

Arizona Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

Annual Report



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
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 31, 2022

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. Additionally, the Aging in Community (AIC) Workgroup members have actively worked to fulfill 2022 objectives that have aided in bringing training on aging-related issues (such as Alzheimer's and dementia) throughout the state, including Arizona's federally recognized Tribal communities. The Council also supported numerous Walk to End Alzheimer's events, helping increase awareness and funding for research around Alzheimer's disease.

Aging is a dynamic process that requires diverse champions and educated advocates. We know Arizona's older adults appreciate your dedication in this arena, and we are honored to provide up-to-date information on aging issues through research, as well as 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 that reads "Terri Spitz".

Terri Spitz
Chair
Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

Cc: Speaker Russell Bowers
Senate President Karen Fann

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| COUNCIL PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE | 1 |
| 2022 OBJECTIVES | 1 |
| COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP | 2 |
| COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES | 3 |
| AGING IN COMMUNITY WORKGROUP | 9 |

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 on all matters and issues relating to aging. Administered by the Governor's [Office of Youth, Faith and Family \(GOYFF\)](#) with a mission to enhance the quality of life for older Arizonans, GACA fulfills its purpose 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 (AIC) 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](#), and [A.R.S § 46-184](#)).

2022 OBJECTIVES

In partnership with community leaders, organizations, and state agency partners, the Council has furthered its mission over the last year 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.

2022 Council objectives include:

- Monitor the current Arizona State Plan on Aging and make recommendations to the 2023-2026 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](#), and [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:

Terri Spitz, Chair
Alzheimer's Association-Desert Southwest

Carol Brown, Vice-Chair
Western Arizona Council of Governments

Jaime Aguilar
Southeastern Arizona Governments AAA

Belinda Akes
Pinal/Gila Senior Citizen Council

Lela Alston
Arizona Senate

Tim Dunn
Arizona House of Representatives

Brenda Holt
AARP

Bert Ijams
Meals on Wheels Prescott

Bonita Imus
Educator

Barbara Marshall
Maricopa County Attorney's Office

Teresa Manygoats
Arizona Department of Health Services

Lisa O'Neill
The University of Arizona Center on Aging

Virginia Rountree
Arizona Department of Economic Security

Shelli Silver
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment

Steve Wagner
RightCare Foundation

COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES

Community & Legislative Partners in Aging

The Community & Legislative Partners in Aging (CLPA) is a collaboration between [AARP](#), the [Arizona State Legislature](#), and GACA, designed to spotlight topics that are time-sensitive, and important to the health and safety of Arizona's aging community.

In 2022, presentations were provided by community partners, including: Dave Voepel, [Arizona Healthcare Association](#); Kyle Sawyer, [Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System \(AHCCCS\)](#); Christina Corieri, Governor Doug Ducey's Senior Policy Advisor and Chair of the [Task Force on Long Term Care](#); Maddy Bynes, [Arizona Area Agencies on Aging](#); Dr. Cecilia B. Rosales, an Associate Dean Community Engagement & Phoenix Programs at [Arizona State University](#); 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; Molly McCarthy, [Division of Aging and Adult Services](#); Katie Skvarce, [Alzheimer's Association](#); Dana Kennedy, [AARP](#); Dana Lewis, [Pinal County Recorder's Office](#); Morgen Hartford, [Alzheimer's Association](#); Sonya Colattur, [GrandPaws Pantry](#).

Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging

The [Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging \(AAA\)](#) is a statewide network of seven regional agencies that advocate, plan, coordinate, develop and deliver services for seniors, adults aged 18+ with HIV/AIDS, individuals with disabilities, and their families and caregivers within their respective regions. In 2022, AAA rebranded to AZ4A and is expected to launch its new website and logo in 2023.

Established in 1973 as a result of the [Older Americans Act](#), AZ4A 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. In 2022, AZ4A was instrumental in accomplishing legislative changes, including:

- [The Elderly Assistance Fund](#) helps bring monetary resources to elderly assistance programs across the state to reduce primary school district taxes.
- [H.B. 2528](#) and [S.B. 1536](#) prioritize funding for home and community-based services for older adults. \$1.5 million was allocated to be distributed through the [Arizona Department of Economic Security \(DES\)](#) to fulfill these needs.
- [H.B. 2477](#) provides assistance to older adults with back taxes owed on their homes.

