

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE OHIO HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Presented by

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Clermont Senior Services, Inc.
Exclusive Contract Agency with
Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services
For Adult Protective Services Investigations and Follow-Up

Background and Relevance

Clermont Senior Services, a 501(c)(3) agency, has the exclusive contract with the Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services to conduct the investigations on all referrals made through Adult Protective Services, as well as conducting guardianship investigations under contract with Clermont County Probate Court.

As the administrator and provider of services for all senior levy funds under contract with the Clermont County Commissioners, Clermont Senior Services is the gateway for persons 60 years of age and older in Clermont County. For more than 45 years, this agency has provided a broad range of community-based services (medical transportation, home care, home-delivered meals, adult day services, home repair and modification), thus enabling older adults to continue to live safely in their own homes for as long as possible.

Clermont County was the first county to pass a levy to support services for seniors in the State of Ohio in 1982, and the taxpayers have continued to entrust Clermont Senior Services and support a levy since that time.

The Miami University Scripps Gerontology Center projects that the 60+ population in Clermont County will grow by 120% between 2010 and 2020. By 2020, 30.5% of the total population in Clermont County will be persons age 60 and over.

TESTIMONY

Good morning Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and honorable members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. I am Cynthia Gramke, the Executive Director/CEO of Clermont Senior Services, a private, non-profit organization having the exclusive contract with the Clermont County DJFS to conduct the investigations and follow-up for Adult Protective Services cases. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak, specifically, to Adult Protective Services and the issues and funding challenges that exist as we work hard to protect the most vulnerable older adults, who have been victimized through abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Like so many other areas of the state, the senior population is exploding in Clermont County. Today, the 60+ population is 43,000, but is ever-rising and projected to be 51,000 by 2020. This increase in population, is in direct correlation with the rise in referrals, as well as the rise in opiate addiction in our community.

In Clermont County, there were 124 Adult Protective Services referrals of abuse, neglect and/or financial exploitation in 2008. This number has exploded in recent years, reaching a high of 264. Moreover, these cases, albeit growing dramatically in number, are far more complex and the situations much worse than ever before.

The following is an actual case (names changed). Actual testimony will not be word-for-word.

In September of 2016 APS received 6 referrals in a few days time regarding concerns over client for allegations of neglect and self neglect from subject's wife, Joan, daughter-in-law, hospital, case manager from Council of Aging, and a police officer. Multiple reports, each spanning several days, occurred over a two month period

John is 77 years old, has dementia, diabetes, is incontinent and has made 3 past suicide attempts. Two of the reports were from Joan who stated her son had taken John to live with him, and she wasn't allowed to visit or call him. Two of the referrals came from daughter-in-law who stated her husband was trying to get guardianship of his father because of his dementia. After an Expert Evaluation, "John" was found to be incompetent. Joan came to their home and demanded they let him come home with her. They let him go because he said he wanted to. Shortly thereafter, Joan came back and dropped him off, saying she couldn't take care of him. Son refused to keep his father so Police and the Clermont Mobile Crisis Unit were called.

Referral made again for allegation of neglect as Joan, once again, dropped John at son's house. Son/daughter-in-law refused to take John because of Joan's behavior. Son said he was dropping guardianship for same reason. APS contacted Assistant Prosecuting Attorney's Office requesting a court-appointed guardian since John was unsafe at home.

Joan agreed John needed nursing home placement. They start the process with a local NH. When the financial review began, NH declines because of large money withdrawals from the bank and ATM's which are unaccounted for, because they knew it would be red flagged by Medicaid. Ultimately, five nursing homes refused Robert due to financial discrepancies.

With that, APS investigated and learned that Joan was withdrawing money from their account for "off shore gambling" in Asian countries. Websites are disguised as shopping sites and Judy was withdrawing money from bank & ATM's, borrowing money from 5 different Check N' Go's and depositing them in the bank so she could continue gambling. As a result, bank account was overdrawn, and John and Joan were NOW in danger of being evicted.

While all of this is happening, the client is still at home. Joan calls APS, sometimes up to 7 times a day, as she cannot take care of John. Police are telling her NOT to call them because she is making multiple calls daily to come out and do things like help put Bob back in bed because she can't lift his legs off the floor.

Then, Joan threatens to hurt John, physically, if something isn't done. APS calls police, they respond, and she says she is joking.

So, back at John and Joan's home, while waiting for court-appointed guardian to be named – John set the couch on fire from falling asleep while smoking. Then, John fell and was readmitted to the hospital. Hospital called APS and asks where to send John because Joan and his son do not want him home with them.

APS urged hospital to keep him there while they look for placement for client. Finally, a Court Guardian was appointed. A Do Not Remove Order had to be placed by court so Joan could not remove him from the hospital because she realized that she didn't have access to John's SS and

Pension funds. John stayed in the hospital, under observation, for approx. 45 days until a group home was found that would accept his SS and Pension as payment. Today, John is safe in the group home.

While there are many mandates that protect the lives of other vulnerable populations, Adult Protective Services is the only mandated service for older adults in the State of Ohio.

We are grateful and thank you for the last biennial budget modification, increasing the previous allocation from \$7,000 to \$30,000 per county.

The actual direct cost to handle these very complex and ever-growing number of cases, escalated to \$195,680.71 in 2016, not including administrative time. The current case load demands one full-time chief investigator, going from one part-time to another full-time investigator in this last year, two back-up investigators and a portion of the supervisor's time.

Clermont County is fortunate to have been the first county to pass a levy to support services for seniors in the State of Ohio, and that community trust continues today, but we are forced to pull levy dollars away from other vital services like specialized medical transportation, home care, adult day services, meals-on-wheels and home repair because the dollars must be carved out to operate Adult Protective Services.

In cases of financial exploitation, we must work to save seniors from falling prey to the unlawful, deceitful, and criminal act of family, friends and strangers draining them of all of a lifetime of savings and frugal living, often thrusting them into bankruptcy and foreclosure. They are left with no choice but to become dependent upon Medicaid and other public assistance programs for the remainder of their lives. Then, the taxpayer ultimately suffers, as well.

For the state, there must be a regard for those who are too old, too weak, too afraid and who cannot protect themselves. We have a basic societal responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you demonstrate your regard for the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable of seniors through an increase in the annual appropriation for Adult Protective Services from \$30,000 to \$65,000 to help support the front line efforts in the counties where this most important work is being performed.