. Behn (2003) argues that without a systematic and integrated approach to acting upon the results of these measurements, the metrics themselves do little but advance knowledge of the current level of functioning of an organization. Organizational improvement is

intimately entwined with its operations, policies, staffing, relationship with communities served, politics, public perception, and strategic goals. Because of this, measurement of performance must be translated into the management of performance if it is to be of any worth. Or as Bob Behn (2003, 586) asserts, “neither the act of measuring performance nor the resulting data accomplished anything itself; only when someone uses these measures in some way do they accomplish something.”

Developing systems of measurement

The process of selecting metrics for inclusion into a performance management system is the best-developed area of the literature. In fact, performance “measurement” seems far more common a term than performance “management”. As previously stated, performance management begins with measurement. Measurement cannot begin without deciding what to measure and how. For some organizations, metrics may already be selected by external entities through such processes as legislative or budget oversight (LBB 2006). McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 315) stress the importance of not letting external pressure force organizations into adoption of systems that do not meet the organizational need. “Organizations planning performance measurement often face substantial resource constraints. One of the reasons for embracing performance measurement is to do a better job of managing the (scarcer) available resources. If a performance management system is mandated by external stakeholders...there may be considerable pressure to plunge in without fully planning the design and implementation phases.”

In the past, finance and audit functions frequently dictated public sector metrics - largely ones of efficiency, inputs and outputs (Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Kopczynski 1999). Quality, timeliness and effectiveness have also been candidates for measurement. In the last twenty years public administrators have seen a shift to looking primarily at outcomes under the banner of “management for results.” McDavid and Hawthorn echo a consistent theme in the literature about the propensity for public administrators to opt for measures of output over outcome. “(M)anagers are usually more willing to have output data reported publicly because outputs are typically much easier to attribute to a specific program or even program activity. Although outputs are important as a way to report work done, they cannot be substituted for outcomes; the assumption that is outputs are produced, outcomes must have been produced is usually not defensible.” (2006, 316)

In recent years, proponents of performance management have increasingly called for a mix of measures, often referred to as a “balanced scorecard.” Mahalland (2002) explains that balanced approach advises a mixture of outcomes with internal *process* metrics. This is based on the notion that by the time *outcomes* are reported it may be too late for a manager to take action to correct problems. Gray (1998) furthers the case for inclusion of customer service metrics, innovation and employee development, and for integrating metrics with an organization’s strategic goals and plans.

Gaining acceptance for measurement

One critical point running through the literature is that public administrators can ensure long-range success in the development of metrics by involving the staff most affected by measurement. Heinrich (1999) and Long and Franklin (2004) argue that what should be a “bottom-up” process of building a performance management system is often a “top-down” management directive, frequently inflexible and overly standardized. Julnes and Holzer (1999) explain that staff unease about performance measure implementation can be overcome by good information sharing. Patchett (2006, 33) further explains, “People usually do not enjoy being measured. It is important, therefore, that those who provide the service be involved in selecting and/or crafting the performance measures. The process of selecting and crafting the measures generates greater understanding of the services being provided and what is expected. Involving ...staff helps them develop a clear sense of the outcomes they are striving to achieve and of what success looks like.” Allowing broad participation not only means a better informed set of metrics but also can be an important strategy in getting much needed buy-in from staff and stakeholders.

Validity of measuring performance

Inclusion of frontline staff in the selection of metrics in no way insures a consistent robust system of metrics. Broad participation also means the risk of differing opinions on the “right” way to measure something. One criticism of the current body of literature on performance metrics is that academics have focused too much attention on the various *purposes* of measuring performance but have largely

neglected the issues of *consistency* and *validity* (Nicholson-Crotty et al 2006). In short, there are many ways to measure the same thing. As complexity increases, especially in the case of outcomes, so do the myriad ways of measuring. Building on experience in researching education outcome measures, Nicholson-Crotty et al (2006, 102) argues “The relative ambiguity of goals in public organizations, along with the nascent nature of performance-measurement efforts, means that multiple measures of or methods for measuring the same concept may be identified as appropriate or correct.” Nicholson-Crotty et al (2006, 104) provide an excellent case study of how the same concept can be measured different ways.

The research team focused on what appears on the surface to be a fairly straightforward measure, dropout rates of school districts in Texas. The authors delve into how three separate but equally sanctioned metrics reveal three very different landscapes. “One used by the state education agency in its current assessment of districts, one recommended by the most recent gubernatorial commission on dropouts for inclusion in future assessments, and one used by the national government in its calculations of district-level dropout rates.”

The researchers (2006,105) found that the type of measure chosen directly impacted the conclusions about whether an organization was performing poorly, if there was a dropout problem at all, and the efficacy of proposed solutions. On the managerial level the authors found that one “could assume that his or her district is performing considerably better than other districts using one indicator but find that it is actually well behind using another.”

Among many examples in a 711 district sample reviewed, the Lytle Independent School District was a small, poor district with a high percentage of Hispanic students. Using a state-proposed cohort measure, the district ranked an abysmal 600th in the state in terms of dropout rate. But using the existing state measurement, Nicholson-Crotty found a very different story was told. The same district received an ‘exemplary’ rating from the Texas Education Agency based on its performance on the TEA methodology. In fact rather than being listed as 600th, the state metric indicated it was ranked 66th. “Thus, this measure might indicate to the manager that little needs to be done about dropouts, particularly given the other challenges that the district faces resulting from its large number of economically disadvantaged students.” (Nicholson-Crotty et al 2006, 107-8) In short, choosing the “right” way to measure program outcomes can be a challenge and such choices can certainly be impacted by political considerations.

A concluding step in the development phase of a performance system is typically the establishment of benchmarks²⁶, or the measurable goal an organization is trying to achieve. Ammons (2001) explains that in the public sector benchmarking typically takes one of two forms. The first is setting a benchmark for a community’s goal (travel time in rush hour, number of new businesses opened). The second is an externally set target such as comparison to other jurisdictions, a federal mandate or professionally set standard.

²⁶ It should be noted that outside the research community, the term “benchmarking” is often used as synonymously with performance management efforts in general (Coplin 2002, 708).

Overall, the design phase plays a critical role in implementation. The literature stresses the need for public sector managers to the provisional nature of the system. Metrics will not be “perfect” on the first try. Even if they were, new measurement needs will arise. Kravchuk and Schack (1996, 349) explain “when fundamental change is present, the measurement system must be flexible enough to either accommodate the change (i.e. to indicate and measure it) or be capable of changing itself in response - that is, to self organize with, and around, the system it seeks to monitor.”

Creating agency knowledge

Once an organization is able to develop a set of consistent, relevant, and generally agreed upon metrics, other challenge awaits. Public administrators must deal with technical issues, resources and organizational commitment to implement and sustain a performance management system. (Kopczynski 1999, Patchett 2006)

Oscar Benavides delivered a set of services to meet Mrs. Anderson’s needs. His efforts were, by most accounts, successful in moving her out of a state of neglect. Oscar may be able to keep up with the details of the scores of clients he works with in a given month in his head or on a well-worn legal pad. Tracking cases and clients becomes increasingly difficult for his supervisor who must oversee the work of seven other caseworkers. And at the district or statewide level, anecdotal information is all but worthless as cases begin to number in the thousands. To deal with the complexity, Oscar Benavides, his boss and his boss’s boss all use a standardized case management system that collects and organizes information electronically.

By nature, performance metrics frequently begin as binary data contained in a database somewhere, collected by whatever mechanism the organization had available. Without proper organization, interpretation and presentation, this data may be useless for the vast majority of agency staff. Dick Schoech (2000, 634-635) explains,

Organizations have always been good data accumulators. Employees, however, are often drowning in data, but starved for knowledge... One modern management task is to create the organizational structure and processes whereby each employee has easy and instant access to the accumulated knowledge of the agency and the capacity to use that knowledge. This collective knowledge or 'organizational intelligence' implies that data are a shared resource, with everyone responsible for collecting, publishing and using them. It also assumes an agency infrastructure that collects, stores, and manipulates data into knowledge for all to use. This data becomes an interactive fluid asset through which employees and stakeholders share, learn, improve and create a more intelligent agency.

Kopczynski (1999, 129) agrees this problem is a systemic hurdle. "A major impediment to sustaining effective performance measurement systems has been insufficient capacity to develop high quality mechanisms to track and report performance information." Behn (2003, 592) goes a step further and argues that data must not only be collected, organized or reported but often needs a translator between the information technology side of the equation and the program delivery side. Those familiar with data and its relation to the organization's programs may feel its "story" is self-evident but novice users may "see" different things in the same information.

To learn from performance measures, however, managers need some mechanism to extract information from the data. We may all believe that the data speak for themselves. This, however, is only because we each have buried

in our brain some unconscious mechanism that has already made an implicit conversion of the abstract data into meaningful information. The data speak only through an interpreter that converts the collection of digits into analog lessons- that decodes the otherwise inscrutable numbers and provides a persuasive explanation. And often, people use different interpreters, which explains how they can draw very different lessons from the same data.

An analyst for APS in Austin may be able to glean that Oscar and his coworkers are doing efficient work because their cases remain in the service delivery stage for less than thirty days and they have a very low recidivism rate. This means nothing to an outsider. Organizations have to invest work and internal discussion to get to a consistent understanding of what performance information means.

Timing is everything

There is also the challenge that it takes time for an action within a public organization to be ultimately transformed into meaningful reports. Oscar may complete his casework with Edith Anderson in May but then wait until after his vacation in June to enter it into the agency's case management system. His supervisor may also take a holiday and not approve his case closure until August. At the statewide level, these delays can mean that program statistics do not accurately reflect the work of the field staff for months.

The lag time between data entry, collection and dissemination may mean that managers are looking at information reflecting conditions weeks or months in the past. Kopczynski (1999, 129) asserts that “[a] core principle of performance measurement is its emphasis on reporting data on a sufficiently frequent and timely basis to be useful to program managers or other stakeholders in guiding improvement

efforts.” But, she explains, the reality is that public administrators must struggle with integrating new philosophies of using information while still conducting business as usual. Redesigning the system from scratch to incorporate information usage is almost never an option. These challenges aside, managers must address the technical issues in order to move forward. Schoech (2000, 635) argues, “A primary role of management is transferring agency data and worker expertise into accumulated agency knowledge.”

Organizational commitment

Beyond the technical challenges of collecting and presenting performance information lies an equally vexing barrier. Performance management ultimately requires an ongoing commitment of organizational resources. McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 315) assert:

Identifying possible performance measures is usually iterative, time consuming work, but is only part of the process. The work of implementing the measures (identifying data that correspond to the performance constructs and collecting data for the measures), preparing reports, and maintaining and renewing the system is a key difference between a process that offers the appearance of having a performance management system in place and a process that actually results in using performance data on a continuing basis to improve the programs in the organization. Although a ‘one shot’ infusion of resources can be a very useful a way to get the process started, it is not sufficient to sustain the system. Measuring and reporting performance takes ongoing commitments of resources, including the time of persons in the organization.

Sustaining ongoing performance management in public organizations is generally seen in the literature as a two-pronged endeavor, the aforementioned

resources and organizational commitment. Patchett (2006, 33-34) explains that implementing a performance measurement program is resource intensive and advises “a dedicated team that can become knowledgeable about performance measurement and can act as internal consultants to the organization.” These teams not only should work on continuous program improvement but should also try to “foster an environment of curiosity, learning, and creativity as citizens, elected officials, and staff learn to use the information for the betterment of the community and the organization.” Jordan and Hackbart (1999) and Julnes & Holzer (2001) found that dedicated employees with technical knowledge are critical to successful performance measurement. Grizzle & Pettijohn (2002) add that if an organization does not have these resources in-house, public administrators should seek out skilled consultants to assist with developing performance systems.

Finally, it should be noted that any new system will require some degree of orientation or training of line employees to achieve full implementation. According to Schoech (2000, 635) “knowledge management involves systematically capturing organizational information and expertise, integrating it and making it interactively available to employees who are trained to use it in decision-making to achieve goals.” At a minimum, this employee orientation should include an overview of what the metrics are trying to achieve and technical training on the use of new reports or automated systems. Organizations, as with many things, must reinforce the concepts periodically and take into account the additional training needs brought about by staff turnover.

Moving from Measurement to Management of Performance

Bourne (2000, 767-768) describes design and implementation as the first two steps of developing a performance management system. But the most important aspect is its actual use to manage:

The development of the use of the measures is a different problem. This is a phase of development lightly researched and few tools and techniques are currently available...[The] solution requires more than the simple application of project management techniques. Implementing a performance measurement system redistributes access to information, which can be seen as threatening to senior managers whose power base is altered, therefore it is probably not surprising that resistance to performance measurement [may be] observed. Skills also need to be developed in critiquing and learning from the performance measures in a group.

Oscar Benavides may investigate and work several hundred cases a year. He may do good work and accurately record his findings and actions into an automated system. His actions had a definite impact on the individual clients that he served. But if his organization does not organize, analyze and learn from the information he (and his hundreds of coworkers) collect, important opportunities for organizational improvement are missed. Grifel (1994) contends that the difficulties in implementing public sector accountability are not in developing effective metrics, but in actually using them for decision-making. Coplin (2002, 700) concurs that operationalizing performance management is a challenge. “Most government agencies may collect data that is or could be used for performance measurement; however, they do not have a system in place in which those data are part of decision-making processes.”

More critically, he says of performance management that most public administrators “have not made a serious commitment to do so, whether they profess to or not.”

In the aforementioned Nicholson-Crotty et al (2006, 103) study of public school dropout rates, the authors categorized the managerial use of performance data into three managerial decisions. First, public sector managers need the ability to *identify* organizational problems quickly and accurately. They then must *use* the information to determine the causes in order to develop an effective remediation strategy. Lastly, leaders in public sector organizations must *evaluate* whether the solutions to the posing problem are having the desired effect on organizational outcomes.

The last of these tasks is the function we most often associate with performance measurement, but all three depend on accurate information about organizational performance. Unless problems are brought to the manager's attention by political principals or outside stakeholders, the manager needs performance information to identify suboptimal organizational functions. Similarly, managers must assess how the inputs into the organization, as well as the larger environment within which it works, contribute to or provide the context for the problems that they encounter.

Nicholson-Crotty et al raise the importance of having an institutionalized mechanism to elevate problems as central to making performance management work. Bourne (2000, 768) is in agreement: “If strategy and measures are to remain in alignment, processes are required to regularly review the measures against the strategy.” Bourne further argues that performance management systems may stagnate without regular review and suggests that a “regular performance

measurement review process is required that focuses on the key aspects of targets, measure definitions and the set of measures.” Organizations must set aside that most precious of resources, time, to delve into the details of what is working and what needs attention.

Behn (2003, 593) argues that attitudinal approaches by management are also critical to performance management success and that “learning from the performance measures is both intellectual and operational.” Public managers must first figure out *what to do* and then determine *how* to motivate employees to get there. If Oscar Benavides feels management is looking for errors or exceptions in his casework rather than identifying exceptional casework, he may be less likely to deliver more than an “acceptable” level of job performance.

Patchett (2006, 33) agrees that the managerial posture chosen in implementation determines the success of accountability systems. When systems are presented as a positive step toward working smarter, they are generally going to be better received.

Performance measurement programs must be conducted as a learning and continuous improvement effort in order to mature and sustain credibility. In short, the data and information must be used to fuel an environment of curiosity, learning, and improvement, not an atmosphere of punishment or "gotcha" when the results are less than expected or poor.

McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 64) further caution managers to be realistic about what performance management can actually do, especially in more complex programs.

(P)rogram managers who are responsible for “people programs” should be realistic about the likelihood of success, although it is important for realism to not be mistaken for cynicism. The latter frame of mind suggests “nothing will work.” Program managers know that this is not so, but need to cultivate a capacity to learn from the mistake that program processes make.