Arizona Department of Veterans Services

The [Arizona Department of Veterans Services \(AZDVS\)](#) works with state and federal partners to support veterans with housing, employment, and general services. In 2022, they focused

their efforts on increasing veterans' housing and homeless services for the approximately 1,000 homeless veterans across the state. This led to the opening of the [Yuma Home](#), an 80-bed, Medicare-certified, skilled-nursing care facility for eligible Arizona veterans that houses a Veterans Benefits Counselor onsite to assist veteran residents in obtaining their benefits/pension.

Shortly after opening, Yuma Home launched a pilot program for aging veterans with high-acuity needs. The program walks veterans through the process of being placed into a Skilled Nursing and/or Assisted Living Facility, and while waiting to be placed in a long-term care facility, the program covers the short-term living costs of the veteran. Leading them through the process from the beginning of their coordinated entry into the housing and homelessness system aids in assessing the barriers they may face. This simultaneously brings data on the barriers to entry into systems of care for veterans, and what resources state agencies can provide to support them in moving out of the homelessness system.

Arizona Department of Economic Security

Adult Protective Services: Dementia Education Training

The AIC Workgroup supports an annual 1-hour training held in four different parts of Arizona utilizing the Alzheimer's Association's curriculum for Dementia Education Training for APS Investigators or First Responders. In 2022, APS made the training mandatory for all APS employees to complete.

United States Administration for Community Living

The [United States \(U.S.\) Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#) released its fiscal year (FY) 2021 [National Adult Maltreatment Report](#), the only comprehensive national reporting system for state APS programs. The report includes a special chapter focused on the impact of COVID-19 which led to the APS Investigator Academy launching a new training for internal staff or APS Investigators. The new curriculum includes content from the Alzheimer's Association and is an eight-week intensive training with over 275 hours of content to prepare investigators for fieldwork. Previous APS Investigators only had approximately one or two weeks of training.

COUNCIL MEETING PRESENTATIONS

In 2022, the Council received presentations from issue-area experts on services and support provided by state agency partners, liaisons, and community partners. These presentations included:

Sustainable Services During COVID-19

Megan Word, Foundation for Senior Living

February 2022

[Foundation for Senior Living \(FSL\)](#) was founded to improve the quality of life for adults and their caregivers, growing over the years to create an integrated system of care that allows

adults to age in place through a continuum of home and community-based health services. FSL's four focus areas include: housing through affordable rental properties for those on fixed incomes; nutrition through the Meals on Wheels program, congregate meals and food pantries in Wickenburg and Peoria communities; health and wellness through 17 behavioral health homes, medicare certified home health, adult day facilities, and hospital to home programs; and caregiver support through respite programs and education in both English and Spanish. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, FSL utilized virtual platforms to continue engaging with seniors at home, as well as providing drive-through meal distributions to facilities.

CommunityCares and the Arizona Healthcare Directives Registry

Melissa Kotrys and Carla Sutter, Contexture and Health Current

February 2022

Health Current, a [Contexture](#) organization, is the Arizona health information exchange (HIE), providing a secure electronic platform that allows patient health information to be shared across different healthcare organizations, serving as the data trustee of medical records, medical and mental powers of attorney, and advanced directives. Health Current represents nearly 1,000 healthcare organizations in Arizona, with data on over 14 million individuals.

Health Current and Contexture launched two major initiatives in 2022: [CommunityCares](#) and the [Arizona Healthcare Directives Registry \(AzHDR\)](#). Partnering with [Arizona Health Care Cost Containment Services \(AHCCCS\)](#) and in collaboration with [2-1-1 Arizona](#), CommunityCares serves as the statewide referral system to address the social determinants of health (SDOH) needs in Arizona. The platform is designed to connect healthcare and community service providers to streamline the referral process, foster easier access to vital services and provide confirmation when social services are delivered. The passing of [S.B. 1352](#) in 2019 gave healthcare providers the ability to have real-time access to patients' end-of-life healthcare wishes, providing seamless access to advance directives and documents that outline a person's healthcare preferences. AzHDR was created to serve as a secure online platform that houses and makes available instantly the advance directive documents of Arizonans, ensuring end-of-life wishes are guided by the individual.

2023-2026 Arizona State Plan on Aging

Molly McCarthy, Arizona Department of Economic Services

April 2022

The [Arizona Department of Economic Services \(DES\), Division of Aging and Adult Services](#) coordinates with a variety of stakeholders to update the Arizona State Plan on Aging every four years to ensure goals and objectives continue to meet the changing needs of aging Arizonans. Additional insight gathered through community feedback platforms identified three consistent themes to the barriers older Arizonans face that aided in these recommendations: caregiver shortages, gaps in service coverage in the form of waitlists and funding constraints,

and rising costs of living versus the funding of programs.

