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Adequate state funding for Adult Protective Services would improve lives of older Ohioans

“Silent epidemic” of abuse could be eased with relatively small investment

Ohio provides vital services to protect vulnerable senior citizens, but state funding has dropped while need has increased, according to a new report by Policy Matters Ohio. The state relies more on federal funds than most other states, and this year those federal funds are facing automatic cuts because of the sequester.

“Ohio needs to do better in the area of funding Adult Protective Services,” said Wendy Patton, senior project director for Policy Matters Ohio and report author. “As legislators make their final decisions, providing adequate funding to protect the elderly should be a priority.”

In 2012, 14,344 allegations of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation were reported to service providers across the state. Experts estimate that only one in eight incidents are reported.

State funding for adult protective services has declined over time, and was cut completely in the middle of the past decade. There has been some restoration since 2008, and the Senate added funds during deliberations over House Bill 59, the budget bill currently under consideration in the General Assembly. But proposed funding for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 remains too low. Ohio’s low level of state funding and heavy reliance on federal dollars put these services at risk.

“Better state funding would create stability for an important human service,” said Patton. “Advocates have called for a relatively small investment of \$11.5 million to \$18.4 million to support adequate staffing to better protect elderly Ohioans.”

Read “Protecting Older Ohioans” at www.policymattersohio.org/aps-jun2013.

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute
with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*

Key findings

- Reports to adult protective services rose by almost 60% over the last two decades, but state funding fell by more than 80%.
- Elderly abuse is a silent epidemic: by one estimate, fewer than 1 in 8 Ohio cases are reported.
- The federal sequester cuts the main source of funding to counties for adult protective services by \$2.1 million this year, with 9 years of cuts to come.
- State funding of between \$11.5 and \$18.4 million annually is needed for staffing alone.