



## Adult Protective Services Documentation

Policy 8.08

Effective: April 15, 2024

### Introduction

All Adult Protective Services case-related activities are documented as case recordings. The case record must accurately reflect what has transpired with a client who is receiving services from Adult Protective Services.

### Scope

This policy describes the activities required of Adult Protective Services staff when documenting case recordings. The accurate and timely recording of facts enables the submission of the case record as a business record. Clear and concise documentation can provide valuable evidence in legal proceedings should the investigative specialist be unavailable to testify as to his/her observations.

### Policy

#### Procedures

##### A. Case Records

1. Each client's record must include a narrative of each contact made on the case. The descriptions provide a means to organize and analyze case information.
2. All major case decisions must be supported by narrative entries and/or the Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessment(s).
3. All contacts are to be documented as case recordings in the case management system (CMS) within ten (10) business days of the contact.

**Note:** It is always best practice to enter case recordings immediately after the contact has occurred. However, contacts must be documented within ten (10) business days to ensure compliance with this policy.

4. It is recommended that staff use the [HS-3125 Interview Checklist](#) and refer to the [Guidelines for Completing Investigations](#) to ensure that all information needed is gathered in a timely and organized manner.
5. Case narratives must:
  - a. Provide an on-going narrative of the nature of Adult Protective Services (APS) involvement with the client and all relevant parties, the progress toward achieving outcomes, and the basis of decisions that eventually lead to case closure.
  - b. Be written in third person.
  - c. Be relevant, reliable, and written in clear and complete sentences.
  - d. Follow rules of capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.
  - e. Be comprehensive of all case-related facts and circumstances.
  - f. Show accountability for both the activities and results of APS's work.
  - g. Write terms out the first time they appear in the case recordings and place the abbreviation or acronym in parenthesis unless it is a commonly used acronym (See Appendix of [Documentation Procedures](#)). This practice must be followed with each separate case recording.
  - h. State the first and last name of each person noted as well as their relationship to the client. Persons noted should not be referred to by first name only. If the person's name is unknown, he or she should be referred to as Mr./Ms. Unknown until such time when their identity is learned.
  - i. Limit the use of pronouns if there is more than one (1) person of the same gender in the narrative.
  - j. When documenting a direct quote or statement verbatim, the quoted text must be enclosed in quotation marks.
  - k. Not include subjective/personal value judgments or slang language unless that language is a direct quote (see item j) and is pertinent to the investigation.
  - l. Be organized so that the material flows logically and sequentially.
  - m. Support conclusions with evidence/facts.
  - n. Use spell check.

## **B. Components of Each Entry**

1. Each entry must include:
  - a. The full date and time of contact which will be selected in the CMS. APS staff is not required to write the date and time in the narrative.
  - b. First and last names of persons present during the contact and their relationship to the client, including other APS staff.

- c. The type of contact, for example: phone, home visit, office visit, etc., will be selected in the CMS. APS staff is not required to write the type of contact in the narrative.
  - d. Observations made by the investigative specialist (IS) and a summary of issues discussed that are relevant.
  - e. Observations relevant to safety/risk including strengths and needs.
  - f. A list of evidence that supports the facts.
  - g. Statements of future plans, actions or next steps, and follow-up dates.
2. Narrative entries must be entered into the CMS. Handwritten notes are not acceptable as narrative entries.
  3. Emails shall not be pasted directly into case recordings. Staff will note in the narrative section that contact was made with an individual through email and document only information pertaining to the case. Discussion of topics unrelated to the case should not be contained within the narrative.
  4. Any written correspondence or verbal communication between Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) staff and the Office of General Counsel (OGC) attorneys is privileged communication or attorney/client work product. Determinations made in conjunction with OGC will be documented in summary.

**Example:** "Legal conference was conducted, and a decision was made to proceed with custody."

Questions regarding documentation of conversations with legal should be addressed directly with an OGC attorney.

### C. Documenting the Use of Photographs and Audio/Video Recordings

1. To properly document the use of photographs and/or audio/video recordings, the IS:
  - a. Identifies the individual/environment/ physical evidence in the photograph and/or audio/video recordings,
  - b. Documents in the case narrative that photographs and/or audio/video recordings indicating the presence or absence of injuries, environmental concerns, improvements, other evidence, etc., were taken and by whom; and
  - c. Lists and records, in case narrative, a description of each photograph and/or audio/video recording taken.
2. During every investigation a photograph should be taken of the client. Before taking any photographs and/or audio/video recordings, permission shall be obtained from the individual/legal representative, if applicable. Should an individual refuse to be photographed or recorded, this must be documented in the CMS.

**Note:** Additional detailed procedures for this policy can be found in [APS Documentation Procedures](#) and [8.06 APS Investigations policy](#).

**D. Maintaining Confidentiality**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires TDHS to maintain the privacy of APS clients by not releasing their individually identifiable health information to anyone. For specific information regarding maintaining the confidentiality of APS records and clients, see [8.01 APS Confidentiality policy](#).

**Supporting Documents**

[HS-3125 Interview Checklist](#)

[Guidelines for Completing Investigations](#)

[APS Documentation Procedures](#)

[8.01 APS Confidentiality](#)

[8.06 APS Investigations](#)

**Definitions/Acronyms**

Term	Definition
APS	Adult Protective Services
CMS	Case Management System
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IS	Investigative Specialist
OGC	Office of General Counsel
TDHS	Tennessee Department of Human Services

**Supersedes**

8.08 Adult Protective Services Documentation Policy, eff. date 01/01/2024

**Authority**

Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-6-103.

**Application**

Adult Protective Services Investigative Specialists and Intake Counselors

**Revision History**

Date	Version	Location of Change	Description/Reason for Change
01/30/2026	04/15/2024	Manual Review	This policy review found no revisions were required.
05/03/2024	04/15/2024	Supporting Documents	This policy was revised to remove an obsolete form.
04/09/2024	04/15/2024	Policy Section	Removed a majority of content as this occurred verbatim in the APS Confidentiality policy
12/03/2023	01/01/2024	Policy Section	Added rules about capitalizations, Linked Investigations policy, removed reference to APS Policy Manual
01/30/2023	02/01/2023	Policy section	Corrected language, removed one rule about acronyms, updated Section C.
05/19/2022	05/23/2022	Policy section	Policy updates
04/04/2018	07/15/2018	N/A	New Policy

**Approval History**

Approved By	Approver Title	Approved Date	Effective Date
Clarence H. Carter	Commissioner	04/09/2024	04/15/2024
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	12/03/2023	01/01/2024
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	01/30/2023	02/01/2023
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	05/19/2022	05/23/2022
Danielle Barnes	Commissioner	04/04/2018	07/15/2018

**Current Approver:**

*Clarence H. Carter*