An interesting concern about attitudinal issues is that managers will rely *too much* on performance information. Kravchuk and Schack(1996, 357) caution, “Key decision makers should avoid using measures as a substitute for expert knowledge, or direct management of, programs.” In short, performance management cannot replace all other managerial tools. “At best, measures should be placed in management-by-exception frame, where they are regarded as indicators that will serve to signal the need to investigate further.”

Challenges of managing performance in the human services

While public administrators face some common struggles in developing accountability systems, the literature indicates there are additional challenges specific to human services organizations. Forty years ago, sociological research into complex organizations resulted in a framework useful for understanding these critical differences. James Thompson (1967) developed the concept of “core technologies” to speak to organizational competencies in any given field. Core technologies are relationships that define the competencies necessary for an organization to accomplish its program objectives. They are a combination of experience, organizational wisdom, and process that represent the means available to organizations implementing programs and policies.

“High probability” technologies have a high degree of success (Thompson 1967). Over time, hopefully, an organization’s probability of success will increase. But some organizations, such as APS, currently have only “low probability” technologies at their disposal.

Oscar Benavides must often engage in trial and error to find something that works. Each client is different. There is no one-way to deal with a shut-in client. Some people may respond to authority while others are moved to change by compassion. His APS program handbook gives him definite boundaries. Within those boundaries is a wide range of options. And he has had some cases in which every strategy he has learned in a decade on the job fails. Building on Thompson’s work, McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 62-63) argue:

Instrumentally perfect technologies work every time- they are based on knowledge we can count on. When we have a problem of condition we wish to ameliorate or solve applying such technologies will result in success. However, in the public and nonprofit sectors many of the means available to solve problems or ameliorate social conditions are imperfect. Realistically, even if we have the resources and can fully implement programs that are intended to achieve particular outcomes, we cannot be fully sure that the program will succeed. In fact, in some situations we can be reasonably sure that it will *not* succeed- we simply do not have the knowledge to solve every problem that society deems worthy of public expenditure.

In some areas of public endeavor, there is simply a better sense of what works (Thompson 1967). The technologies, in Thompson’s assessment, are “high probability”. For instance, the types of road surfaces and vehicles using them have changed since the advent of mass transportation. But it remains as true as it did a century ago that routine repair of roads – the filling of a pothole, for example – is a

strategy that results in almost assured increased longevity of a road. It also results in safer and happier motorists. Given decent management, good planning and enough budget, the goal of maintaining functional roads is absolutely achievable. McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 63) add to the discussion:

The probability that a given program technology will succeed is a reflection of how much we know about solving different kinds of problems...In the area of social programming we know relatively less than we do for most other program areas. That does not mean social programs are doomed to failure. Instead it means that expectations of success, even if resources are adequate and full implementation occurs, need to be tempered by the knowledge that we do not generally have the kind of “engineering principles” available, for example, to colleagues in a transportation and highway agency.

Significant expenditures in the human services have not guaranteed success. Success rates for drug treatment remain low. Rates of child and elder abuse have not significantly diminished. Homelessness and mental illness remain chronic problems long after society became generally aware of their existence. Some organizations seem to have never settled on a common foundation of how things should be done. Oscar Benavides has been to weeks of training over the years on a wide variety of subjects relating to his clients. Sometimes the information is useful. Sometimes it seems the strategies he is being taught were designed by people who worked in hospitals or clinics, not in community settings. Sometimes he simply ignores advice offered in case staffings with his supervisor.

Manela and Moxley (2002) argue that practices determined to be “best” in human services organizations are often those that are consistent with existing organizational culture and with what the organization views as useful knowledge.

Further, they argue, “best practice” models are useful in fields with mature practice and generally accepted standardization of practices. They do not always easily translate to the human services where the societal context undergoes constant change. Or put another way, they do not always translate well to organizations such as APS, with low probability technologies and complex missions.

What is “best”?

Hatry (2001) adds that in all types of government agencies, what are termed “best” practices are often self selected by public administrators, based on personal interaction and lack explanatory information as to why it may or may not be contributing to performance. Wulczyn (2005) argues that the management of human services functions is often guided by “common sense” rather than objective measures of outcome or case quality, with policy decisions guided as much by anecdote as evidence.²⁷ Kravchuk and Schack (1996, 356) add that improper design of a performance system on the front end can greatly limit the range of available “best practice” responses later. They argue that performance metrics are often “a reflection of what decision makers expect to see, and how they expect to respond.” This view of the program based on organizational “common sense” means “problem description and prescriptions will be limited to the established range responses presumed in the design of the performance management system.”

²⁷ *The use of “common sense” as a tool to guide decision-making is not limited to public sector organizations. John Kenneth Galbraith similarly wrote of a societal tendency towards “conventional wisdom” in his 1958 The Affluent Society. He described this as “the ideas which are esteemed at any time for their acceptability.”*

The elusive nature of outcomes

Measuring outputs in human service organizations is perhaps no more challenging than in any other type of public organization. But McDavid and Hawthorn (2006) argue effective measures of *outcomes* can be exceedingly difficult. The social services have the added complication of often having *multiple* agencies (both public and nonprofit) serving the same clients. Kravchuk and Schack (1996, 354) explain:

The programmatic structures of evolving systems thus can become less coherent over time; that is, they become nearly decomposable. Programs may show signs of increasing overlap and duplication. A particularly insidious problem is when fairly well differentiated programs duplicate efforts at the target client level. Such has occurred for instance, in the case of the multiply diagnosed, medically indigent population in large urban areas. It is extremely difficult to separate out the discrete effects of Medicaid, WIC and drug treatment and rehabilitation for many inner city clients. Under these circumstances, programmatic interaction becomes attenuated, complicating efforts at measurement.

Managing for outcomes is a core tenet of the public accountability movement.²⁸ Outcomes are essentially a desired “end result” of a particular government program, though obviously they are tailored to the particular mission of the organization. For a fire department an outcome could be “percentage of commercial fire incidents where flamespread was confined to the room of origin.” For a public works department, outcome measures are often something along the lines of “percentage of lane miles assessed as being in satisfactory condition” (Kopcynski 1999, 127). For a public safety organization they may be crime rates.

²⁸ See, for examples, Osborne and Gaebler (1993), Kopczyński (1999), Heinrich (2002), Kravchuk and Schack (1996).

These are fairly straightforward in keeping with relatively well-defined missions: put out fires, keep the roads well paved, keep the streets safe. This is not to say that accomplishing each of these missions is not a complex endeavor; certainly they are. But the end goal is well understood by both practitioners and the public.

Researchers further stress that intervention in the life of the individual citizen does not take place in a vacuum. Oscar Benavides has worked with clients for months who were making no observable improvement. Suddenly, a trusted clergy member would intervene and motivate a client to get help. He has also had cases where unexpected family intervention undid months of progress. McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 65) argue that even if a human services organization were to have “high probability technologies” at its disposal, there are many external factors in the quality of life of an individual. The “best” intervention may not always result in a desired outcome. “Being held accountable for outcomes can be problematic because the outcomes occur in the program’s environment, and *other factors in the environment besides the program that managers cannot control can impact the outcomes* [author’s emphasis].” McDavid and Hawthorn explain that in the human services “rival hypotheses are a major concern - the logics of social programs tend to be more ‘open’ to environmental influences.” Kravchuk and Schack (1996, 355) agree that that these “rival hypotheses” can greater complicate efforts by public administrators to measure. “Developing a single impact measure, such as the recidivism rate for the criminal justice system, is also difficult if the strategic mission is vague or does not encompass

the full range of factors that can influence overall performance, including interactions with other programs.”

Organizational culture in the human services

Both Wulczyn (2005) and Carrillo (2003) argue that using performance information to manage for outcomes is strained by the organizational culture of human services. Carrillo posits that social workers often see data entry as an annoyance rather than an activity integral to collecting program information. Oscar Benavides has a coworker or two that do excellent casework, but rarely document their findings. He has been frustrated in the past that they were not held accountable for this by his unit’s supervisor, who also values client contact over administrative functions.

Following research into implementation of information gathering tools, Carrillo (2003) surmised that the collection process itself is stymied in human services organizations. Carrillo describes this as a “nothing in -nothing out” system of performance information gathering, referring to a propensity to downplay data entry and the resulting dearth of usable management information. Carrillo further argues that, while social services can use information as a means of quality management, organizations are most often hampered by their own technological naiveté. In the case of Texas APS, Oscar Benavides rapidly adapted to a new “tablet personal computer” given to all staff. He soon began to use it while interviewing clients

leading to more accurate and faster documentation. Others in his unit locked their computers in the trunks of their cars.

To a startling degree in the human services, information that could be captured and organized electronically still exists in paper files. Carillo (2003) explains that human services staff are often poorly trained in the use of existing tools or may not use them at all. Information technology shops have poor understanding of programmatic needs when procuring new systems and are often siloed from service delivery. Carillo (2003) and Wulczyn (2005) both also indicate that in the human services there is a reactive culture of dealing with the “crisis of the day.” This permeates entire organizations. Little effort is left to put into planning and evaluating the results of actions taken or looking for ways to best improve future service delivery. This has several impacts when trying to collect and use data to ultimately manage performance. Staff may not see the importance of data entry in collecting case-related information.

Carillo (2003) explains that qualitative interaction with clients often takes precedence over what is seen as the tedious documentation. Human services employees may also not be trained to use automated systems effectively. Caseworkers may not see how their individual actions relate to larger organization goals or the direction of the organization for which they are working. Ezell (2002) explains that this failure to connect individual action to organizational goals is often due to poor communication on the part of leadership. Oscar Benavides has access to an intranet website that displays performance information for his unit, region and the entire APS

program. He is able to connect how his work – and the documentation of it - is a building block in overall program performance. Further, he appreciates that new policy changes are now accompanied with material²⁹ that explain not only what he is supposed to do, but also the rationale behind it.

Holzer and Yang (2004) go a step further and state that there are cases in which the organization itself may have unclear goals. Behn (2003), Joyce (1997), Caiden (1998) reiterate that developing measures and implementing accountability can be a challenge when an organization's goals or mission are unclear. Similarly, Heinrich (2002, 716) attests to the existence of "mission fragmentation," causing public administrators to lose sight of agency-wide, longer-term objectives. Coplin (2002, 709) argues that in the human services there are barriers to public administrators implementing performance management. Coplin asserts the current research rarely deals with these particular challenges, "[M]ost [researchers] assume the benefits are self-evident in an era when citizens are demanding increased accountability from their governments and resources are shrinking. They assume that barriers to implementation can be addressed through an appeal to reason."

Several researchers caution about the pitfall of ignoring organizational culture when implementing accountability systems. Jean-François Henri (2006) examined the use of performance management systems in Canadian organizations and its relation to organizational culture. Henri found that performance information is used to focus organizational attention and support strategic decision-making more effectively in

²⁹ *APS began in late 2006 what is termed "policy in a box". New policies are released on a quarterly schedule (rather than as they are written) and supervisors are given training material to share with field staff during their unit meetings.*

organizations that value flexibility over control. Further, he found metrics tended to be more diverse in organizations that valued flexibility. He makes a compelling argument that the role of organizational culture has been largely ignored by current performance research. Heinrich (2002, 720) agrees that in developing accountability systems, public administrators cannot ignore the “importance of weighing the influence of organizational structure and complexity, policy choices and constraints, and service-delivery practices in assessing program performance.” Gray (1998, 101) agrees and posits that performance management systems must be tailored to the “organization’s overall mission, vision and strategic objectives.”

In summary, there is considerable interest in the literature for measuring and managing performance. The current body of literature serves as a general resource for public administrators in for building the basic infrastructure for organizational accountability. Literature on the topic does not always fully account for the variety of missions and culture that exists in public sector organizations. As Gray (1998, 104) explains, performance management is often presented as a “cookie-cutter” solution without sufficient attention to the needs and competencies of the organization. There are substantial opportunities to focus public administration research on the challenges of implementing performance management in organizations with more complexity.

Chapter IV. Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology

This chapter describes the conceptual framework that was developed to address the research purposes, building on the review of existing literature. It also operationalizes the conceptual framework to by identifying tools to collect information to address three main pillar questions of that framework. A variety of research methods were used and the purposes, strengths and challenges of each will be described.

Conceptual Framework

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges of implementing a performance management system within the Texas Adult Protective Services program, explore the ways the APS program adapted to these challenges, and assess the impact of the program's efforts thus far. Building on the review of current literature, a conceptual framework has been developed to address these research purposes. As this work is largely exploratory and descriptive, and to a great degree introductory, pillar questions are used as a framework for approaching these purposes. To address the first research purpose, to explore the challenges of implementing a performance management system within the Texas Adult Protective Services program, the following pillar question is asked:

What are the challenges that APS faces in implementing a performance management system?

To address the second research purpose, to explore the ways the APS program adapted to these challenges, the following pillar question will be used to structure the inquiry:

What approaches did the APS program take to mitigate these challenges?

The third research purpose is to assess the impact of the APS program’s efforts around managing performance so far. For this research purpose, a third pillar questions is:

What are the observable results of the APS strategies to implement performance management so far?

The table below links the literature review to the research questions.

Table 4.1: Proposed Conceptual Framework	
Pillar Questions	Scholarly Support
Pillar Question 1: What are the challenges that APS faces in implementing a performance management system?	Bond 1999 Carillo 2003 Devaney 2004 Ezell et al 2002 Heinrich 2002 Holzer 2001 Kopczynski 1999 Kravchuk and Schack 1996 Hatry 1999 Heinrich 2002 McDavid and Hawthorn 2006 Nicholson-Crotty et al 2006 Osborne and Gaebler 199 Patchett 2006 Plant 2006 Schoech 2000 Thompson 1967 Wulczyn 2005

<p>Pillar question 2: What pragmatic approaches did the APS program take to mitigate these challenges?</p>	<p>Behn 2003 Carrilio et al 2003 Gibelman 2004 Hatry 1999 Heinrich 2002 Henri (2006) Holzer 2001 Kopczynski 1999 Kravchuk and Schack 1996 McDavid and Hawthorn 2006 Moxley and Manela 2001 Neuman 2003 Nicholson-Crotty et al 2006 Patchett 2006 Schoech 2000 Thompson 1967</p>
<p>Pillar question 3: What are the observable results of the APS strategies to implement performance management so far?</p>	<p>Behn 2003 Bond 1999 Hatry 1999 Kopczynski 1999 Kravchuk and Schack McDavid and Hawthorn 2006 Moxley and Manela 2001 Thompson 1967</p>

Units of analysis

The units of analysis of this study vary from an entire statewide program down to the individual APS employee. The challenges of the APS program, the processes used to implement performance management, and the impacts on staff and the program represent a mix of qualitative and quantitative information. No single research method would adequately capture all of the information needed to address the pillar questions. Social research scholar Earl Babbie recommends *triangulation* as a means of addressing the weaknesses of any one type of social research. (2004, 113)

By use of multiple research methods, this study will attempt to avoid the collected information being overly affected by a single method of inquiry.

Operationalizing the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework provides a tool by which this research can be structured. It is, by design, high-level and requires further detail to be of use. Each of the pillar questions was further detailed into a series of subquestions based on themes emerging from the literature review. Each in operationalized in a different manner. Due to the size of operationalization table, it was necessary to describe this detail in three separate tables.

First research purpose: challenges

Interviews

To address the first pillar question regarding the issues that challenge the APS organization in implementing accountability, interviews were conducted with APS leadership. According to Babbie (2004, 307-308), such qualitative research is particularly useful for capturing detailed and nuanced information. It allows for interaction with the subject of the interview and for clarification of details. The primary limitation of interviews is that while they are strong in their validity, the personal nature of the process means they may not always be reliable over time, or with different interviewers.

