

Adult Protection Coordinating Council

January 18, 2013



In 2006 the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1116 that created the Vulnerable Adults Investigations Unit within the State Law Enforcement Division. The legislation was a result of a study done by the Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities which is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting people with disabilities.

At that time, state agencies that had responsibilities to provide care to disabled adults were investigating themselves when complaints or charges of abuse by their employees were made by the abused adults or their family members. What Senate Bill 1116 did was prohibit self investigations and to create a special victims unit within SLED dedicated to the investigation of complaints and charges of staff abuse of agency clients and any deaths that occur within state run or contracted facilities. Additionally, the bill also required local law enforcement to investigate similar activities in other facilities not operated or contracted by or with the state. These would include nursing and retirement homes in the private sector.

Each quarter, SLED makes a report to the Adult Protection Coordinating Council regarding the number of cases they deal with and the number that are passed on to local law enforcement. For instance, at the August 2012 meeting of the Council, SLED reported that a total of 435 cases were investigated in 2011. This included 226 cases reported by the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, 163 cases by the Department of Mental Health, and 43 cases reported by private facilities. Of the total of 435 cases, 3 were cases of exploitation, 132 were fatalities, 9 were for financial exploitation, 13 for neglect, 62 for physical abuse, 33 for psychological abuse 10 for sexual abuse, 71 for standard of care, and 102 for 'other' charges or complaints.

When criminal conduct is discovered, the evidence is turned over to the local solicitor or the Attorney General's office for prosecution. It's difficult to determine how many individuals have been prosecuted since Senate Bill 1116 was passed because no central agency compiles these numbers, but it can be said that the number of prosecutions have definitely increased.

The South Carolina Sheriffs' Association was a member of the working committee at the State house that helped draft the final bill that passed. It's something we are extremely proud of and we continue to work on behalf of our vulnerable adults through our participation on the Adult Protection Coordinating Council.