

Photographing Evidence

When to take photographs:

APS workers are encouraged to take photographs of their clients' injuries and adverse health conditions (e.g. severe weight loss due to malnourishment), or environmental conditions whenever:

- Photographs will help document the client's lack of ability to provide self care for a probate guardianship case.
- A photograph can more accurately depict the client's injury or situation than can be stated in a brief narrative.
- Requested to do so by law enforcement.
- There has been a violation that can be documented photographically.
- APS workers may also take baseline photographs, with the client's permission.

Always take an identifying shot:

Always take at least one photograph showing the whole person, the front of the home or an overview of the scene.

Rationale: Without an identifying shot, it is often difficult to determine who was injured and exactly what part of the body was injured. It is also important to show that the interior shots are of the client's home and not another residence.

Use the rule of thirds:

Using the identifying shot, move in by thirds to show the details of the injury or of an environmental condition (e.g. rat droppings, spoiled food, etc). [This allows clarity in understanding what one is looking at with the more close-up picture.]

Use a scale in photographs:

It is helpful to position an ordinary object of known size (e.g. a ruler, a coin or a pen) next to the object or injury being photograph to demonstrate the size of the item being photographed.

Photograph the injuring object:

If the object that is believed to have caused the injury is identified, it is helpful to photograph the object next to the injury. For example, photographing a 1 inch wide leather belt next to a one inch wide bruise may help to demonstrate that the belt was the cause of the injury. (Please note that in some cases the size of the injuring object will **not** match due to swelling, movement of the victim when struck or other factors.)

Take sharp pictures:

The following guidelines will help you produce sharp, detailed pictures:

1. Avoid backlighting the person or object as the resulting photograph will be a silhouette without any detail.
2. Use side lighting only if you need to show the texture or depth of a wound.

3. Almost all documentary photographs should be lit from the front if at all possible. However, it is advisable to take photographs in varying light levels.
4. Steady your camera against a table, the roof of a non-running car, etc. and squeeze the shutter slowly so as not to jerk the camera.
5. Make sure that your lens is clean, your batteries are charged and the camera has available memory.
6. Shoot most of your photographs from eye level as this makes it easier to judge the perspective of objects in the picture.

Downloading photographs:

Photographs are to be (1) downloaded to the worker's computer or a CD and (2) labeled as soon as is practical after being taken.

All photographs, electronic files, CD's or floppy discs must be labeled with, at a minimum, the client's name and the date the photographs were taken. In addition, it is desirable to include the name of the person taking the photographs and a description of what was photographed (e.g. the bruise on Mrs. M's left knee).

Only one client's photographs may be stored in any single electronic file.

All photographs should be stored in at least 2 places (e.g. CD and on paper, CD and in an electronic file on the worker's computer).

Maintain the original photograph:

In some cases, photographs may need to be enhanced in order to clearly see some details. Enhancements include changes in lightness/darkness, sharpening the focus, cropping the photograph, etc.

Do not enhance the "original" photograph. Make a copy and then make any necessary enhancements. The changed photograph needs to be labeled as having been enhanced with notations of what changes were made. The notation should reference the original photograph and both photographs (the original and the enhanced version) should be kept in the same electronic file.

Release of photographs:

Photographs are part of the APS case documentation and their release is regulated by the same policies as any other part of the case record.