Document analysis

In further addressing the first pillar question, existing official reports were reviewed. In 2004, the APS program was the subject of intense scrutiny by the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), its Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the media. A formal review of the program was conducted resulting in several detailed reports³⁰ of program deficiencies and recommendations for corrections.

These documents provide a rich historical context of the conditions that existed in the APS program in 2004, and they detail the factors that led to APS reform.

According to Babbie, research conducted using document analysis is strong in its ability to qualitatively look at issues over time, but is obviously limited to recorded communication. This can raise issues of both reliability and validity. (2004, 338).

Some of the documents reviewed included:

- Office of Inspector General reports on APS from 2004 detail the challenges the program faced, as does the HHSC Reform Recommendation Report.
- Senate Bill 6 from the 2005 79th Texas Legislative Session detailed legislative expectations of APS reform.
- The Performance Management Project Workplan and associated documents described how the APS program approached its effort at implementing performance management.
- APS Performance Management training materials described what concepts APS employees were trained.
- Various newspaper articles indicated public sentiment regarding the program both before and after APS reform.
- The APS Quarterly Performance Report is the official report to the Legislature on reform progress.

³⁰ HHSC issued a preliminary report in May 2004, with findings from case readings from the El Paso area. HHSC submitted a detailed plan for reform of APS to the Texas Governor's office in July 2004 and final report to the Governor's office in November of 2004. In 2005, there were also numerous presentations during the 79th Texas Legislative Session with accompanying written materials.

Operationalizing the conceptual framework

The following table indicates how the conceptual framework will be operationalized for the first of the three pillar questions:

Table 4.2: Operationalization of Conceptual Framework for Research Purpose 1				
Research Purpose 1: To explore the challenges in implementing a performance management system within the Texas Adult Protective Services program.				
Pillar Question 1: What are the challenges that APS faces in implementing a performance management system?				
<i>subquestion</i>	Structured Interviews	Document Analysis	Program Statistics	Survey Questions
Subquestion 1a: What political or social debate surrounds the APS mission and desired outcomes?	APS State Office Leadership	HHSC Inspector General reports Final Report: Executive Order RP 33 Relating to Reforming the Adult Protective Newspaper Articles		
Subquestion 1b: What external factors impact APS client outcomes?	APS State Office Leadership APS Subject Matter Experts	HHSC Inspector General reports Final Report: Executive Order RP 33 Relating to Reforming the Adult Protective APS Handbook	HHSC Enterprise Budget and Legislative Material	Open ended question
Subquestion 1c: How accurately or efficiently do the current Legislative Budget Board Performance Measures measure the work of APS?	APS State Office Leadership DFPS Performance Management Team APS Subject Matter Experts	Performance Measure Definitions- FY2008-2009.	Output and Efficiency Measure Report-5th Quarter, FY 2004, 2005, 2006	

Second research purpose: actions

The second pillar question concerns the pragmatic steps that the program undertook to address the challenges of implementing performance management.

Interviews were conducted with the organization’s leadership and key staff involved in the implementation of the APS performance management system. Secondly, the process that the program undertook to develop an accountability infrastructure was well documented. Further document analysis was done on the tools developed for workgroups on developing metrics, the ongoing updates to management, and the performance reports developed by the DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics (MRS) division. Additional documents reviewed included training materials developed to rollout the system to staff, training schedules, participant feedback, and the internal agency website that serves as a central clearing house for performance information.

The following table described how the second research purpose is being operationalized.

Table 4.3: Operationalization of Conceptual Framework for Research Purpose 2				
Research Purpose 2: Explore the ways APS adapted to the challenges of implementing of performance management system.				
Pillar Question 2: What approaches did the APS program take to mitigate these challenges?				
<i>subquestion</i>	Structured Interviews	Document Analysis	Program Statistics	Survey Questions
Subquestion 2a: What sort of employee participation was there in the development of APS performance management?	APS state office leadership DFPS Performance Management Team APS subject matter experts	Performance management development records DFPS project management records		“Employee input was sought in the creation of the performance management system.”
Subquestion 2b: How are the APS performance metrics balanced?	APS state office leadership DFPS Performance Management Team	Performance management development records APS performance	DFPS IMPACT Data Warehouse Report “INV_APS_05S”	“Quality Assurance (case reading) scores help me to do better casework.” “Performance reports on

	<p>APS subject matter experts</p> <p>APS field staff</p>	<p>management training materials and website</p> <p>APS Quarterly Performance Management Report</p>	<p>Extracts from APS Case reading Database</p>	<p>the Data Warehouse help me to do better casework.’</p> <p>“Our system is measuring the right things to promote better casework.”</p>
<p>Subquestion 2c: What elements make the APS system sustainable and adaptable?</p>	<p>APS state office leadership</p> <p>DFPS Performance Management Team</p> <p>APS subject matter experts</p> <p>APS field staff</p>	<p>APS performance management training materials and website</p> <p>APS Quarterly Performance Management Report</p> <p>Adult Protective Services Handbook</p>		<p>“Performance reports are accurate to a usable degree.”</p> <p>“There are avenues to report concerns about how well the system is working.”</p> <p>“The performance benchmarks are achievable given current caseloads.”</p> <p>“Employees were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.”</p> <p>“Performance reports are easy to access.”</p> <p>“Supervisors were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.”</p> <p>“The performance management system is flexible enough to change as we learn more as a program.”</p>

Third research purpose: results

To address the final question of the organizational progress in implementing performance management thus far, there were three different efforts at data collection and analysis. The following table summarizes how this data collection and analysis link to the conceptual framework:

Table 4.4: Operationalization of Conceptual Framework for Research Purpose 3				
Research Purpose 3: Assess the impact of the APS program’s performance management efforts so far.				
Pillar Question 3: What are the results of the approach to implementing performance management on the APS program so far?				
<i>subquestion</i>	Structured Interviews	Document Analysis	Program Statistics	Survey Questions
Subquestion 3a: What is the impact on the timeliness of casework?	APS Leadership APS Performance Management Lead	DFPS 180-Day Report to Texas Legislature	DFPS IMPACT Data Warehouse Report “INV_APS_05S”	“The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me to do better work.” “The performance management system promotes individual accountability.”
Subquestion 3b: What is the impact on the quality of casework?	APS Leadership APS Performance Management Lead	Adult Protective Services Handbook	DFPS IMPACT Data Warehouse Report “INV_APS_05S” Extracts from APS Case reading Database	“The performance management system promotes better client outcomes.” “The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me to do better work.” “The performance management system promotes individual accountability.”
Subquestion 3c: What is the impact APS field staff?	APS Field Caseworkers and Supervisors		DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics Report: “Turnover and HR-Related Data”, for fiscal years 2004-2007 Extracts from APS Case reading Database APS Caseworker Tenure Statistics	“I understand what performance reports are measuring.” “The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me to do better work.” “The performance management system promotes individual accountability.” “I get regular feedback on my performance.” “The current metrics in the APS system are fair to employees.” “Employees were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.” “Supervisors were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.”

Examination of existing statistics

Qualitative metrics of case quality were examined over time. Each client of Adult Protective Services is represented by a case that is documented into the DFPS IMPACT electronic case management system. The electronic case file system has been in place for over a decade. To support the goals of the performance management process, new fields were added that allowed specific case information to be captured and time stamped. Using these time stamps, the program is able to determine the length of time it takes for a caseworker to complete certain case actions. For example, the program now tracks how long it takes a caseworker to contact a client from the point at which a case was first received at the centralized hotline. The difference is then used to compute compliance or noncompliance with particular performance standards.³¹

These individual case records can be aggregated into worker, unit, regional, or statewide metrics of performance. For the purposes of this study, the statewide aggregated metrics³² were utilized. These would include data for all 108,938 APS cases closed during the time period between September 2005 and February 2007. This represents months before, during and after implementation of the APS performance management system. As this quantitative data represents *all* APS cases for this time period, it is a complete population; there are no sampling issues.

³¹ *Interviews with APS and MRS staff Jan-Feb 2007.*

³² *DFPS IMPACT Data Warehouse Report "TNV_APS_05S". Individual reports were produced from the DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics Data Warehouse for each month, September 2005 through February 2007.*

The first set of metrics speaks to the timeliness of caseworker actions. However, it is entirely possible a case could be handled in compliance with timeliness standards and still be of low quality. It was beyond the scope of this inquiry to directly evaluate APS clients and the impact of APS services on them. As a proxy measure, objective indicators of casework quality and client outcomes already developed by the program will be used. To evaluate the quality of casework being performed, the author also obtained data on the sample of 6,369 cases that were selected for in-depth case reading by APS case analysts during the time period between September 2005 and February 2007. Again, this represents months before, during and after implementation of the APS performance management system.

Sampling issues in quality assurance data

This sample of case reading scores is not a *random* sample but rather a *representative* sample, designed to ensure that each employee has two cases read in each month. The employee's scores are shared with the employee and are available electronically through the agency's intranet to unit supervisors. While the individual employee's cases are selected randomly, 24 cases per year per worker is not a statistically valid sample at the employee level, a fact that the program readily acknowledges. At the regional and statewide level, the 6000 plus sample is well within the range of valid a sample with 99% confidence level and 2% confidence interval.

The standardized case reading instrument uses 30 questions that feed one of three indexes.³³ One set of 10 items supports investigation quality. Another set of 10 questions has to do with client outcomes. A third set of 10 feeds a process and policy compliance score. A single percentage score can then be calculated for each scale.³⁴

In the instances of existing APS program data collected for this study, information was available to the author through queries of agency databases, but required reorganization and aggregation. According to Babbie (2004, 327), such aggregation can present problems as the data primarily describe groups, limiting inquiry in detail or into select cases. As this was largely exploratory research, there was not a need for a greater degree of detail. Babbie (2004, 327) also cautions that statistics limit a researcher to what exists in the data, and may not always be a valid representation of the concepts a researcher is studying. To address this possibility, this study attempted to use triangulation of several different research methods to address the strengths and weaknesses of each research method.

Survey of APS staff

These first two sets of data are used as indicators of timeliness and quality of APS casework. As the move to an accountability framework marked a major cultural shift for APS, this study also sought to explore the impact on APS employees. Two sets of information were collected: a short employee survey and human resources statistics for the Adult Protective Services program.

³³ *The currently utilized QA data collection tool is a web-based instrument that can be accessed by case readers around the state. It is an electronic version of the "APS In-Home Case reading Standards" document (form 2775), last updated in October 2006.*

³⁴ *"Instructions for APS In-Home Case reading Standards" program document, updated October 2006.*

A short survey focusing on the performance management system was offered to randomly selected APS caseworkers and supervisors around the state. A sample of 100 employees was drawn from the agency's database of employees. They were sent an electronic survey, of which 61 responded. Questions focused on employee perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of the performance management system, and the training and preparation they had been given on the new system. According to Babbie (2004, 274) surveys are the most useful instrument for collection of standardized information from a large sample of respondents when the individual is the unit of analysis. Survey data allows flexibility when analyzing data (2004, 274) allowing one to develop operational definitions from the observations of the survey. A weakness of survey research is validity. As respondents are offered a limited range of response options, the options must be standardized (in this case in a five response Lickert scale). This may limit the depth of respondents' actual opinions, potentially yielding inaccurate results. (2004, 274-275).

To partially address this weakness, the survey included an open-ended question allowing for more detail. The author developed the survey instrument to operationalize the elements of the pillar questions and gather some basic information about the respondent's role in the organization and their length of tenure. The response choices for each survey question included "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree". These responses were coded from 5 to 1, respectively.

Additional examination of existing statistics

Employee turnover information on the APS program was also gathered. This information is collected from a human resource data warehouse contained within DFPS for purposes of reporting to the Texas Legislature and State Auditor. APS turnover is calculated using the method required by the Legislative Budget Board performance measure for CPS caseworker turnover.³⁵ Statewide APS turnover data³⁶ was gathered for caseworker positions. The information was segmented by caseworker level (1-5), which directly correlates to caseworker tenure with a percentage of turnover computed by individual job type and for the overall population of APS caseworkers. As this data represents *all* APS employees for this time period, it is a complete population; there are no sampling issues.

Data on the employment tenure of current APS employees was also computed from agency line-item reports. Because it could not be compared over time or to other similar programs with the available data, it is included in the appendix for informational purpose only.

Human subjects protection

Texas State University, as with all education, research, and medical institutions, has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) charged with protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects. The IRB reviews proposed research to

³⁵ *This turnover metric is computed by the total number of full-time, regular employees who terminated during the period and remain terminated divided by the average number of full-time, regular active employees on the last day of each quarter in the period) multiplied by 100 to produce a percentage.*

³⁶ *DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics Report: "Turnover and HR-Related Data", for fiscal years 2004-2007 (year to date).*

ensure federal guidelines and accepted ethical principles are followed.³⁷ A prospectus for this project was submitted prior to research being conducted. This project was found by the IRB to be exempt from review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

³⁷ *Additional information on the IRB process can be found online at <http://www.txstate.edu/research/irb/>.*

Chapter V. Results

This chapter will detail the findings generated through the collected information. To recap, this inquiry sought to look at the challenges that faced Adult Protective Services as it tried to institute accountability structures, examine the actions it took in response to these challenges, and look at what initial impacts the APS performance management system may be having on the program. The information gathered seems to indicate there were competing views as to what exactly APS should be doing before its reform efforts. External expectations enacted through legislation and public misunderstanding contributed to this ambiguity. There is strong evidence to support that the clients served by APS are affected by multiple inputs, both official (other agencies) and societal (family, poverty). The limitations of the Legislative Budget Board Performance Measures, the “official” Texas accountability system, are discussed in depth in this chapter as well.

This chapter will detail the efforts that the program took to include its field staff in development of an internal performance management system. All indications are that this inclusion was substantial and actively promoted in good faith by the leadership of the program. The program also made efforts to balance metrics to account for outcome and process. The chapter will further describe how APS sought to hold employees at all levels of the organization accountable and the challenges that remain in fully measuring outcomes.

Finally this chapter will document the findings regarding the effects of APS performance management. Improvement has been shown in most of the areas upon which the system focused. The greatest changes seems be occurring in staff attitudes – and actions – around documenting their casework in a timely fashion. Less improvement is noted in other areas. However, enormous changes that have occurred over the last three years in policy, procedure, technology, leadership, and programs responsibilities, and staffing. Even modest improvement is of note in such a time of organization turmoil. It was during the course of writing this paper that the Adult Protective Services program completed the last of 245 reform recommendations laid out by the Health and Human Services Commission. These efforts at fixing the foundation of the program may set the stage for dramatic further improvements.

There are no simple yes or no answers to any of the questions in this inquiry. The challenges, the solutions implemented by APS, and their eventual results are complex. For the actions the program has already taken, a detailed map is developed in this chapter. For the ultimate *impact* of these actions, this study can offer the equivalent of a compass. This compass seems to indicate that APS is heading in its intended direction.

Question 1: challenges to implementing APS accountability

The first broad pillar question deals with the challenges that APS faced in implementing a performance management system. Subquestions explored the debate

of the mission of the organization, the degree of uncontrollable outside influences on APS clients, and the accountability infrastructure that existed in 2004. This section will detail the finding that there was not a common understanding about the range and scope of the APS role, and that additional responsibilities had been added piecemeal to the program for over a decade. Policies and procedures were inconsistent, resource had not kept up with a growing client base. It will also detail a finding that did not fit neatly into the conceptual framework; there are characteristics of APS clients themselves that make measuring and managing to outcomes extraordinarily difficult.

This section will look at the significant issues of attribution; many other entities both public and societal impact each APS client. There will also be detail provided on the challenges of the current Legislative Budget Board measures for the purposes of managing the program.

