

Arizona Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

Annual Report



2021



The Governor's Office
of Youth, Faith
and Family



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

goyff.AZ.gov/GACA



STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

DOUGLAS A. DUCEY
GOVERNOR

MARIA CRISTINA FUENTES
DIRECTOR

December 31, 2021

Governor Douglas A. Ducey
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Ducey,

It is my pleasure to serve as chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging. I would like to acknowledge the ongoing service of the Council's members and our associated liaisons. Their efforts to address serious health, safety, and welfare issues facing Arizona's growing, diverse, and often vulnerable older adult population, have made this work possible. We are proud to actively engage with this population to ensure the Governor's office, the state legislature, and other state departments are aware of critical aging-related matters statewide.

Over the last year, the Council heard from issue area experts on efforts taking place across the state to support Arizona's aging population, including: COVID-19 mitigation strategies, fall prevention, Alzheimer's Disease, financial exploitation scams, and support services for veterans. Additionally, the Aging in Community Workgroup was instrumental in identifying recommendations for the 2022-2026 Arizona State Plan on Aging.

Aging is a dynamic process that requires diverse champions and educated advocates. We know Arizona's older adults appreciate your dedication, and we are honored to provide up-to-date information on aging issues and research, and participate in collaborative initiatives between public and private organizations to ensure we continue serving and supporting Arizona's aging population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. O'Neill".

Dr. Lisa M. O'Neill, Chair
Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

Cc: Speaker Russell Bowers
Senate President Karen Fann

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COUNCIL PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

The Governor's Advisory Council on Aging (GACA) was formed under state statute to advise the governor, legislature, and all state departments the Council deems necessary, on all matters and issues relating to aging. This Council is administered by the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family with a mission to enhance the quality of life for older Arizonans. GACA fulfills its purpose and accomplishes its mission by working with policymakers, state agencies, local communities, non-profit organizations, private enterprises, and older adults across Arizona.

As part of its role, GACA gathers and assesses information on the needs of seniors and aging trends by monitoring and raising awareness about programs and policies that affect older adults. GACA has been instrumental in providing training and awareness programs concerning vital aging issues. In addition to six council meetings a year, GACA created the Aging in Community workgroup to further facilitate the mission outlined in the body's governing Arizona Revised Statutes ([A.R.S. § 46-182](#), [A.R.S. § 46-183](#), & [A.R.S § 46-184](#)).

2021 OBJECTIVES

Over the past year, in partnership with community leaders, organizations, and state agency partners, the Council has furthered its mission to support Arizona's aging population through the review of current information on aging issues and research, and participation in collaborative initiatives between public and private organizations.

2021 Council objectives include:

- Monitor the Arizona State Plan on Aging.
- Support efforts led by liaison agencies/departments to educate and inform older Arizonans of programs, resources, and information related to older adults and aging issues.
- Collect new data on Alzheimer's Disease and related disorders, and prepare new or revised recommendations based on this information.
- Support efforts to educate the public on available services and technology for the hard of hearing and advocate for enhanced services for the hard of hearing.
- Advocate for care recipient/caregiver support and education.
- Advocate for, and support, long-term home and community-based services as a cost-effective way to keep older Arizonans aging in place.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with legislation ([A.R.S. § 46-182](#), [A.R.S. § 46-183](#), & [A.R.S § 46-184](#)), the Council is composed of individuals appointed by the Governor who serve at his pleasure without compensation. The following members currently serve on GACA:

Lisa O'Neill, Chair

The University of Arizona Center on Aging

Jaime Aguilar

Southeastern Arizona Governments Area
Agency on Aging

Belinda Akes

Pinal/Gila Senior Citizen Council

Lela Alston

Arizona Senate

Carol Brown

Western Arizona Council of Governments

Tim Dunn

Arizona House of Representatives

Brenda Holt

AARP

Bert Ijams

Meals on Wheels Prescott

Bonita Imus

Educator

Teresa Manygoats

Arizona Department of Health Services

Barbara Marshall

Maricopa County Attorney's Office

Virginia Rountree

Arizona Department of Economic Security

Shelli Silver

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment
System

Terri Spitz

Alzheimer's Association- Desert Southwest

Steve Wagner

RightCare Foundation, Inc.

COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES

Community & Legislative Partners in Aging

The Community & Legislative Partners in Aging (CLPA) is a collaboration between [AARP](#), the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging (GACA), and the [Arizona State Legislature](#), designed to spotlight topics that are time-sensitive and important to the health and safety of Arizona's aging community. CLPA is co-chaired by several members of the Arizona Legislature: Senator Lela Alston, Senator Tyler Pace, Representative Jennifer Jermaine, and Representative Regina Cobb.

In 2021, presentations were provided by community partners, including: Dana Kennedy, AARP; Dave Voepel, [Arizona Healthcare Association](#); Kyle Sawyer, [Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System](#); Christina Corieri, [Governor Ducey's Senior Policy Advisor](#) and Chair of the [Governor's Long Term Care Task Force](#); Maddy Byner, [Arizona Area Agencies on Aging](#); Dr. Cecilia B. Rosales, an Associate Dean Community Engagement & Phoenix Programs at [Arizona State University](#) and Will Humble, the Director of the [Arizona Public Health Association](#) with Dr. Joe Gerald, [University of Arizona](#) Associate Professor & Program Director, Public Health Policy & Management.

Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging

AZ4A is the Arizona Association of [Area Agencies on Aging \(AAA\)](#), a statewide network of seven regional agencies that offer a variety of programs and services to enhance the quality of life for individuals in their respective regions. These agencies advocate, plan, coordinate, develop and deliver services for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and their families and caregivers. Established in 1973 as a result of the [Older Americans Act](#), AAA organizations respond to the needs of Americans age 60 and older, adults living with disabilities, and caregivers with the mission of leading Arizona in aging successfully through innovative resources, collaborations, and advocacy. AZ4A provides updates at each GACA meeting to support ongoing dialogue between the seven regions and GACA members.

AZ4A worked with the [Arizona Department of Economic Security](#), the [Arizona Department of Health Services](#), and the [Arizona Governor's Office](#) to have AAA workers classified as Group 1A for vaccine prioritization. This allowed all AAA workers and their contractors to receive the vaccine alongside Arizona's health care workforce to avoid spreading the virus to highly vulnerable communities.

During the 2021 legislative session, under the [General Appropriations Act](#), \$3.5 million was appropriated to the AAA for home and community-based services, and the long-term care ombudsman program. Additionally, \$1.5 million was appropriated in one-time funding for home and community-based services. At the federal level, several stimulus packages brought an additional \$50 million to Arizona for AZ4A to support programs and services throughout the network.

COUNCIL MEETING PRESENTATIONS

In 2021, the Council received presentations from issue-area experts on services and support provided by state agency partners, liaisons, and community partners. These presentations included:

Arizona Alzheimer's Consortium

Dr. David Coon, Arizona State University

October 2021

The [Arizona Alzheimer's Consortium \(AAC\)](#) is widely recognized as one of the nation's most prominent multi-institutional research collaborations in biomedical research. The AAC partners with numerous Arizona agencies to increase support for underserved populations across our state, particularly Hispanic/Latino and Tribal communities. The AAC brings together more than 250 researchers and additional associate member institutions to further its research and findings. AAC partners include: [Arizona State University](#), [Barrow Neurological Institute](#), [Mayo Clinic Arizona](#), [Banner Sun Health Research Institute](#), [Translational Genomics Research Institute \(TGen\)](#), [The University of Arizona](#), [Banner Alzheimer's Institute](#), [Midwestern University](#), the [Critical Path Institute](#), [Northern Arizona University](#), [Banner Alzheimer's Institute-Tucson](#), and the [University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix](#).