Download the 2023-2026 State Plan on Aging [here](#).

2022 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Report

Katie Skvarce, Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter

April 2022

The [Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Report](#), an annual publication released by the Alzheimer's Association, reveals the challenge of Alzheimer's disease and dementia on individuals, caregivers, the government, and the nation's healthcare system. More than 6 million Americans live with Alzheimer's disease and over 11 million Americans provide unpaid care. Specific to Arizona, 150,000 individuals are living with Alzheimer's disease, with 257,000 caregivers providing support to those with the disease, estimating \$9.6 billion in unpaid care per year. Of these caregivers, 54% are diagnosed with chronic healthcare conditions themselves. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, dementia deaths have increased by 17%, with Arizona having the highest rates in the country. Additionally, it is estimated that there will be an increase of 33.3% of individuals aged 65 and older diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease from 2020 to 2025.

Intervention on Social Isolation

Alexandra Nelson and Anne L'Ecuyer, Arizona Commission on the Arts

June 2022

The [Arizona Commission on the Arts](#) works to create opportunities for all Arizonans to participate in and experience the arts. Through programs, research initiatives, and strategic grantmaking, the agency creates arts-based partnerships that strengthen Arizona communities by creating spaces and serving as a resource for artists and all Arizonans to get involved with.

ARTS+ Seniors serves Arizona's aging population by providing respite for healthcare workers, support for family caregivers, and creative aging programs for seniors. Creative aging is the umbrella term for the national movement of using creative expression tools for healthy aging outcomes. Based on research showing that creative aging programs have a positive impact on health outcomes, the agency created the [AZ Creative Aging Initiative](#). The initiative aims to strengthen skills in the arts of creative aging, implement creative aging programs, and overall, grow the creative aging field throughout the state. Additionally, this initiative educates creative practitioners on how to best serve the aging population, allowing for supportive partnerships between aging, creative, and healthcare providers.

Impact of Medication Costs

Brendon Blake, AARP Arizona

June 2022

Older Americans take an average of 4.5 medications per day. In 2022, the average Medicare

recipient paid \$4,972 in out-of-pocket expenses, with the average social security check being approximately \$1,550 a month. Americans pay the most for prescription drugs in the world, so much that researchers have deemed a term for it: American Premium. Drug manufacturing companies are able to pay their global research and development budget through medication purchases made by American consumers, and there are no laws preventing prescription companies from raising the price of prescription drugs without reason. Higher medication costs have several impacts on older Arizonans. Seniors are the fastest-growing subpopulation of the first-time homeless population due to not having an income they can grow and/or not having enough money to cover their medication and living expenses forcing them to choose.

Many organizations are working to reduce the rising costs of medications, one being AARP which launched [Stop Rx Greed](#), a nationwide campaign aimed at lowering prescription drug prices at both the federal and state levels. The solutions outlined in the campaign are cost-shifting measures meaning that an individual or insurance company will still pay the amount billed, causing the drug manufacturing companies to raise monthly premiums instead of the medication cost. By having transparency around Rx drug costs, they can be lowered over time.

2022 Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Report

Dana Kennedy, AARP Arizona

August 2022

The [2022 Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance \(OASDI\) Report](#) revealed certainty through 2037. Social Security is not supposed to cover everything, but instead be one of the three ways of maintaining financial security into older age; the other two being Savings and Pensions/401ks. The report outlines potential solutions that Congress can take to help secure Social Security solvency: raise the retirement age, begin longevity indexing, recalculate chained consumer price index (COLA), increase and/or eliminate the payroll tax, reduce benefits from higher earners while simultaneously improving benefits for lower earners, tax all salary reduction plans, cover all newly hired state and local government workers, increase the number of years used to calculate initial benefits, and begin means-testing Social Security benefits.

AZ4A AmeriCorps Program

Mary Beals-Luedtka and Melissa Elliott, Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging

August 2022

Some of the services provided by the [Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging \(AZ4A\)](#) include but are not limited to Case Management, Congregate Meals, Information and Referral, Benefits Counseling, Transportation, and other community-based services. [AmeriCorps](#) members were instrumental in implementing Region One's Operation HOPE, delivering over 8,000 boxes of food to the aging population. Additionally, and through funding

from a partnership between the City of Phoenix, AmeriCorps, AZ4A, and Goods2HOME, providing cleaning supply boxes to low-income aging community members.