Unclear organization mission

In the conceptual framework for this inquiry, a question was asked to what degree the APS mission and the program's outcomes were subject to substantial political or social debate. To bring this back to the field casework level, one can look to the example of Edith Anderson. Her caseworker, Oscar Benavides, sought to find the least restrictive solution. He structured his casework in hopes of allowing Mrs. Edith to remain in her home, living with a great degree of independence. One neighbor thought APS should have immediately moved her to a nursing home. There

may well have been neighbors who thought the government had no business intervening at all. In the pre-reform APS of 2003, different APS caseworkers might have handled the situation differently. Another caseworker may have simply left and closed the case when Mrs. Anderson refused help.

The level of disagreement about the goals and objectives of the Adult Protective Services program can be best addressed by document analysis of the reviews conducted by the Health and Human Services in 2004. In its “Preliminary Report On the Implementation of Executive Order RP33” released in April of that year, HHSC found inconsistencies within APS and between the APS program and the communities it served. The report detailed that policy expectations in the APS handbook offered inconsistent guidance on the balance between client safety and the right to self-determination. There were dramatic inconsistencies in the degree to which local caseworkers involved law enforcement in criminal investigations or other social service agencies to collaborate on cases. The inquiry found that what policy was available seemed to have evolved over time, under differing sets of management philosophy and often appeared contradictory to staff. These policy inconsistencies led to friction in communities, especially with local courts that had conflicting messages about what the program was and was not able to do to intervene on behalf of clients in need. (HHSC 2004b) In short, the reviews found process, policy, and law were not aligned to clearly defined outcomes that protect individuals while recognizing the goals of client self-determination. As the later “Implementation Plan” released by HHSC in July 2004 summarized:

The goals of APS are not well defined. Ill-defined goals result in various interpretations of the scope of APS activities and inconsistent application of policies and procedures. Internally, staff in one region may focus on determining capacity, while in other regions staff may focus on providing non-protective service delivery to clients. (HHSC 2004b, 8)

This criticism of unclear programmatic goals was reflected in the print media as well. Articles in both Texas and national newspapers criticized, like HHSC, the APS program for *too much* emphasis on self-determination.³⁸ Articles asked how it was that elderly clients could be left in dire situations by the program based on the client's refusal of services.³⁹ Further, the APS program was represented as managing to the total number of clients served, a key Legislative Budget Board measure, rather than focusing on individual case quality.⁴⁰ Interviews with APS leadership generally confirmed that the situation in APS three years ago, while sometimes exaggerated or misrepresented, was challenged by an unclear sense of what the program's priorities and goals were.

Evolving Responsibilities

Contributing factors for this unclear sense of mission can be gleaned though looking at the legislative history of APS. It shows that the program's public purpose has been slow to be defined with frequent shifts in direction. According to the program leadership, the APS program began in Texas in the mid-1970s when

³⁸ *Among numerous newspaper articles: Hancock, Lee and Kim Horner. 2004. Abandoned: Texas often fails to use its legal powers to protect seniors. Dallas Morning News, December 19. and Castro, A. 2004. Report Says \$34M to Reform Texas Elder Care, Associated Press (online). November 15.*

³⁹ *Roberts, Chris. 2004. Texas elderly care program lambasted in state review - Called filth a 'lifestyle choice', The Record (Bergen County,NJ), May 20.*

⁴⁰ *Hancock, Lee, 2004. Adult Protective Services Worker Says Dallas Office Pads Elder Neglect Cases. Dallas Morning News. June 18.*

amendments to the Social Services Block Grants portion of the Social Security Act required that states assure protection of children, elder adults and adults with disabilities from abuse and neglect, and exploitation. Texas law caught up in 1981 and established the state's legal authority and responsibility for protecting vulnerable adults age 65 and older from maltreatment.⁴¹

In 1983, the Texas legislature added to APS the responsibility for protection of adults age 18 to 64 who have disabilities. In 1992, the responsibility was then added for investigating abuse in State Hospitals and State Schools. ⁴² In 1993, the program was also given the role of assuming guardianship of individuals with severe disabilities aging out of Child Protective Services conservatorship. In 1995, the 74th Legislature clarified that APS should investigate reports of maltreatment in community MHMR centers.⁴³ In 1997, the 75th Texas Legislature passed laws that indicated that the duty to report adult maltreatment applied without exception to persons whose professional communications are generally confidential.⁴⁴ This opened up a new and greatly expanded source of APS reports.

The legislature in 1999 added responsibility for home and community-based services waiver program investigations and provided the first specific appropriation for guardianship of APS clients. In 2001, the 77th Legislature amended laws to further clarify that the duty to report applies to people who become aware of

⁴¹ *Chapter 48 of the Human Resources Code (HRC 48)*

⁴² *These are state institutions that serve persons with mental illness and/or mental retardation.*

⁴³ *Interviews with APS state office staff, DPRS, DFPS annual reports.*

⁴⁴ *This includes attorneys, clergy members, medical practitioners, social workers, and mental health professionals.*

maltreatment through their employment⁴⁵ and that the reporter's employer is immune from legal action regarding the report unless the employer is the subject of the investigation. Again, this expanded the number and types of reports coming into the program. Other amendments to law that year clarified the role of APS in including certain perpetrators in the Employee Misconduct Registry, which is used in state operated mental facilities. ⁴⁶ If Oscar Benavides is a tenured employee, his job is most likely very different now than when he started.

In a decade leading up to the early 2000s, these new responsibilities, coupled with the demographics of an aging population, led to a doubling of APS cases. ⁴⁷ Some additional resources were allocated to the program but did not keep pace with the growing client base and growing scope of APS responsibilities. Interviews within the program indicate that APS staff struggled to simply handle day-to-day operations. There was little time to ensure policy was written consistently and program goals were clearly communicated. There was even less time to ensure goals were *implemented* consistently statewide across scores of offices. Most new resources were directly to field casework, leaving little infrastructure at the state office level for quality assurance functions.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Chapter 48 of the Human Resources Code (HRC 48)*

⁴⁶ *Interviews with APS state office staff, DPRS, DFPS annual reports*

⁴⁷ *DFPS annual reports. Since 2002, APS annual investigations have risen by another 50%.*

⁴⁸ *Interviews with APS state office staff, December 2006- Feb 2007.*

Unique Challenges of the APS Client Base

Beyond the resource challenges in Texas APS, there are characteristics particular to APS clients that raise the complexity of defining mission and measuring for outcomes. Oscar Benavides sees clients every day who are mentally or physically disabled. They may be wheelchair bound. An APS client may be insulin-dependent, homeless, or drug addicted. They may be living in dire poverty or be the subject of a fight between heirs for multi-million dollar fortunes.⁴⁹ On any given day, Oscar may see a client who is depressed, psychotic, drunk, in jail or sitting at a bus station in an adult diaper, undermedicated, overmedicated, blind, deaf, confused, without power or without family. They may be sweltering in the heat, suffering from malnutrition, wandering the streets, living in cars, drinking themselves to death, or never leaving home. They have their homes stolen by crooked nephews and their checkbooks appropriated by conniving caregivers. Some have worked hard all of their lives while others have done little. Before getting old or falling ill or becoming a target they were teachers and lawyers and public servants and veterans. They were somebody's neighbor and someone else's mother. Most of Oscar's clients fall into multiple categories of need.

Regardless, all are vulnerable. For each category and subcategory of malady or challenge, there are entire schools of thought to describe the causes and what society should be doing to address them. Ideas and opinions flow faster than solutions.

⁴⁹ For example, see: MacCormack, John. 2005. *Captive of courts in Alamo Heights*. *San Antonio Express-News*. December 5.

There are advocacy groups and conferences and other social service agencies dedicated to each of these situations. And if they were working to their full potential, there may not be a need for APS.

An example of complexity

To use just one example to detail this complexity, one can look at what demography and health statistics indicate will be a major issue in the coming decades. At one time, dementia was solely a matter for the family (or for the asylum). It is now recognized as a medical condition, one in which an aging population will inevitably force an increased public policy response. Indeed, dementia related to aging and Alzheimer's is one of the fastest growing issues confronting APS caseworkers like Oscar Benavides.⁵⁰

Internationally, research has been done in the area of age-related dementia and the struggle to measure what "good" client outcomes are. As medical personnel, social workers, governments and families struggle with how to best treat diminished capacity in an aging population, there is little agreement on what they are struggling toward. Gerontology researcher John Bond (199) describes a debate amongst professionals that ranges from the diagnostic to the philosophical. Bond details three main models of looking at dementia (biomedical, psychological, social), all with committed adherents. Each model is similarly unable to define a desirable outcome, largely due to the exclusion of the patient from defining the outcome.

⁵⁰ *Interviews with APS state office staff, December 2006- Feb 2007.*

In essence, Bond argues that while debates continue about what quality outcomes for dementia patients are, all disciplines continue to miss the point. Patients must be included in development of measures of success, and any measure of quality of life must include a look at the entirety of a person's life. What looks like a poor outcome for one patient may be a success for another based on their individual experience and perspective (Bond 1999). To put in simply, the experts are unable to come to consensus on what should be happening in treating dementia. To relate this to APS, one's interpretation of the organizational mission would affect their view of a desirable outcome - and how to measure it. This discussion centers on clients suffering from dementia, but equally difficult debates can be found around clients with mental illness, physical disability, chronic disease, substance abuse, mental retardation – all potential APS clients.

Comparing (and confusing) programs

The public perception of the APS mission may also be confused due to comparisons to APS' sister program, Child Protective Services. CPS is also housed within the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Both programs attempt to address the effects of abuse, neglect and exploitation. But the fundamental difference is that children do not choose to be in their situations of maltreatment nor are they equipped legally, financially, or intellectually to make informed decisions to ameliorate their situations. As such, the state of Texas allows CPS to intervene legally

in child abuse situations.⁵¹ These interventions can be dramatic, up to and including actually removing a child from their family of origin.

CPS interventions have the full force of law behind them. In the case of Adult Protective Services, such interventions (against the will or desire of the client or their family) are possible only when the adult is mentally incapacitated to the point of being unable to make his or her own decisions. Further, this incapacity has to be certified by medical professionals and the courts.⁵² Capacity itself can fall across a wide spectrum. A client may be able to perform their activities of daily living (bathing, cooking, cleaning) but unable to manage their finances. As the range of client's needs and abilities is so variable, so must be the response from APS. But APS staff assert the public often expects APS to "behave like CPS."⁵³ Despite residing in the same state agency, the programs are not the same. The fundamental difference is that APS deals with adults who have often have the capacity to make decisions that their friends, family, and caregivers may well disagree with. They have the right to make even bad decisions, ones that place them in danger. In almost every case, Oscar Benavides must walk a tightrope between intervening to protect and not trampling on the rights of the individual. He employs art as much as science.

As Bond stressed in his study of dementia, each intervention must take into account the totality of a client's life experience (1999). What may be a positive and

⁵¹ *Texas Family Code, chapters 17 and 34.*

⁵² *Texas Human Resource Code §48.208. In cases in which clients are unable to meet their own needs, they may be referred to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) Guardianship programs. This was previously within the APS program but moved to DADS as part of APS reform.*

⁵³ *Interviews with APS In-Home caseworkers and state office staff. December 2006- Feb 2007.*

desirable outcome for a disabled man on one side of town may be completely unacceptable for a similarly disabled woman just a few miles away. One APS caseworker interviewed recounted a case that highlights the difficulty of APS outcome metrics and the differing opinions of the APS mission. The client was an elderly World War II veteran. He suffered from diabetes and had not maintained an adequate regimen of care. His doctors were advising amputation of his leg to extend his life expectancy, an idea to which the client was highly resistant. The caseworker, over the course of several weeks, counseled and worked with the man to weigh the benefits of the proposed surgery, offering a wide variety of services to meet his medical needs. The client remained adamant that he had lived a long and fulfilling life. He was willing to run the risk of shortening his remaining time in exchange for keeping his leg and, in the client's estimation, his dignity. The client was professionally assessed and found to be in full control of his faculties, with full capacity to make decisions for himself. In short, he was an adult making a conscious decision that he was fully competent to make.

The treating medical staff, other social workers and family were not pleased that APS would not "force" the client to get an amputation. No amount of work on the part of the caseworker could change the client's decision. The worker offered some secondary services to improve the client's home situation and eventually closed the case, leaving the door open for further services as needed.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *Interview with APS In-Home caseworker from Abilene area. December 2006.*

The justification for discontinuing the case was based in the APS program's strong orientation toward a person's right to self-determination. The nature of the outcome, positive or negative, was seen very differently given each stakeholder's perspective. This is certainly the case with Edith Anderson and her well-meaning neighbors. Indeed, the self-determination issue was one of the most controversial during the HHSC inquiries (HHSC 2004b). For the APS program, and more importantly for the client, the outcome was positive. Such ethically challenging situations are common in the cases in which APS intervenes.⁵⁵ In summary, the APS program has made significant strides (which will be detailed later) in clarifying its mission. But in 2004, organizational strain as well as the nature of the work itself meant there was significant inconsistency in perception as to goals and priorities of the program.

External factors affecting APS casework

APS is often represented as the last stop in the social safety net. Other state, federal and local programs provide investigations and client services to elderly and disabled adults, but there are no other programs at the state or local level that serve exactly the same function as APS.

In the conceptual framework a question asked to what degree were APS client outcomes were affected by a variety of external factors and inputs. In providing protective services to "vulnerable Texans," APS caseworkers assess the overall situation to understand the nature, extent, and root causes of the client's problems.

⁵⁵ *Interview with APS State Office staff. January-February 2006*

According to program policy, assessment requires observing the client's living situation and social interactions, as well as asking questions about major areas of the client's life, including: environment; financial situation; physical and mental conditions; mental status and problem-solving ability; and social interaction and support.⁵⁶ The client assessment function informs which APS services will be delivered. If an elderly or disabled person is at risk of neglect, they may first rely on family, friends or neighbors to intervene. At the next tier of intervention, there may be community organizations, churches or civic groups who may be of some help.

If assistance is still needed, a client may have a case with another government agency. For example, the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) is the licensing agency for long-term care facilities and is required to determine whether facilities meet the requirements for participation in the Title XVIII and XIX programs.⁵⁷ DADS also has oversight of assisted living, adult foster care facilities with four or more residents, and nursing homes.⁵⁸ The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for operating the state mental health in-patient hospitals providing psychiatric treatment and care. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) protects senior Texans and other health-care service consumers from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by pursuing civil actions against long-term care facilities and investigating incidents for criminal prosecution. The OAG's Consumer Protection and Public Health Division also takes civil legal

⁵⁶ *APS In-home Handbook, section 3351.*

⁵⁷ *DADS Licensing Standards for Certification of Long Term Care Facilities Handbook, §96.2 Scope.*

⁵⁸ *Interview with APS exploitation specialist, December 2006.*

action to ensure quality treatment in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and home health agencies.⁵⁹

It is when these first three tiers of the safety net fail to meet the client's needs that APS typically gets a referral. As one APS employee put it, "We are usually the last phone call somebody makes before they decide to dial 911."⁶⁰ Neighbors may help fix a leaky roof for an elderly woman. Local police may intervene in domestic violence situations. An elderly person's son or daughter may intervene to keep a home health aide from stealing a client's money. An APS client may have been hospitalized as a suicide risk the prior week. An APS client may have been the subject of intervention from any number of sources, public and private. Each of these interventions may lead to a referral to *another* agency. For example, APS investigates certain types of situations in nursing homes and State Hospitals.

The point is that, in most cases, APS intervention into the life of the individual citizen does not take place in a vacuum. Many external factors affect the quality of life of an individual. There are often multiple interventions in the course of a client's life that attempt to address or avoid maltreatment; APS is not the only player. As stated in Chapter 3, McDavid and Hawthorn (2006, 65) explain why this is a challenge for purposes of public accountability: "because the outcome occurs in the program's environment, and other factors in the environment besides the program that managers cannot control can impact the outcomes." Put another way by Kravchuk and Schack (1996, 355), "Developing a single impact measure, such as the

⁵⁹ *Office of the Attorney General Website at www.oag.state.tx.us.*

⁶⁰ *Interview with APS caseworker, December 2006.*

recidivism rate for the criminal justice system, is also difficult if the strategic mission is vague or does not encompass the full range of factors that can influence overall performance, including interactions with other programs.” This “full range of factors” makes it difficult to assess the impact of APS interventions and thus adds to the complexity of holding caseworkers and program accountable.