One of the primary focuses of the AAC is the examination of blood-based biomarkers to identify their role in informing preclinical Alzheimer's Disease and to further support treatment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AAC and its partners began to characterize the cognitive biomarker, neuropathy, and other long-term effects of COVID-19. The AAC has also been instrumental in advancing the [Alzheimer's Prevention Registry](#) and [Mindcrowd](#) - platforms that connect individuals with web-based screening tools to conduct outreach and increase participation to advance research around Alzheimer's Disease and other brain disorders.

Arizona Alzheimer's State Plan

James Fitzpatrick, Alzheimer's Association - Desert Southwest Chapter

August 2021

The [Arizona Alzheimer's Task Force](#) was established in 2011 as a collaborative of the Governor's Office on Aging, the [Arizona Department of Economic Security Division of Aging and Adult Services](#), the [Arizona Alzheimer's Consortium](#), and the [Alzheimer's Association - Desert Southwest Chapter](#). The Task Force brings together a wide range of stakeholders, both public and private, to develop a plan to address the growing number of Arizonans with Alzheimer's Disease. In 2015, the Task Force published the [Arizona Alzheimer's State Plan: A Framework for Action](#), which was developed based on input from more than 100 organizations and stakeholders across Arizona.

The Alzheimer's State Plan includes five main goals:

- Maximize public awareness and understanding of Alzheimer's Disease
- Develop new and enhanced supports for Alzheimer's patients and their families
- Expand a dementia-capable workforce in Arizona
- Advance and disseminate research

- Create a dementia-capable system in our state

Arizona Poison and Drug Information Update

Laura Morehouse, Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center

October 2021

The [Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center \(AzPDIC\)](#) works to keep Arizonans healthy and safe, providing the expert medical knowledge needed when individuals have a poison emergency. All poison control centers around the nation are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free and confidential, and callers are connected with medical experts who can provide support in over 150 languages.

AzPDIC receives roughly 30,000 calls per year. Around 60% of these calls include poisoning cases and 40% include informational requests. Approximately 70% of AzPDIC Poison Control Center cases are managed at home instead of in an emergency room. This saves Arizonans approximately \$26 million a year in unnecessary medical expenditures. AzPDIC receives over 2,200 calls annually from individuals ages 65 and older. These calls predominantly involve drug safety counseling, exposure management, and cannabis safety. AzPDIC offers drug-to-drug interaction information for cannabis, prescription, and over-the-counter medications as adverse drug reactions are responsible for 3-10% of all hospitalizations among older patients each year.

Arizona State Plan on Aging

Cindy Saverino, Arizona Department of Economic Security

April 2021

Every four years, the [Older Americans Act \(OAA\)](#) requires [State Units on Aging \(SUA\)](#) to submit a State Plan to the [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#), under the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#). Under the OAA, states are provided with federal funding to support community planning and social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging.

The State of Arizona receives federal funds matched with state and local funds to administer the State Plan, and subsequently distribute the funding to programs serving individuals age 60 years and older. Over 1.5 million adults ages 60 and older reside in Arizona, many of whom are supported by informal caregivers such as family, friends and neighbors providing daily or intermittent care for these adults and persons living with disabilities. Each individual encounters unique challenges, limitations and resource constraints. Their one resounding goal is to live with dignity, in safety and as independently as possible. Arizona is committed to ensuring that aging Arizonans find programs and services to fulfill this common goal. Arizona continues to plan for the future of our growing aging population by collaborating with state agencies to create a State Plan that outlines OAA requirements and the goals, objectives and programming across state agencies with a mission to serve older adults in a single comprehensive plan.

The [2019 -2022 Arizona State Plan on Aging](#), administered through the [Arizona Department of Economic Security's Division of Adult and Aging Services](#), includes five goals:

- Streamline access for all eligible adult Arizonans to the integrated array of quality care available by all state aging services, and promote resources for individuals that are physically and sensory challenged
- Increase awareness and understanding of aging issues and help prepare Arizona for an aging population
- Increase the ability of adult Arizonans to maintain their individual well-being and safety, in order to remain active, healthy, and living in their communities
- Strengthen Arizona's economy by fostering an integrated and well-trained informal, paraprofessional and professional workforce
- Enhance the state's capacity to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure to deliver services in a culturally appropriate, timely, and cost-effective manner

The next Arizona State Plan on Aging will take effect in the spring of 2022.