Early Voting for the 2022 General Election

Dana Lewis, Pinal County Recorder's Office

October 2022

Arizonans must be registered to vote in their residing county 29 days before an election and they do not need a reason to participate in Early Voting in Arizona. There are many reasons why one would vote early, such as: avoiding the potential long lines at the polls, having the opportunity to vote if going out of town on Election Day, and/or having the ballot mailed to a temporary address so there is sufficient time to review all the various candidates, propositions, and referendums thoroughly in the comfort and privacy of the home. There are multiple early voting request processes that one has the option to proceed with if they are not already signed up for early ballot voting. If not yet signed up for the Active Early Voting List, one has the ability to reach out to either their early voting department or the Recorder's Office and request a one-time early ballot be sent 93 days before the election. There is also a system in Arizona called the 90-day request. If one is on the Active Early Voting List, there is the ability as an independent voter going into the primary election to request a partisan-style ballot, and determine the mailing status.

To request an early ballot one must reach out over the phone, over mail, or through the [online portal](#) no earlier than 93 days before an election and no later than 11 days before an election. Forms are also available at the County Recorder's Office for in-person requests. There is complete anonymity of a person's name throughout the entirety of the early ballot voting process. To learn more about one's voting status and registration, visit the [Service Arizona](#) website.

Walk to End Alzheimer's

Morgen Hartford, MSW, Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter

October 2022

In the last two decades, Alzheimer's deaths have increased by 145% in comparison to a 7.3% decrease in deaths from heart disease. Alzheimer's kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined, showing the seriousness of this growing issue and one that is affecting Arizona more than other states, making it the epicenter of this crisis. [The Alzheimer's Association](#) provides a number of services to families including support groups, education programs, and other activities that help individuals and caregivers navigate living with the disease. All of this would not be possible without donors and events like the [Walk to End Alzheimer's](#), their signature fundraising event held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide. The association has invested over \$167 million to more than 500 leading international research projects working toward methods of treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease. \$2.2 million of that funding has been invested in active research

projects in Arizona alone. Individuals can find a walk near them at alz.org/blog.

GrandPaws Pantry

Sonya Colatteur, Founder

December 2022

[GrandPaws Pantry](#) works to provide pet supplies, mental health education, and resources to older Arizonans who have companion pets and are living in assisted living facilities within Maricopa County. Through their Senior Companion Pet Care Program, GrandPaws Pantry is able to provide seniors with focused financial assistance for those living in Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCs)-approved facilities. Additionally, the program reduces the number of senior pet surrenders by covering the cost of the resources needed to take care of a companion animal.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted GrandPaws Pantry by limiting access to assisted living facilities, increasing the difficulties for senior citizens faced who relied on resources from the organization. By utilizing social media platforms and raising money through online fundraising, GrandPaws Pantry gained national attention on how to best address social isolation in assisted living facilities to better support the health and well-being of older Arizonans.

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

AGING IN COMMUNITY WORKGROUP

Arizona has one of the highest growth rates for Alzheimer's in the country, and under [A.R.S § 46-183](#), became one of the first states in the nation to establish a workgroup focused on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. The Aging in Community (AIC) Workgroup partners with a variety of public and private sector organizations to evolve knowledge, understanding, and best practices used to identify and respond to the needs of Arizonans residents struggling with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

In partnership with [Adult Protective Services \(APS\)](#), the AIC Workgroup established the requirement for APS Investigators to complete the Alzheimer's Association's comprehensive Dementia Education Training. With APS Investigators working with individuals living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia every day, knowing what to look for and how brain disease can impact vulnerability strengthens investigations while additionally providing critical resources for family members and caregivers on what to expect as symptoms deteriorate and eventually interfere with most everyday activities.

This partnership allowed APS access to curricula used nationwide and designed specifically for APS employees. As new research is published and best practices evolve, the training is updated to ensure investigators are equipped with the most up-to-date information that aids in how to navigate and overcome obstacles they may face during their investigations,

leading to better outcomes for vulnerable adults.

Additionally, the AIC workgroup was instrumental in providing recommendations for the [2023-2026 Arizona State Plan on Aging](#) and continues to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease, provide education surrounding fall prevention, and support prevention efforts around elder abuse throughout the State of Arizona.