The efficacy of existing accountability structures in 2004

In the 2004 inquiry into APS operations by the Health and Human Services Commission, a general lack of accountability was seen as a primary challenge running throughout the program. As the HHSC Implementation Plan detailed:

There are few performance standards for the APS process. Appropriate performance criteria for what constitutes a good investigation or a good service delivery plan are lacking in the APS process. Current criteria appear to be subjective; therefore, it is difficult to measure staff performance. When management does have performance indicators, such as number of days an investigation is open, there are no clear standards for staff to follow. This lack of standards impairs the ability to effectively manage time and resources, to ensure quality investigations, and maintain accountability. (HHSC 2004b, 8)

In fact, there *was* an existing infrastructure of performance standards for the APS program. As with all state agencies in Texas, public oversight of agency performance is conducted by the Legislative Budget Board through a series of performance measures.⁶¹ In the conceptual framework, one subquestion sought to examine to what degree could the efficacy and performance of the APS program be

⁶¹ Detail of APS Performance Measures can be found in Table 2b.

adequately measured by the current Legislative Budget Board Performance Measures system.

APS had metrics approved by the legislature and reported on them regularly and publicly for over a decade. Though several researchers have posited that the Texas system is effective in ensuring agency accountability (Romero 2004, Wilson 1999), APS staff interviewed found limited management use for the Legislative Budget Board performance metrics. These metrics may play an important role in legislative oversight, they have limitations in their use for day-to-day management of the programs. In the case of APS, the “outcome” measures look at societal levels of abuse and neglect of the elderly and disabled.⁶² Referring again to Kravchuk and Schack (1996, 355) this “does not encompass the full range of factors that can influence overall performance, including interactions with other programs.”

As for the Legislative Budget Board output measures, they are largely numbers of completed cases and numbers of clients. In APS, these are driven largely by the number of intakes coming into the program. The APS program has almost no control over these inputs.⁶³ APS staff also had concerns that none of these metrics speak to whether an APS client was better off after an APS intervention, nor are any of them conditions over which a field caseworker has much control. But as a high level APS official explained in an interview, “You can’t manage by the Legislative Budget Board

⁶² *The Legislative Budget Board “Outcome” measure includes the “APS Incidence of Adult Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation per 1,000” The program does have some control over “Percent of Adults Found to be Abused/Neglected/ Exploited Who Are Served”, though any services depend on the client accepting them. The APS program has some influence on “APS Case Recidivism” but, again, this is impacted by multiple external factors.*

⁶³ *Interview with APS Executive, March 2007.*

measures. No program really can - at least not most that I'm familiar with in HHS [Health and Human Services]. We're measured on things we have no control over.”⁶⁴

One way to assess the usefulness of the Legislative Budget Board measures is to simply look at what the metrics indicated at a time in which the level of the APS program's performance was in general agreement by all parties. In the spring of 2004, APS was under investigation by the HHSC Office of Inspector General and was the subject of national media scrutiny. The program's real performance was generally thought to be as low as it had ever been. But, according to the LBB metrics, the APS program was at 100% of its expected performance for the percentage of elderly and disabled persons receiving protective services.⁶⁵ The APS program was at 104% of its LBB goal for completed investigations, confirmed cases, and the number of clients receiving guardianship services. It was doing this work at a cost of \$99.59 per investigation, using fewer resources than the \$116.76 Legislative Budget Board target expenditure.⁶⁶ (DFPS 2004)

In short, in every “official” measure of determining performance, APS was doing more work, more cost effectively, with better outcomes than anticipated.⁶⁷ Yet, at the same time, a *New York Times* headline (somewhat gentler than those on the pages of Texas newspapers) read “Texas Agency for Elderly Under Fire Over

⁶⁴ *Interview with APS Executive, March 2007.*

⁶⁵ *Output and Efficiency Measure Report, 5th Quarter 2004 (official performance report to Legislative Budget Board), page 3.*

⁶⁶ *Output and Efficiency Measure Report, 5th Quarter 2004, page 17.*

⁶⁷ *Nowhere in the multiple inquiries into APS does it appear that the reporting on Legislative Budget Board metrics was inaccurate or misreported. Legislative Budget Board Measures were apparently accurate, though arguably not valid.*

Neglect”,⁶⁸ and legislators were calling for new leadership. Arguably, the Legislative Budget Board metrics had limited viability in ensuring public expectations were met, much less sufficient to manage a program.

Question 2: APS approach to implementing performance management

The second pillar question in the conceptual framework directs attention to the approaches the APS program has taken to mitigate these challenges described in the previous section. Building on the research discussed in the literature reviews section, this section will detail employee participation in developing the system, the degree to which the metrics were balanced, and the overall sustainability of the system.

Before looking at answers to these questions it is useful to look at some preliminary work the APS program had to conduct. The HHSC reviews of 2004 indicated that a major barrier to implementing consistent accountability was a lack of consistency in practice:

There is not a clear delineation of the APS process steps. While each case referred to APS is different, the basic APS process should be the same for every case. The handbook offers minimal guidance for key decision points and even less for direction regarding the criteria and decision processes. Without such specificity in the decision-making process, there is great variation in how decisions are reached and the appropriateness of these decisions. Clear, well-reasoned, and uniform decision-making criteria needs to be incorporated in each stage of the APS process and outlined in the APS handbook and training curriculum. (HHSCb 2004)

⁶⁸ *Blumenthal, Ralph and Barbara Novavaitch, April 20, 2004.*

Prior to developing a performance management system , the program invested significant time and resources to developing and mapping a standardized case flow process.⁶⁹ Documentation of this is provided in the appendices. Secondly, in advance of developing an internal performance management system, the program had to define what it wanted to achieve and how that differed from the existing accountability structures.

A disparity clearly existed between the Legislative Budget Board Performance Measures and the information needed to effectively manage APS casework practice. As this was primarily due to lack of grounding in the realities of field casework, the program adopted a strategy of beginning at the field level to develop its performance management system. APS leadership envisioned an internal performance system in which there were expanded requirements for quality assurance. Leaders wanted performance management that would allow for active monitoring as well as a retrospective quality assurance process. APS leadership wanted the ability to review cases based on specific factors to ensure casework was appropriately performed. Effective quality assurance and performance management functions would also enable managers to identify patterns of performance at individual, unit, regional, and statewide program levels.⁷⁰ To avoid confusion for both staff and external stakeholders, the program differentiated between the proposed internal performance management system and the external Legislative Budget Board Performance Measure

⁶⁹ *Interviews with APS State Office staff. December 2006-Januray 2007.*

⁷⁰ *Interviews with APS state office staff. January 2007.*

process. Table 5.1 compares the two systems and is based on interviews with APS leadership.

Table 5.1:
Comparison of Performance Measures and Performance Management

	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT PROCESS <i>(as implemented in Texas)</i>	PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS <i>(as utilized by APS)</i>
Purposes	Legislative/public accountability	Operational management
Development Context	State level, political, fiscal	Program level, operational
Metric Steward	Legislative Budget Board	Agency programs
Intended Audience	Legislators, Legislative Budget Board (LBB), general public, agency executive management	Agency employees: executives, management, line staff
Producers of Data	State agency	State agency
Reporting Periods	Quarterly, annually	Daily, weekly, monthly and as needed by the organization
Revised	Every two years, negotiated between executive management of the agency and Legislative Budget Board	As needed by organization, with input from employees at all levels

Employee participation in developing APS accountability

In the operationalization of this inquiry Sub-question SQ2a explored the degree of employee participation in the development of performance management. This was identified though the literature review as critical to getting buy-in and ensuring the most accurate metrics were selected. One APS employee explained in an interview, “The [LBB Performance] measures are clearly a top-down system... with little relation to our day-to-day work. We wanted to start at the field level and work our way up.”⁷¹ To that end, the program asked for broad participation from APS staff

⁷¹ Interview with DFPS Performance Management Team staff. February 2007.

around the state. The workgroups kept detailed records and meeting notes. Of the 30 members of the APS team brought into to develop performance measures⁷²:

- Four members were state office APS employees based in Austin.
- One was a state office employee outside of APS.⁷³
- Eight workgroup members were administrative or leadership staff from regional offices.
- Seventeen were field staff engaged in direct delivery of APS services.⁷⁴

Over half of the workgroup was composed of field staff. Also, it is worth noting that the field staff that were included represented ten of the eleven Family and Protective Services regions. This was an effort to ensure a geographic balance and to capture both the urban and rural perspective. Caseworker and supervisor-level staff were brought into Austin for two days of meetings at the beginning of the process and were divided into subject areas. A Staff Productivity, Efficiency & Professional Development group focused on quantitative measures of performance and training issues. The Case Quality & Client Outcomes workgroup worked on the challenging issue of better measurement of the results of APS services. Performance metrics for administration, contracting and staffing were developed in the Resource Management workgroup. The quality of interaction with communities was the topic in the Community Engagement workgroup. The subject area teams were led by staff outside of the APS program⁷⁵ with specific facilitation instruction that all members of the groups were to be given an equal voice. This was a deliberate attempt to eliminate

⁷² "APS Workgroup Members". Internal APS document dated 3/22/2005.

⁷³ From the DFPS Community Engagement office.

⁷⁴ This included field caseworkers, field supervisors, regional contract managers, and local subject matter experts (SMEs) such as exploitation specialists.

⁷⁵ These included staff from the DFPS Community Engagement program and Management Support Division.

the hierarchical structure. Also, all participants were given the same set of tools to work through the process of developing metrics. Though Austin is the center of Health and Human Services administration, there was an attempt to further tie the efforts to the field by having development meetings at the Austin regional office (from which there is active casework) rather than at the state office (the center of administration).⁷⁶

To further reinforce the idea of field level participation, subsequent meetings of the workgroups took place in the DFPS regional offices instead of in Austin. Finally, it is worth noting that APS leadership had the entire process of developing metrics led by an external group of staff working on larger DFPS performance issues. These staff were from the Family and Protective Services Operations division with no direct ties to APS policy or fieldwork.⁷⁷ In summary, all indications are that the APS program went to great lengths to gather broad employee input into the development of its metrics. They did this both through inclusion of mostly field staff coupled with a process that put line staff opinion on equal footing with management.

The balance of metrics

In the operationalization of the conceptual framework, one subquestion looks at the balance of metrics in the APS performance management system. This is based on information obtained through the review of literature that advised balancing process metrics with outcome metrics.

⁷⁶ *Interviews with APS and DFPS Operations staff – December 2006-March 2007.*

⁷⁷ *Interviews with APS and DFPS Operations staff – December 2006-March 2007.*

A six-step process was developed that started with broad ideas about quality work and drilled down to things specific, measurable and realistic. Subgroups focused on specific areas of practice by walking through a series of six deductive steps. One administrator explained, “We wanted to start by casting a wide net. We didn’t want to necessarily keep looking at the same things we’d always looked at so we really asked staff to be creative about the sort of things that they thought spoke to quality work.” APS leadership also instructed the workgroup participants to consider that, while some elements of casework practice or outcomes may not be measurable currently, they may be so in the future. All potential metrics were to be captured. The program developed a group of logic tools that started with the general and moved to the specific through a series of questions:

1. What is the universe of things that APS could measure that point to good work and positive client outcomes?
2. Of these, what can the program objectively measure - either now or potentially in the future?
3. What information about this do employees at each level need to do their job?
4. What is a benchmark for each measure?
5. What is the APS response to those doing it well? How is good work rewarded? What about for those staff who are having difficulty?
6. How does the program operationalize this measure into practice and management of APS? ⁷⁸

After about three months of work, a proposed framework had been developed by the workgroups of field staff. The proposed system spelled out specific performance standards for APS staff that were readily measurable in a consistent way.

⁷⁸ Summarized from “APS Project Packet v2.1”. Internal APS document. This document was 30 pages and served to set the stage for the Performance Management workgroups. It has background information, diagrams that display the idea of shared accountability, and the 6-step tool that walked the groups through the process of developing metrics.

For example, whereas an investigator might have had vague mention in their previous performance reviews of making timely contacts on their investigations, now a specific percentage expectation was clearly defined. Online reports were developed that allowed all employees to gauge their progress. Employees are now asked to work toward goals in a handful of consistent metrics judged by quantitative data and qualitative case reading. An APS state office employee explained in an interview, “An APS employee in El Paso is evaluated by the same standards as one in Beaumont or Lubbock.” Table 5.2 shows the resulting metrics organized by the APS goals they support:

Table 5.2: Detail of APS-Developed Internal Performance Metrics	
<p><i>* Indicates measures included in worker and supervisor performance evaluations</i> <i>** Indicates measures included in supervisor performance evaluations</i></p>	
APS PROGRAM GOALS	RELATED PERFORMANCE METRICS
<p>a. Outcomes for clients are improved.</p> <p>b. Improved client health and safety.</p>	<p>Investigation scale from APS case analysis*</p> <p>Timeliness of 24 hour contact*</p> <p>Timeliness of face to face contact*</p> <p>Timeliness of monthly status contact*</p> <p>Average length of time between contacts</p> <p>Client outcome scale from APS case analysis*</p> <p>Percent of cases progressed to service delivery</p> <p>Number of days pending in investigations</p> <p>Number of days pending in service delivery</p>
<p>c. Employees are held accountable for their work.</p> <p>d. Supervisors are supporting their workers.</p>	<p>Percent of employee evaluations completed within timeframes</p> <p>Process compliance scale from APS case analysis*</p> <p>Average length of time for supervisors to approve cases**</p> <p>Employee conferences with developmental notes entered into AccessHR (the HHSC automated HR system)</p>
<p>e. Workloads are balanced across the state.</p>	<p>Average caseload per worker</p> <p>Percent of staff allocated vs. percent of workload</p> <p>Percent of ECS⁷⁹ dollars allocated vs. percent of workload</p>
<p>f. Caseworkers are adequately trained.</p>	<p>Percent of staff in compliance with 18 hours of required ongoing training</p> <p>Percent of compliance with developmental plan in employee annual evaluations</p>

⁷⁹ ECS dollars are emergency client services: contract funds available to buy prescriptions, fix roofs, pay electric bills, etc.

<p>g. Management is supporting and developing the program.</p>	<p>Length of time to fill vacancies Staff turnover, tenure and retention trends Communities are engaged and share accountability for successful client outcomes⁸⁰</p>
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Analysis shows the result of the APS work resulted in a balance of process and outcome metrics. To address the individualized nature of APS cases, the program implemented a quality assurance system that attempted to address the complexity. Rather than asking a single question about whether or not a positive outcome had been achieved for the client, the program developed a case reading tool that looked holistically at multiple aspects of the case outcome, quality of the investigation, and process, policy and best practice compliance (See Appendix for detail). Case quality measures come from the scoring of a sample of cases (two per worker, per month) by state office case readers.⁸¹ Also the system appears to be balanced through the program. There are metrics specific to supervisors and managers and, according to interviews with APS state office staff and written APS material, “All employees of APS have a level of accountability; it is up to managers to work in conjunction with each person to clearly establish individual accountability. Individual accountability will roll up to the unit and program level.”⁸²

⁸⁰ *Currently these measures are under development in cooperation with a separate community engagement workgroup.*

⁸¹ *Interviews with APS staff, December 2006*

⁸² *APS Performance Management Website*

Sustainability & adaptability of the APS system

The final sub-question developed out of the literature review concerns the degree to which the APS performance management system was designed to function in a sustained manner. Literature points to two main components: organizational commitment and resources. There are several encouraging signs that the APS system is designed for the long haul as opposed to the “one shot infusion of resources” described by McDavid and Hawthorn (2006). First there are staff resources both within APS and Family and Protective Services agency. APS has two state office staff assigned fulltime to performance evaluation and several staff who support this effort. There are additionally a half-dozen case readers. By most accounts, this is not enough, but is an improvement over previous resource allocations.