COVID-19 Immunizations Update: Arizona Department of Health Services

Meagan Surgenor, Arizona Department of Health Services

February 2021

In early 2021, Arizona announced a new hybrid approach to vaccine prioritization that provided Arizonans 55 and older eligibility, along with frontline essential workers, priority in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The new hybrid approach ensured the distribution of vaccine doses to individuals at high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, including hospitalization and death, due to age while allowing local health departments to prioritize frontline essential workers through employer-based vaccination strategies.

As of February 2021, nearly 1 million vaccinations had been administered throughout the state at over 400 vaccination sites, including county health departments, hospitals, federally qualified health centers, pharmacies, and other community-based organizations. In February 2021, President Joe Biden recognized Arizona's State Farm Stadium Point of Dispensing (POD) site as a model for the nation. The State Farm Stadium POD operated 24/7 as a drive-thru vaccination site and its streamlined processes allowed for 6,000 to 12,000 vaccinations per day.

Arizona's long-term care facilities continued to be a vaccination priority throughout the pandemic. Under the [Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program for COVID-19 Vaccination](#), established by the CDC in partnership with Walgreens and CVS, over 76% of Arizonans in long-term care facilities had received vaccinations as of February 2021. Additionally, over 89% of Arizonans 65 years and older received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and over 59% of Arizonans had received at least one dose of the vaccine as of February 2021.

COVID-19 Update: Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona

Lurai Atcitty and Roxanne Thomas, Area Agency on Aging - Region 8

June 2021

Arizona's [Area Agencies on Aging \(AAA\)](#) are designated by the state to address the needs and concerns of older persons at the local level. AAA's bring nonprofit and public organizations together to plan and coordinate services, advocate for older adults, and offer information on

programs, options, and community support to meet individual needs. Many of these programs are offered in partnership with the Arizona Department of Economic Security and are funded through the Older Americans Act. Arizona has eight regional AAA's that provide services and support for older adults statewide.

The [Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona \(ITCA\) - AAA, Region 8](#) supports 21 tribal communities in 13 Arizona counties. Programs and services provided through this AAA include technical assistance and training, coordinating [Title III, VI, and VII programs](#), advocacy, and resource development. The Region 8 AAA also supports two Tribal Assisted Living Facilities with a bed space capacity of 28 and four Skilled Living Facilities with a bed space capacity of 239.

Tribal communities faced many challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While several tribes excelled at executing their emergency plans, others struggled to obtain necessities for survival. Some of these challenges included: access to resources, communication, housing/weatherization, transportation, training, education and outreach, meal programs, personal protective equipment (PPE)/supplies/vaccines, and elder abuse/fraud. Throughout the pandemic, a number of tribal communities partnered with [Indian Health Services](#) to develop mobile vaccination units in order to provide vaccinations to homebound elders.

Fall Prevention Update

Dr. Michael “Shayne” Gallaway and Melissa Luxton, Arizona Falls Prevention Coalition August 2021

The [Arizona Falls Prevention Coalition \(AFPC\)](#) promotes evidence-based fall-prevention approaches to help older adults in Arizona improve their flexibility and balance, reduce their fear of falling, and decrease the likelihood of a fall. By increasing awareness of the seriousness of a fall, and providing education and technical assistance in coordination with existing prevention efforts, AFPC increases opportunities for older adults to enhance their quality of life.

AFPC continues to expand outreach to older adults throughout Arizona by holding professional and public symposiums and engaging partners across multiple sectors. In 2021, AFPC launched a public service announcement campaign around [Falls Awareness Prevention Day](#).

This year, Arizona enacted [A.R.S. 36-420](#), requiring senior care facilities to provide CPR and first aid to individuals who have fallen until emergency medical services arrive on the scene. The statute also requires health care institutions to develop and administer a training program for all staff regarding fall prevention and fall recovery.