Family and Protective Services also has a dedicated Performance Management team of five staff that supports the agency’s overall performance management efforts.⁸³ This team reports directly to the Chief Operating Officer of the agency. They provide ongoing management training, development of metrics, and provide a “help desk” function for supervisors. The team leader indicated the role of the team was to make performance management “a seamless part of everyday management in the agency.” A high priority has been put on ease of use. In staff interviews, DFPS employees point to the availability of performance reports on the agency’s intranet. The Family and Protective Services Management Reporting and Statistics (MRS) group turned the performance management recommendations into reports that could

⁸³ *Staff interviews in December 2006 and APS performance management website.*

be accessed by employees through its agency Data Warehouse. The interface is accessible without technical or statistical knowledge through a series of drop down menus. All reports are available to all employees. Standardized performance evaluations are made available online and are entered in a web-based interface. This reduces administrative time for supervisors and ensures consistency.⁸⁴

Perhaps the best evidence of sustainability is the fact that the agency has adopted the APS model for use in its other programs and is currently rolling out a system to the much larger Child Protective Services program.⁸⁵

Question 3: impact of the APS performance management system

The final pillar question examined the results of the performance management system so far. As discussed in the Methodology chapter, the results of the APS implementation of performance management are being assessed through multiple avenues. Timeliness of contact with clients and documentation is linked by the APS program to immediate client safety needs. The lack of timeliness was the source of prior criticism in past evaluations of the program.⁸⁶ The timeliness of particular case actions is captured by the IMPACT automation system and is evaluated on the aggregate for cases over the last year and a half.

Secondly, case quality is assessed through case reading of a representative sample of cases. The APS case reading instrument organizes information into three

⁸⁴ *Staff interviews in December 2006 with DFPS Performance Management team.*

⁸⁵ *Interviews in December 2006 with DFPS Performance management Team.*

⁸⁶ *This was mentioned repeatedly in the HHSC Office of Inspector General reviews of APS in 2004.*

indexes of case quality. The aggregate scores of these three indexes are also evaluated over the last year and a half.

Finally, the impact of APS reform of its accountability system are evaluated from the employee perspective. Three separate sources of information will be analyzed: a survey of employee opinion on the performance management system, statistics regarding agency turnover, and data regarding the tenure of APS staff.

Impact on the timeliness of casework

In terms of the qualitatively measurable metrics of timeliness factors, improvement has been noted with the most substantial changes coming in the areas where the largest degree of improvement was required. The APS performance management quantitative metrics look at several distinct areas. First, the vast majority of cases require an initial contact to be made within 24 hours of the receipt of the report at the Statewide Intake hotline in Austin. Cases are routed electronically using the APS IMPACT case management system⁸⁷ to the appropriate field office and the case is assigned to a caseworker.

Within 24 hours, the worker must make some sort of contact to follow up and ensure that immediate safety needs are being met. This can be a contact with the alleged victim of abuse and neglect, but it could also be with the reporter or with another person who may have substantive knowledge of the situation. This

⁸⁷ The IMPACT system originated with federal efforts to improve data reporting on child welfare data and is used also by DFPS for Child Protective Services and some functions of the Child Care Licensing program.

requirement was always in APS policy but has been reinforced by management to ensure that cases do not “linger” unaddressed on a caseworker or supervisor’s workload. Further, to ensure case documentation is complete, this action must be documented in the electronic case management system within 14 days. Performance is shown in Table 5.3 for the timeliness of 24-hour contacts since September 2005.⁸⁸

**Table 5.3:
Timeliness of APS 24-Hour Contacts and Documentation**

Month	Total completed cases	% of 24 Hour Contacts met	% of 24 Hour Contacts Documented within 14 Days
Sep-05	6703	94.5%	65.0%
Oct-05	6324	94.3%	67.9%
Nov-05	8066	94.7%	68.5%
Dec-05	5719	94.2%	71.3%
Jan-06	6002	94.2%	71.2%
Feb-06	5690	94.8%	70.7%
Mar-06	6316	95.2%	72.3%
Apr-06	6031	95.6%	72.6%
May-06	6041	95.9%	73.9%
Jun-06	5793	94.8%	76.1%
Jul-06	5492	95.5%	79.5%
Aug-06	6560	94.8%	76.0%
Sep-06	5596	94.0%	76.1%
Oct-06	6500	94.7%	78.5%
Nov-06	5158	94.5%	76.7%
Dec-06	5376	94.6%	78.8%
Jan-07	5992	94.7%	80.3%
Feb-07	5579	95.6%	81.7%

Shaded months indicate the initial rollout of the APS Performance Management System to field supervisors. Data from DFPS Data Warehouse, pulled March 2007.

In making initial 24-hour contacts on cases, the APS program has basically maintained performance in the 94-95% range for the few months prior to rolling out

⁸⁸ The table represents individual queries by month of the DFPS data warehouse by the author. The DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics Quality Assurance unit confirmed the accuracy and validity of the information.

performance management in the winter of 2005-2006 until the present. By the program's own measurement of individual employees, this performance would be judged to be "competent". It is interesting to note that the program has been able to maintain this level of performance despite monthly totals of incoming cases that fluctuate by 30% and more. The greatest level of improvement has been in case documentation. This metric has steadily improved from under 70% to over 80% of initial contact being recorded timely.

In the flow of an APS case⁸⁹, the next metric for which caseworkers are held accountable is the actual face-to-face contact with the client. The length of time allowable for this to occur is dependent on one of four priorities assigned at the intake phase. In a priority 1 case, the contact with the client mirrors the initial contact timeframe of 24 hours. For priority 2, 3 and 4 cases, the timeframes for face-to-face contact are 3 days, 7 days and 14 days respectively.⁹⁰ Table 5.4 charts the performance of the APS program since September 2005 in terms of timeliness of face-to face contact and related documentation.⁹¹

⁸⁹ See appendices for detailed flowchart of APS casework process.

⁹⁰ According to the APS program handbook, Priority 4 cases involve clients for whom economic exploitation is the only allegation. An example would be a situation in which a relative caregiver of an elderly person is misusing the client's checking account. Any allegations regarding health or safety issues are prioritized higher depending on the assessed risk of harm to the client.

⁹¹ The table represents individual queries by month of the DFPS data warehouse by the author. The accuracy and validity of the information was confirmed by the DFPS Management Reporting and Statistics (MRS) Quality Assurance unit.

Table 5.4: Timeliness of APS Client Face-to-Face Contacts and Documentation			
Month	Total completed cases	% of face-to-face contacts met	% of face-to-face contacts documented within 14 days
Sep-05	6703	82.3%	43.1%
Oct-05	6324	81.2%	47.4%
Nov-05	8066	80.7%	44.1%
Dec-05	5719	81.2%	50.4%
Jan-06	6002	82.8%	51.8%
Feb-06	5690	84.7%	51.4%
Mar-06	6316	85.8%	55.6%
Apr-06	6031	85.8%	52.0%
May-06	6041	86.8%	55.2%
Jun-06	5793	86.6%	59.2%
Jul-06	5492	87.8%	61.0%
Aug-06	6560	87.0%	58.3%
Sep-06	5596	84.8%	56.7%
Oct-06	6500	84.6%	57.5%
Nov-06	5158	85.7%	59.7%
Dec-06	5376	86.6%	59.1%
Jan-07	5992	85.7%	61.1%
Feb-07	5579	86.4%	66.0%

Shaded months indicate the initial rollout of the APS Performance Management system to field supervisors Data from DFPS Data Warehouse, pulled March 2007.

To a greater degree than in the case of the initial contacts, improvement can be seen. In the fall of 2005, APS staff were making their face-to-face contact deadlines with clients in 81-82% of the time. One year later, this percentage had risen to 85-87% each month. Improvement of documentation of these contacts has also steadily risen from less than half of cases seeing timely documentation to over 60%.

To ensure multiple levels of accountability, APS supervisors are required to have involvement at specific points during investigations and delivery of services. Supervisors ensure cases are assigned appropriately and that investigative staff receive additional guidance in difficult or complex cases. To ensure thorough investigations of all allegations in a timely manner, there is a mandatory review by supervisors on all cases prior to their closure. Generally, cases in the investigative stage are expected to be completed by the APS caseworker within 45 days.⁹² A supervisor may accept and close the case or send it back to an employee to correct. This supervisory review did not occur regularly prior to APS reform and became

an expectation as performance management was being developed. Table 5.5 shows the statewide performance in submission, approval and completion of investigations.⁹³

⁹² *There are some exceptions to these timeframes. Individual cases may have issues that require more time. A case in which forensic accounting is involved, for example, may require significantly more time. Supervisors can approve legitimate extensions based on the case scenario.*

⁹³ *The table represents individual queries by month of the DFPS data warehouse by the author.*

Table 5.5: Timeliness of Approval and Closures of APS cases over time			
Month	Total completed cases	% Submitted timely	% Approved and closed timely
Sep-05	6703	55.0%	89.8%
Oct-05	6324	54.4%	89.1%
Nov-05	8066	45.9%	93.2%
Dec-05	5719	54.3%	86.9%
Jan-06	6002	49.7%	91.3%
Feb-06	5690	48.9%	93.2%
Mar-06	6316	51.7%	91.8%
Apr-06	6031	48.4%	95.0%
May-06	6041	55.0%	95.0%
Jun-06	5793	58.2%	94.1%
Jul-06	5492	56.9%	94.6%
Aug-06	6560	53.8%	95.0%
Sep-06	5596	49.7%	94.8%
Oct-06	6500	47.9%	95.0%
Nov-06	5158	49.2%	95.3%
Dec-06	5376	50.5%	95.1%
Jan-07	5992	51.1%	91.8%
Feb-07	5579	54.1%	92.8%

Shaded months indicate the initial rollout of the APS Performance Management system to field supervisors. Data from DFPS Data Warehouse, pulled March 2007.

While performance on both case submission and approval fluctuates by 5-6 percentage points across months, there has been little change in this metric since the performance management system was implemented. These performance metrics would seem to indicate that, while there has been improvement in documentation of critical case actions, improvement is still needed in the final disposition of the case by caseworkers.

Supervisors report “rejecting” cases repeatedly back to employees for additional casework or improved documentation. Caseworkers indicated, anecdotally, that there was a perception this was occurring too often and for often-petty reasons.

In essence the “clock resets” for the supervisor for meeting their timeframes every time they return a case to a worker. There was some speculation (on the part of their employees) that some supervisors may be returning cases to employees to protect their own statistics.⁹⁴ It was beyond the resources of this inquiry to confirm or refute this. Supervisor approval, once cases are fully “corrected” is occurring in a timely fashion.

Impact on the quality of casework

As cited in the Methodology chapter, the APS program randomly selects two closed cases from each worker in its program to be read each month. A case reading instrument was developed within the program in the summer of 2005 and was deployed electronically. A half-dozen Program Improvement Specialists read cases and enter the results via an Internet interface. The standardized case reading instrument uses 30 questions that feed one of three indexes.⁹⁵ Questions answered by the case reader vary widely. Some are broad outcome questions such as whether or not a client was left in a state of abuse or neglect following the APS intervention. Some are to process questions, such as whether the caseworker appropriately took photographs or employed an interpreter when a client had limited English proficiency. One set of 10 items supports investigation quality. Another set of 10

⁹⁴ *Several caseworkers interviewed raised this issue as a reason why caseworker statistics had not improved dramatically.*

⁹⁵ *The currently utilized QA data collection tool is a web-based instrument that can be accessed by case readers around the state. It is an electronic version of the “APS In-Home Case reading Standards” document (form 2775), last updated in October 2006.*

questions is concerned with client outcomes. A third set of 10 feeds a process and policy compliance score. A single percentage score can then be calculated for each scale. ⁹⁶ Table 5.6 represents the aggregate statewide quality assurance scores since September 2005.

Month	Client Outcome Scale	Investigation Scale	Process Compliance Scale
Sep-05	88.35%	86.98%	84.52%
Oct-05	89.84%	88.80%	88.17%
Nov-05	90.68%	90.20%	88.85%
Dec-05	91.60%	92.18%	91.22%
Jan-06	90.90%	93.81%	90.86%
Feb-06	87.67%	88.49%	86.16%
Mar-06	88.68%	89.04%	86.17%
Apr-06	90.56%	89.95%	88.49%
May-06	90.45%	91.18%	88.07%
Jun-06	88.31%	89.27%	85.71%
Jul-06	86.07%	86.58%	85.22%
Aug-06	89.36%	88.87%	88.16%
Sep-06	88.75%	89.64%	87.29%
Oct-06	86.39%	90.23%	84.19%
Nov-06	88.08%	88.83%	82.41%
Dec-06	86.47%	89.81%	81.72%
Jan-07	87.47%	90.50%	83.22%
Feb-07	89.10%	91.07%	87.07%

Shaded months indicate the initial rollout of the APS Performance Management system to field supervisors. Data from APS Case reading Database, pulled March 2007.

As is evidenced in the scores, there is no immediately apparent change over time after the quality assurance system was put into place. In all three scales, scores seem to fluctuate between 85 and 92%. While there has not been a significant increase in percentage scores, the performance recorded is notable for several reasons. First, in all three scales, the aggregate performance in every month is in the

⁹⁶ "Instructions for APS In-Home Case reading Standards" program document, updated October 2006.

at least the “competent” range, and often “commendable,” as referenced in an individual tenured employee’s⁹⁷ evaluation. Employees are meeting, even exceeding the program’s expectations of quality. Secondly, as the program has worked to ensure interrater reliability, the APS program reports “tougher” scoring over time.⁹⁸ A flat line over time may actually be a sign of progress if expectations of APS case quality have risen. Employees appear to be “keeping up” with the increased demands. Finally, performance management and quality assurance are only a part of a massive program overhaul. Dramatic change can disrupt an organization so it is encouraging to see quality in casework has not suffered in the dynamic environment of APS over the last couple of years.

Oscar Benavides will receive official case reading on a only a small percentage of the cases he works every month. A weakness of the current case reading system is that QA scores of the employee are based on this fairly small sample. Due to the workload issues, each employee has two cases per month pulled to be read, resulting in a total of 24 cases per person, per year. APS leadership recognizes that this is a small percentage of cases and does not reflect statistically valid samples. To address these concerns, there is an effort to include supervisory case reading in addition to case readers. This comes with the challenges of maintaining inter-rater reliability.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Tenured employees in the performance management system are those with over 18 months of tenure.*

⁹⁸ *Interview with APS Assistant Commissioner, March 2007.*

⁹⁹ *Interview with APS state office staff, Feb 2007.*

Impact on APS field staff

The foundation of the APS performance management system is the work of the APS field caseworkers. An evaluation of the impact of the APS performance management system would not be complete without some exploration of the impact on these line caseworkers and their perception of the usefulness, fairness, validity and inclusiveness of the system. As detailed in the methodology section, this was approached through an employee survey and analysis of human resource data for the APS program on the whole. Sixty-one responses were received from APS field staff about their perceptions of the performance management system. Table 5.7 organizes employee responses from the most positive to the most negative responses as captured through the Lickert scale.

Table 5.7: APS Employee Survey Responses				
<i>(n=61) On the average score column, 3 represents a neutral response with positive greater than three, negative, less than 3.</i>	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree or Strongly Agree	Average Score
I understand what performance reports are measuring.	12%	8%	80%	3.78
The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me to do better work.	11%	10%	79%	3.77
The performance management system promotes individual accountability.	18%	3%	79%	3.67
Performance reports on the Data Warehouse help me to do better casework.	24%	10%	66%	3.56
Quality Assurance (case reading) scores help me to do better casework.	28%	5%	67%	3.52
Performance reports are accurate to a usable degree.	22%	7%	72%	3.48

The performance management system promotes better client outcomes.	22%	15%	63%	3.44
The performance benchmarks are achievable given current caseloads.	22%	17%	62%	3.38
I get regular feedback on my performance.	23%	25%	52%	3.35
Performance reports are easy to access.	31%	7%	63%	3.29
Our system is measuring the right things to promote better casework.	28%	20%	52%	3.28
The current metrics in the APS system are fair to employees.	25%	17%	58%	3.25
There are avenues to report concerns about how well the system is working.	32%	15%	53%	3.20
The performance management system is flexible enough to change as we learn more as a program.	32%	14%	54%	3.14
Supervisors were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.	29%	22%	49%	3.12
Employee input was sought in the creation of the performance management system.	39%	27%	34%	2.92
Employees were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.	40%	25%	35%	2.78

Employee opinions about the system were generally positive regarding the philosophy of measuring quality and performance and about the infrastructure of reports the programs built to support accountability. Staff reported understanding why they were being measured and concurred that measurement could lead to improved client outcomes.

Line staff were less positive about the ways the system had been developed and implemented. Despite ample evidence of the APS programs having engaged

employees at all levels in the development of the system,¹⁰⁰ there was a perception among line that the system was a “top-down” creation. Field caseworkers were also negative about the degree of training they had received on the new system and its expectations. This is not surprising given that the program did not train everyone. Due to resource constraints, APS was only able to train down to the supervisor level. Staff were given one open-ended question in the survey. From looking at the responses it appears that the training of the APS supervisors had not always filtered down to line staff. A few were completely unaware that a system had been put in place. Many expressed that, while they were aware there were consistent standards in place, they had no formal training on the system. To address this the program has a detailed website that describes the process in its entirety.¹⁰¹

Employees expressed a variety of concerns in their open-ended responses to the survey. There was concern that the quality expectations did not take into account the variations in caseload. In theory, caseloads should be relatively balanced statewide. Allocations of staff are made regionally based on workload. However at the unit level, there appears to be some imbalance. As one employee answered in the survey: “When you have 70 cases, you can't possibly do them all without making small mistakes. The QA readings don't measure whether or not you busted your butt helping a client.”

¹⁰⁰ Detailed notes of development meetings indicated staff from all levels and from around the state being brought into Austin to develop the performance management system. Further, records indicated additional meetings on development of the system were conducted in regional offices.

¹⁰¹ Available on the DFPS intranet.

Another concern expressed by several staff members was that the system promoted *recording* of casework activities over *actual* casework. One respondent wrote: “Too much emphasis is being given to the documentation process regardless of the client outcome still being number one. In other words, documentation has become the name of the game and client outcome has become secondary.” Or as another put it “[The]system seems to measure a worker's documentation skills, not necessarily their social work skills.” There were numerous complaints about the organization’s AccessHR online human resource system. The DFPS performance management team has attempted to address this by a second round of training specifically around using the system. A couple of employees were not able to directly access their own quality assurance scores; they had to be pulled off the system by a supervisor. And there was some concern about inter-rater reliability. As one employee stated, “Different case readers read differently and score differently.” One employee said some “grade harder.”

In summary, the respondents were generally open to the idea of being measured and understood the importance of accountability. Their objections seemed to be in their degree of preparedness. The weaknesses identified by staff all seem to be in the process of being addressed in an ongoing way by the program. Though the process appears to be transparent, there may be some communication challenges.

Social service agencies in Texas typically struggle with maintaining a tenured workforce. This inquiry also looked at the history of turnover in the APS program

before and after performance management was implemented. The chart below breaks out employee turnover by position type.

Year	APS Spec I	APS Spec II	APS Spec III	APS Spec IV	APS Spec V*	APS Spec Total
2004	11.5%	17.4%	6.7%	15.8%	<i>n/a</i>	13.6%
2005	38.5%	30.4%	5.3%	9.8%	0.0%	20.5%
2006	31.2%	12.0%	10.3%	13.9%	0.0%	19.7%
2007 YTD**	27.5%	15.4%	11.4%	14.0%	26.7%	20.8%

**There was no Specialist V position in 2004. **As per Legislative Budget Board and State Auditor methodology, 2007 year to date is a projection of annualized turnover based on terminations from the first quarter.*

The information was segmented by caseworker level (1-5), which directly correlates to caseworker tenure with a percentage of turnover computed by individual job type and for the overall population of APS caseworkers. There appears to have been a spike in the first year of APS reform that has since leveled off. Since turnover is an areas affected by many factors, no strong conclusion can be drawn here. Currently, information on why people leave state agencies is collected by the Texas State Auditor's Office but offers little detail. Interviews with APS leadership confirm that 2004-2005 saw massive changes in the APS program and reform may have contributed to the loss of tenured staff.

To summarize the findings, there are indicators that the APS program faced significant challenges to implementing accountability systems. The basic mission and goals of the APS program were the subject of considerable debate. The outcomes for which the program may be held accountable are impacted by multiple factors, many of which are outside the control of APS. The existing Legislative Budget Board performance measures were inadequate to manage the program and gave an

inaccurate portrayal of the health of the program. To deal with these challenges, the program developed a step-by-step approach to devising internal performance metrics and included a wide array of staff in their development. The program seems to have found an appropriate balance between outcome and process metrics and also appears to have spread accountability through all levels of the organization.

The performance management system implemented in APS may well have seemed like an impossible task at its outset. Early results indicate that program performance has been positively impacted. But many questions will only be answered over time. There are substantial opportunities for further research both within APS and within like organizations struggling with many of the same challenges.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

The findings of this research are broad and before moving into the conclusions, it may be useful to the reader to recap the major findings and pair them with related recommendations. Table 6.1 addresses both, organizing them by research questions.

Table 6.1 Summary of Major Findings, Recommendations		
	Findings	Recommendations
Question 3: What are the challenges that APS faces in implementing a performance management system?		
Subquestion 1a: What political or social debate surrounds the APS mission and desired outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public expectations vary • Confusion with other programs • Legislative expectations change over time • Conflicts with private sphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication efforts with external stakeholders • Ongoing efforts to ensure policy is consistent • Publication of performance efforts
Subquestion 1b: What external factors impact APS client outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients involved with multiple agencies • Client base itself is impacted by age, infirmity, poverty • Most impacts risk factors are out of APS control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer coordination with other agencies
Subquestion 1c: How accurately or efficiently do the current Legislative Budget Board Performance Measures measure the work of APS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Output</i> more than <i>outcome</i> based • Did not accurately anticipate failures in programs • Slow to evolve • Based largely on budget model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a strong internal system with the hope of eventual migration to external accountability systems
Question 2: What approaches did the APS program take to mitigate these challenges?		
Subquestion 2a: What sort of employee participation was there in the development of APS performance management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of the staff that developed the APS metrics were field staff • Direct field training with all APS supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing employee participation in revisions to system • Better communication of such

<p>Subquestion 2b: How are the APS performance metrics balanced?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to balance process and outcome • Includes process and outcome measures for staff • Management related metrics for directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on improving outcome measures • Collaboration with external entities • Completed metrics of community involvement
<p>Subquestion 2c: What elements make the APS system sustainable and adaptable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed training materials • Dedicated staff to support effort • Executive level dedicated steering committee • Detailed support website • Online availability of standardized performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of current efforts • Continued strong Executive level support • Ongoing refresher training • New and improved reports as needed.
<p>Question 3: What are the results of the approach to implementing performance management on the APS program so far?</p>		
<p>Subquestion 3a: What is the impact on the timeliness of casework?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some improvements in actions • Substantial improvement in documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading of (confirmed) best practices
<p>Subquestion 3b: What is the impact on the quality of casework?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor improvements as measured • Better QA systems • Constant performance may be a positive in light of massive program change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on improving actual outcome measures • Collaboration with external entities • Spreading of (confirmed) best practices
<p>Subquestion 3c: What is the impact APS field staff?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General acceptance by staff • Good understanding of process and measures • Less understanding of the inclusion of field staff in the process • No significant effect on turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways to deal with uneven workloads • Better integration of hiring and promotion with performance management system • Better communication in general to field staff on performance management and its links to larger program goals

The exercise of implementing a consistent accountability structure in Texas APS is evolving. Adult Protective Services performance management is in its early stages of deployment and the complete impact may not be realized for years. Early indicators are positive. Timeliness of case actions and related documentation appear to be moving in a positive direction. Measurement of case quality remains consistent even in as workloads and expectations rise. There does not appear to have been significant impact on retention of staff. Certainly the level of negative public scrutiny has diminished and in many cases, has been replaced by public praise of the program.

Existing Legislative Budget Board accountability structures focus on the top of the organizational pyramid. While Texas does indeed have an evolved performance measurement system, it is primarily a sideshow to the appropriations dance that goes on between the legislature, the LBB and state agency executives. The resulting strategic plans and performance measures have very little to do with the management of complex programs, nor do they speak to the actual efficacy of the programs. In the case of APS, at the very point at which the program was failing both in the perception of staff and of the legislature and media, the program was largely in compliance. The limitations of the Legislative Budget Board Measures cannot be blamed for the failures of APS, but they certainly failed the citizens of Texas and policy makers. In implementing its own performance management, APS found an internal solution to deal with the weaknesses of the external structures. It may be worth pursuing inclusion of the APS internal metrics into the LBB measures if the opportunity arises.

It is worth noting that the implementation of performance management was just one of scores of major programmatic reforms in APS. Given the massive overhaul of policy, training, staffing, leadership, quality assurance, and philosophy, the fact that such a holistic approach to accountability was implemented in such a short timeframe is remarkable. While many people shared in this effort, it certainly would not have been possible without complete support from both the Assistant Commissioner for APS and the Family and Protective Services Commissioner. In terms of ongoing development of its performance management system, APS would benefit from better communication across the organization about the goals and specifics of the system. It already has resources dedicated to continuous improvement, but additional case readers would increase the validity of casework quality efforts.

This research was introductory and highlights several areas for possible further study. One weakness in the current body of literature on performance management in the public sector is that organizations are spoken about as relatively homogenous and interchangeable. The reality is that there is not one large “government.” It is because of the complexity of public needs that there are so many specialized agencies and departments and so many jurisdictions: international, federal, state and local. Much of the general academic research from the public administration discipline does not fully take into account these differences. Certainly, there are foundational issues that are applicable regardless of the type of organization. Accountability should be an expectation of the public sector. Metrics should be commonly agreed upon. But

public administration research can do more in accounting for organizations with complex missions and “low probability technologies”.

The APS program and other organizations serving the elderly and disabled would benefit from more outcome research. Already, the APS program is researching the possibility of partnering with graduate schools to provide follow up with APS clients. The plan suggests neutral parties could visit with former APS clients 3-6 months after their cases are closed and assess how effective the APS intervention was. There are electronic tools available that make analysis of and access to performance quality information much easier use and manage. This so-called “business intelligence software” is currently cost prohibitive for much of the public sector, but there may be ways to partner between agencies to make such tools more accessible. Study into such potential collaborations would be of great benefit to human service organizations.

The much larger Child Protective Services program is now deploying performance management based on the APS model. This program’s employees number in the thousands with greater specialization and more complex casework with the courts, stakeholders and families. The efforts of CPS represent a prime research opportunity to study the challenges of implementing performance management in the human services.

The APS experience is obviously of great interest to the employees and management of the program as well as the clients and communities served by the

program. But beyond the immediate impacts to APS, the model of implementing performance management could very well serve similar organizations. Within the human services there are a handful of oft-repeated excuses for why work cannot be measured, much less fully managed. Adult Protective Services has taken some initial steps to countering these arguments.

After what seems like two solid months of late nights and weekend work, caseworker Oscar Benavides returns to his office late one Friday afternoon to catch up on email. The prior week saw one elderly man pass away from potentially preventable complications of diabetes. Earlier in the day, another woman he was working with had to be picked up by mental health deputies after a suicide attempt. After hours at the state hospital and in court committing her for a weekend observation, he now just hopes to get out in time to grab dinner and a movie with his wife. He tends to remember the cases that went bad. There are many that don't though.

After wading through scores of messages about overtime policy and the latest news of promotions in the state office, he runs across an email from Donna McGill. She is just checking in. Her neighbor Edith Anderson had a bout of the flu but generally seems to be back on her feet, engaging with folks on the street and tending to her garden. He feels good about this and it gives him the strength to face another hard week.

He also has an email from his supervisor. It begins by relating some kind words about Oscar's work from the regional director. The supervisor lets him know that Oscar Benavides has some of the highest scores in quality assurance case reading for client outcomes.

These objective measures confirm what he largely suspects - but frequently doubts. Oscar's work matters, he is doing the right things, and he is making a difference.

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Appendix A: APS Quality Assurance Case reading Indicators

The following is the list of questions used to assess case quality by APS case readers. A more detailed guide¹⁰² to answering these questions is used to train quality assurance staff.

Bracketed comments indicate which index (investigation, process compliance, or client outcome) each question support.

Question	Score
1. Case initiation contact was completed with a reliable source that had current information about the CL ¹⁰³ 's whole situation. ¹⁰⁴ [this question supports the investigation scale]	Y N N/A
2. Enough information was gained about the client during the client initiation contact and a priority change decision was made and acted upon appropriately. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
3. Interpretive services were provided for each principal having LEP ¹⁰⁵ or sensory impairment. (Applies to all principal contacts) [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
4. Client emergencies were recognized and handled appropriately. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
5. Policies were followed after an initial face-to-face attempt failed or at any time during the course of the case when the client became unavailable. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
6. Re: CARE ¹⁰⁶ All risks/problems identified in the investigation were listed, including root cause(s). [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
7. Re: CARE Scores were appropriately explained and justified in the narrative. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
8. The reporter was interviewed adequately and, as necessary, re-interviewed. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
9 The client was interviewed adequately and, as necessary, re-interviewed. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
10. A medical professional was interviewed when appropriate. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
11. The alleged perpetrator was interviewed adequately and, as necessary, re-interviewed. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
12. All appropriate collaterals (not including the reporter or medical professionals) were interviewed adequately and, as necessary, re-interviewed. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
13. Photographs were taken as appropriate per policy. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
14. Documentary evidence was collected as appropriate. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
15. All allegations of client problems made at intake or at any other time were investigated adequately. [investigation scale]	Y N N/A
16. Re: Conclusion Justification Conclusions on allegations involving an alleged perpetrator are shown to be supported by the evidence and in keeping with Chapter 48 definitions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
17. Timely notifications were made: Probate court, DP ¹⁰⁷ of intent to release findings, CL of domestic	Y N N/A

¹⁰² "Instructions for APS In-Home Case reading Standards" program document, updated October 2006.

¹⁰³ "CL" is agency shorthand for "client."

¹⁰⁴ In numerous situations an on-call, duty worker or temporary worker will work part of a task in a case and will then be responsible for that part of the case. In that situation an "N/A" will be scored on the applicable standard and the initials ROAW (responsibility of another worker) is placed in the comments section.

¹⁰⁵ LEP is "limited English proficiency" – basically a client who needs a caseworker who speaks their native language or a translator.