Law Enforcement Response to Senior Scams

Detective Kellie McGhee, Phoenix Police Department June 2021

Arizona law enforcement agencies continue to educate community members statewide about the different ways criminal networks target older adults to illegally acquire their money. Throughout the pandemic, the rate of telemarketing and online scams nationwide increased. Criminal networks operate across multiple jurisdictions, making it difficult for law enforcement to

locate perpetrators. Telemarketers continue to target older Americans, using phone applications to disguise phone numbers. These scammers often gain access to money by offering investment opportunities that will yield a high rate of return. Arizonans are encouraged to check the list of current scam and consumer alert resources on the [Arizona Attorney General's website](#).

Veterans Compensation and Pension Benefits

Rob Thompson, Arizona Department of Veterans Services

February 2021

[Veteran Benefits Counselors \(VBCs\)](#) within the [Arizona Department of Veterans Services \(ADVS\)](#) are accredited by the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#), and serve as advocates for Arizona service members, veterans, and their families seeking to receive federal and state veteran benefits. VBCs assist claimants with a variety of services including education regarding eligibility requirements for benefits, processing VA compensation, pension applications, appealing VA decisions, representing claimants at VA hearings, filing for survivor's benefits, applying for discharge upgrades, referring claimants to other agencies for potential benefits, requesting military service records, certifying DD-214s (discharge paperwork), and explaining State Veteran Benefits.

The VA provides both service-connected compensation and non-service-connected pensions. The service-connected compensation takes the form of a tax-free monthly monetary benefit paid to veterans who are determined by the VA to be disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during military service. To be eligible for this compensation, the discharge must be under conditions other than dishonorable. The non-service connected pension takes the form of a tax-free monthly monetary benefit paid to wartime Veterans who meet certain age or disability requirements and have income and net worth within certain limits. Veteran stakeholders and their families are encouraged to take advantage of these resources as VCBs have the expertise to file benefits claims error-free.

Walk to End Alzheimer's

Sarah Boerner, Alzheimer's Association - Desert Southwest Chapter

October 2021

The [Walk to End Alzheimer's](#) is the [Alzheimer's Association's](#) signature event to help raise awareness and hope for breakthroughs in Alzheimer's research and other dementias. In 2021, over 600 communities nationwide held events - six of which occurred in Arizona. While there is no fee to register for the Walk to End Alzheimer's, all participants are encouraged to raise critical funds that allow the Alzheimer's Association to provide 24/7 care and support and advance research toward methods of prevention, treatment and, ultimately, a cure. This year, in-person walks were resumed, with the additional option to participate by walking from home. The Alzheimer's Association closely followed guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) to support the safety of in-person participants. All local events implemented safety protocols including physical distancing, contactless registration, hand sanitizing stations and more. Around 50% of this year's participants attended in-person walks. For more information on Alzheimer's events taking place across Arizona, visit www.alz.org/dsw.

A complete summary of Council presentations can be found at goyff.az.gov/gaca.

AGING IN COMMUNITY WORKGROUP

Under [ARS 46-183](#), Arizona was one of the first states in the nation to establish a workgroup focused on Alzheimer's Disease and related disorders. The Council's Aging in Community (AIC) Workgroup partners with a variety of public and private sector organizations to identify and respond to the needs of Arizona residents struggling with Alzheimer's Disease.

In 2021, GACA Chair Lisa O'Neill announced Carol Brown and Brenda Holt as the new co-chairs of AIC. Carol serves as the Program Development & Advocacy Manager for the Western Arizona Council of Governments, Area Agency on Aging. Brenda serves as the Associate State Director, Community Outreach & Advocacy at the AARP Arizona State Office.

The workgroup continues to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease, provide education surrounding fall prevention, and support prevention efforts around elder abuse. The workgroup was instrumental in identifying recommendations for the 2022-2026 Arizona State Plan on Aging. Recommendations were shared with GACA members and the complete State Plan will be shared with workgroup members for approval once it is completed.