¹⁰⁶ CARE is the structured risk assessment tool workers use to assess the immediate and ongoing needs of a client.

violence information, law enforcement, licensing boards, DADS, DP's employer, Adult Fatality Review Team.[process compliance scale]	
18. Decision to progress or not progress the case was appropriate. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
19. Policy was followed if the client refused to cooperate with the investigation, accept or withdrew from services. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
20. CL participated in service planning. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
21. Appropriate services/actions were offered to address each identified problem needing intervention. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
22. Client and community resources were explored (<i>and online supervisor's approval "save/submit" was obtained if required by policy</i>) before ECS expenditures were approved. The ECS ¹⁰⁸ documentation was completed properly and on time. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
23. Outcomes, including adequacy and quality of delivered services, were evaluated and properly documented. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
24. Re: Monthly Status: Contact was made with/about the client each month per policy and the current status of the client was documented. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
25. CL was informed of closure. (investigation <u>or</u> service delivery)	Y N N/A
26. Guardianship referral was considered as appropriate. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A
27. Legal Actions: The legal action/outcome window was completed, supervisor approval was obtained for each action, consultation with regional attorney was attempted and the action was considered the least restrictive alternative. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
28. Narrative documentation placed in IMPACT told the complete story of the case. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
29. Essential data/detail information was captured in IMPACT according to policy. [process compliance scale]	Y N N/A
30. The client was <u>not</u> in a state of abuse, neglect or exploitation at the time the case was closed because of a lack of APS effort. [client outcome scale]	Y N N/A

¹⁰⁷ DP is the "designated perpetrator", the person validated for abuse or neglect.

¹⁰⁸ ECS are "emergency client services" funds. These are resources available to the caseworker to pay for client needs: medications, space heaters, contractors to do small home repairs, utility bills.

Appendix B: APS In-Home Case Reading Detail

The following are the statewide raw scores over time of the three scales generated by the APS quality assurance case reading instrument in Appendix A.

For example, in the month of September 2005, out of 6,236 questions (from the instrument in Appendix A) asked in case readings that feed the client outcome scale, 3,170 were positive; the caseworker met the program's standards. For 418 of those questions, the caseworker did not meet quality expectations. And in 2,648 questions, the questions were not applicable.

Client Outcome Scale				
Month	Positive	Negative	n/a	[Yes/(Yes + No)] * 100
Sep-05	3170	418	2648	88.35%
Oct-05	3377	382	2956	89.84%
Nov-05	3357	345	3071	90.68%
Dec-05	3327	305	3188	91.60%
Jan-06	3446	345	3019	90.90%
Feb-06	3420	481	3302	87.67%
Mar-06	3384	432	3464	88.68%
Apr-06	3406	355	3446	90.56%
May-06	3588	379	3603	90.45%
Jun-06	3497	463	3410	88.31%
Jul-06	828	134	1008	86.07%
Aug-06	3613	430	3767	89.36%
Sep-06	3425	434	3481	88.75%
Oct-06	2813	443	3914	86.39%
Nov-06	2896	392	3832	88.08%
Dec-06	3005	470	4335	86.47%
Jan-07	2960	424	4246	87.47%
Feb-07	3163	387	4630	89.10%

Investigation Scale				
Month	Positive	Negative	n/a	[Yes/(Yes + No)] * 100
Sep-05	1791	268	2925	86.98%
Oct-05	1728	218	3429	88.80%
Nov-05	1694	184	3545	90.20%
Dec-05	1663	141	3652	92.18%

Jan-06	1668	110	3670	93.81%
Feb-06	1776	231	3755	88.49%
Mar-06	1885	232	3707	89.04%
Apr-06	2140	239	3389	89.95%
May-06	2242	217	3597	91.18%
Jun-06	2221	267	3408	89.27%
Jul-06	542	84	950	86.58%
Aug-06	2260	283	3705	88.87%
Sep-06	2121	245	3506	89.64%
Oct-06	3224	349	3597	90.23%
Nov-06	3238	407	3475	88.83%
Dec-06	3562	404	3844	89.81%
Jan-07	3523	370	3737	90.50%
Feb-07	3763	369	4048	91.07%

Process Compliance Scale				
Month	Positive	Negative	n/a	[Yes/(Yes + No)] * 100
Sep-05	3041	557	3266	84.52%
Oct-05	3100	416	3866	88.17%
Nov-05	3069	385	3993	88.85%
Dec-05	3284	316	3902	91.22%
Jan-06	3240	326	3924	90.86%
Feb-06	3294	529	4098	86.16%
Mar-06	3494	561	3953	86.17%
Apr-06	3737	486	3703	88.49%
May-06	3994	541	3792	88.07%
Jun-06	3827	638	3641	85.71%
Jul-06	1015	176	976	85.22%
Aug-06	4141	556	3892	88.16%
Sep-06	3874	564	3621	87.29%
Oct-06	3328	625	3217	84.19%
Nov-06	3247	693	3180	82.41%
Dec-06	3474	777	3559	81.72%
Jan-07	3487	703	3440	83.22%
Feb-07	3812	566	3801	87.07%

Appendix C: Details of Employee Survey Results

61 APS employees responded from 100 invited to participate. For scoring, coding was as follows:

Strongly Disagree=1 Disagree =2 Neutral=3 Agree = 4 Strongly Agree=5

Not all respondents answered all questions. “Average Score” accounts for this by computing averages for actual number respondents for each question. “Total score” does not reflect adjustment for actual numbers of respondents.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total responses	Total Score	Average Score
Employees were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.	12	12	15	19	2	60	167	2.78
Employee input was sought in the creation of the performance management system.	6	17	16	16	4	59	172	2.92
Supervisors were sufficiently trained on the performance management system.	7	10	13	27	2	59	184	3.12
The performance management system is flexible enough to change as we learn more as a program.	8	10	8	28	3	57	179	3.14
There are avenues to report concerns about how well the system is working.	4	15	9	29	3	60	192	3.20
The current metrics in the APS system are fair to employees.	8	7	10	30	4	59	192	3.25
Our system is measuring the right things to promote better casework.	4	13	12	26	6	61	200	3.28
Performance reports are easy to access.	5	13	4	34	3	59	194	3.29
I get regular feedback on my performance.	5	9	15	22	9	60	201	3.35
The performance benchmarks are achievable given current caseloads.	8	5	10	30	7	60	203	3.38

The performance management system promotes better client outcomes.	4	9	9	31	6	59	203	3.44
Performance reports are accurate to a usable degree.	5	8	4	39	4	60	209	3.48
Quality Assurance (case reading) scores help me to do better casework.	3	14	3	30	11	61	215	3.52
Performance reports on the Data Warehouse help me to do better casework.	2	12	6	29	10	59	210	3.56
The performance management system promotes individual accountability.	4	7	2	40	8	61	224	3.67
The feedback I receive from my supervisor helps me to do better work.	4	3	6	38	10	61	230	3.77
I understand what performance reports are measuring.	2	5	5	40	8	60	227	3.78

Appendix D: APS Caseworker Turnover and Tenure Detail

The “APS Specialists” (Spec I, Spec II, etc) are APS caseworkers. There was no Specialist V position in 2004. “Avg” is average filled position for the years and “terms” is the number of employees who terminated, or left the program. “Terminations” can be a misleading word. In Texas State government the word refers to employees who left for *any* reason and does not refer specifically to employees were involuntarily terminated - or “fired”.

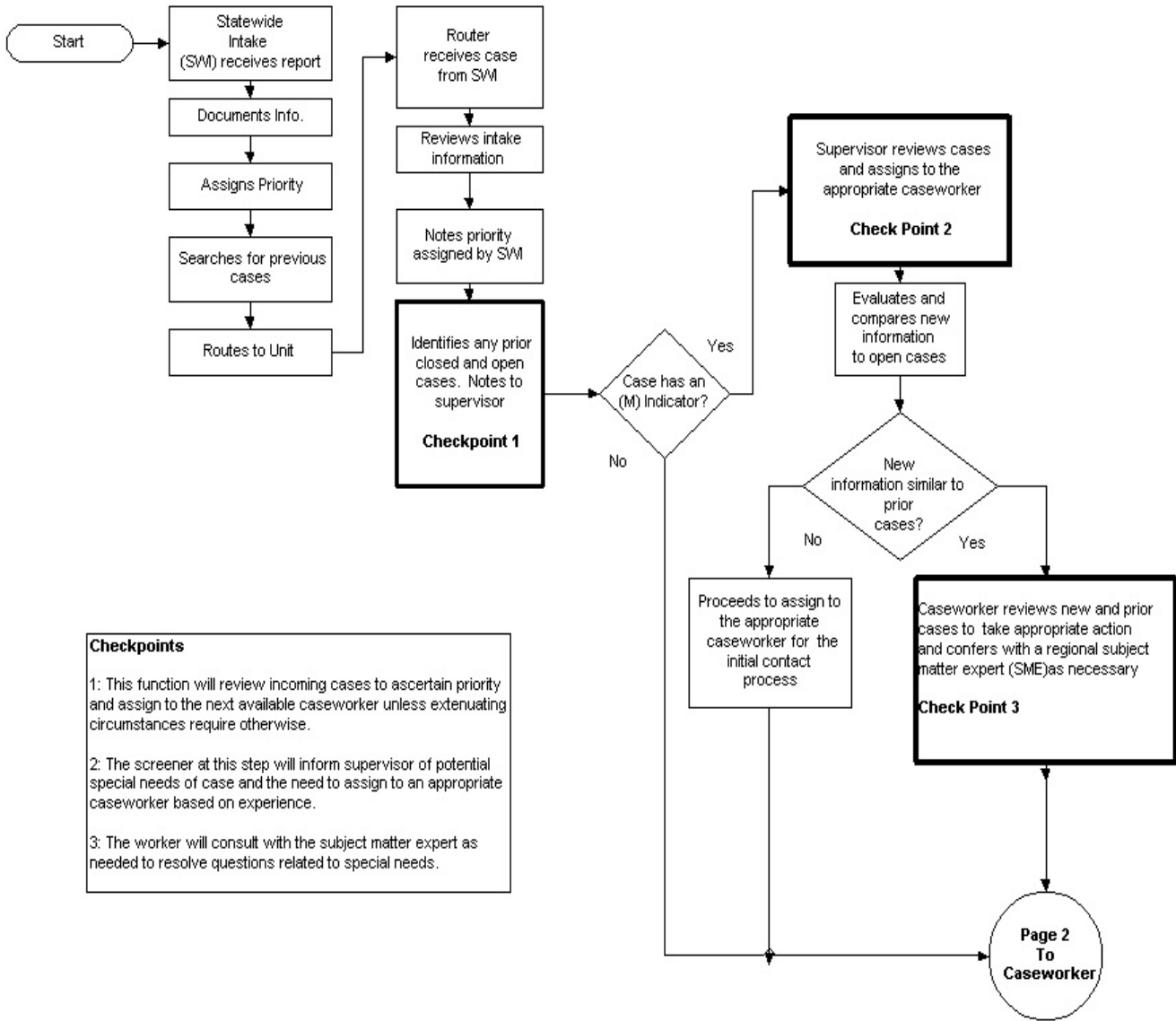
Year	APS Spec I			APS Spec II			APS Spec III			APS Spec IV			APS Spec V			APS Spec Total		
	Avg	Terms	T/O	Avg	Terms	T/O	Avg	Terms	T/O	Avg	Terms	T/O	Avg	Terms	T/O	Avg	Terms	T/O
2004	60.75	7	11.5%	57.5	10	17.4%	75	5	6.7%	196.5	31	15.8%	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	389.8	53.0	13.6%
2005	137.8	53	38.5%	46.0	14	30.4%	56.8	3	5.3%	183.8	18	9.8%	4.0	0	0.0%	428.3	88	20.5%
2006	192.5	60	31.2%	92.0	11	12.0%	38.8	4	10.3%	151.0	21	13.9%	12.0	0	0.0%	486.3	96	19.7%
2007 YTD	284.0	39	27.5%	143.0	11	15.4%	35.0	2	11.4%	128.5	9	14.0%	15.0	2	26.7%	605.5	63	20.8%

Tenure information was not available for prior years so comparison could not be made.

Tenure of Active APS Staff in February 2007		
	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
under one year	176	31%
1-2 years	74	13%
2-5 years	73	13%
5 to 10 years	108	19%
Over ten years	135	24%
Total	566	100%

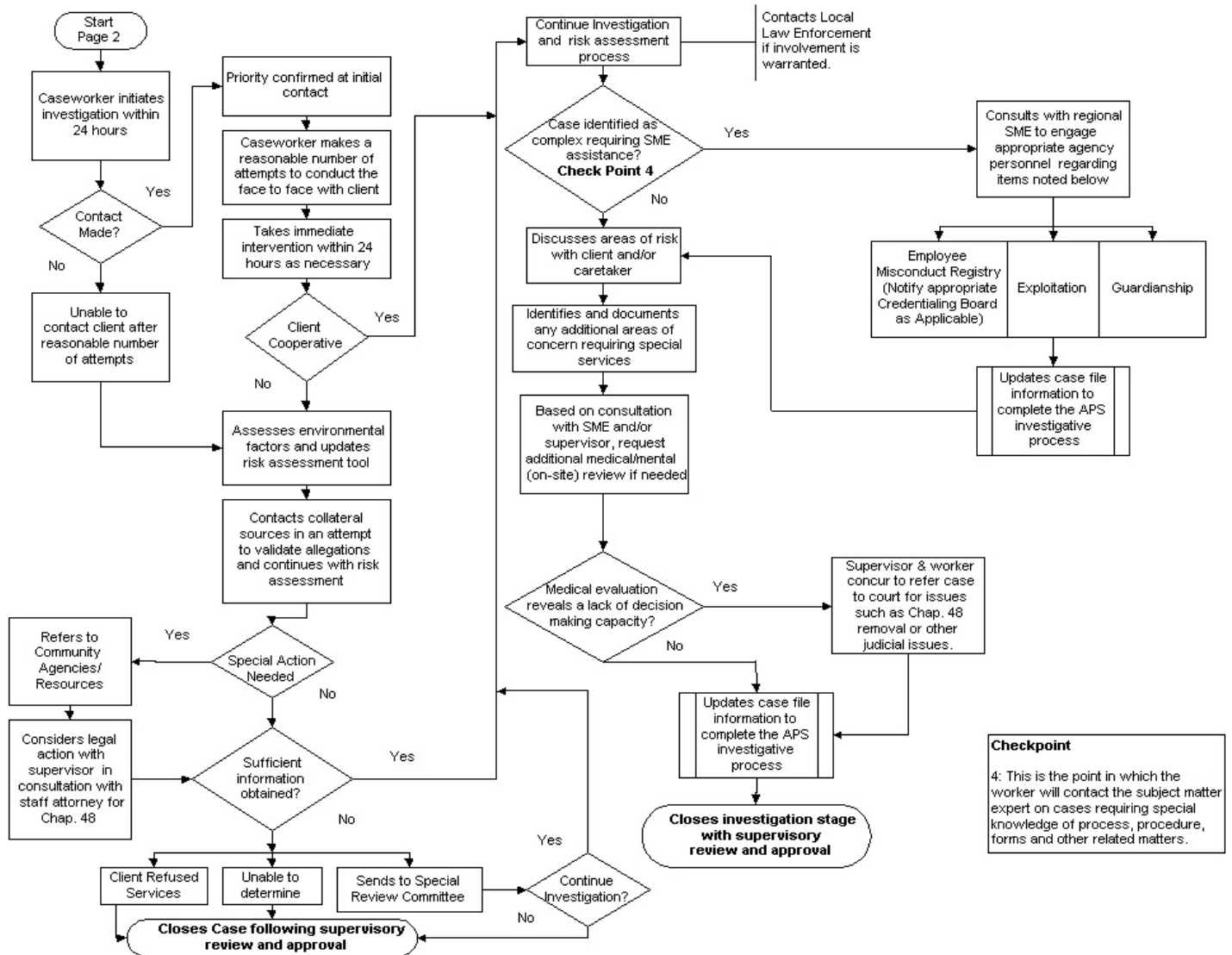
Appendix E(1): APS In Home Case Flowchart

Note: These diagrams were produced by the APS program.



Appendix E (2): APS In Home Case Flowchart

Note: These diagrams were produced by the APS program.



Appendix E (3): APS In-home Case Flowchart

Note: These diagrams were produced by the APS program.

