



## GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

February 12, 2025, 10:00 AM

Alzheimer's Association 340 E Palm Lane, Suite 230, Phoenix, AZ 85004

Hybrid via Zoom

A general meeting of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging convened on **February 12, 2025**, in a hybrid format, notice duly given.

Members Present (10)	
Terri Spitz, Chair	Brendon Blake
Carol Brown, Vice Chair	Leslie Moore
Belinda Akes	Gwen Relf
Rebecca Clayton, ex-officio	Dr. Nelly Clotter-Woods
Lisa O'Neill	Steve Wagner
Members Absent (4)	
Senator Lela Alston	Representative Tim Dunn
Bonita Imus	Dr. Terri Kennedy
Staff and Guests Present (5)	
Ann Carver, Staff	Anthony Amezcuita, Staff
Chantel Hutchinson, Staff	Brandon Baxter, Presenter, AZ Aging Liaison
Tenneh Turner-Warren, Presenter, ADHS Liaison	

### Call to Order

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, called the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging (GACA) meeting to order at **10:02 AM**. Ten members and six staff/guests were present.

### Chair's Remarks

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting.

### Roll Call

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, conducted a roll call and reached a quorum.

### Approval of Minutes

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, requested a review of the **November 13, 2024**, meeting minutes before requesting a motion to approve as drafted.
  - o **Lisa O'Neil** updated the language of her presentation
  - o **Brendon Blake** corrected the spelling of his name from Brenda to Brendon.
  - o **Belinda Akes** moved to accept the drafted meeting minutes with amendments.
  - o **Steve Wagner** seconded the motion.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, called for a vote, and the **November 13, 2024**, meeting minutes with amendments were approved with no dissenting votes at **10:09 AM**.

### Excellence In Government

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Carol Brown, Co-chair**, who shared that out of hundreds of submissions, the 2024 GACA Listening Sessions were semi-finalists in the inaugural Excellence in Government Award presented on January 27, 2025. As part of the award, **Terri Spitz, Chair**, the GOYFF Director Tonya Hamilton, the GOYFF Executive Director on Aging Latrisha Centers, and herself were interviewed and featured in a video housed on the [state website](#). The video played.

### Alzheimer's Awareness Campaign Outcomes

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, explained that **Dawn Webley**, her co-presenter, could not attend before providing an overview of the Alzheimer's Awareness Campaign, established as a public-private partnership following the passage of [House Bill \(HB\) 2087](#), championed by **Representative Tim Dunn**.
  - This legislation allocated \$750,000 in state funding for Alzheimer's awareness initiatives targeting rural and underserved communities.
  - Through a contract with the [Arizona Department of Health Services \(ADHS\)](#), the [Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter](#) and [ON Advertising](#) launched a campaign that resulted in a 22% increase in calls to the Alzheimer's Association helpline, a 48% rise in attendance at educational programs and events, and the formation of 88 community partnerships across Arizona from March to December 2024.
- To view the presentation, [click here](#).

### Department of Health Services - ADRD Plan Update

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Tenneh Turner-Warren**, the ADHS Liaison and the Chief Office of Chronic Disease and Population Health, to present an overview of the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) Draft State Plan.
- **Tenneh Turner-Warren** began by explaining ADHS' history as the designated lead agency in Arizona for ADRD, which includes the responsibility to publish the 2024-2029 ADRD state plan. She then discussed draft goals and the next steps.
  - Draft goals:
    - Goal 1: Increase Access to Care, Support and Treatment
    - Goal 2: Improve the Quality and Safety of Care
    - Goal 3: Advance Risk Reduction, Early Detection and Diagnosis
    - Goal 4: Ensure a Coordinated Statewide Response to ADRD
  - Draft next steps:
    - Gathering Feedback from Core Leadership Team and Tribal Partners
    - Making updates based on State Agency Review and Core Leadership Team Feedback
    - Designing the ADRD State Plan
    - Review by Assistant Director & Deputy Director
    - Briefing with ADHS Health Officer Briefing
    - Identifying Individuals to participate in the ADRD Core Leadership Team and ADRD Workgroups(ongoing)
- To view the presentation, [click here](#).

### Fall Prevention

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Steve Wagner** to discuss how gravity affects Arizona communities and our most vulnerable populations.
  - **Steve Wagner** is the president and founder of the [RightCare Foundation](#), where he advocates for best-practice care before emergency responders arrive. He also serves as co-chair of the Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition alongside **Carol Brown, Co-chair**. With over 23 years of experience as an active-duty firefighter and paramedic, **Steve** has dedicated his career to emergency response.
- **Steve Wagner** emphasized that it is unacceptable for Arizonans to experience falls. Arizona has a vulnerable population with a high incidence of falls, which can result in catastrophic injuries and, tragically, even death. It is not right for vulnerable individuals to live in fear, nor is it acceptable for the public to ignore this issue as we go about our daily lives. Falls lead to a loss of independence and significantly diminish the quality of life—not only due to the loss of autonomy and the fear of falling but also because of the injuries sustained. Falls have become normalized in society and the healthcare industry, which should not be the case.
- **Steve Wagner** highlighted key risk factors for individuals, including abandonment, lack of social connections, and poor quality of life due to inadequate nutrition and exercise. He noted the significant

impacts of cognitive impairments, like dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and emphasized the importance of managing medical conditions such as diabetes and congestive heart failure. Other indicators of inadequate care include unsanitary living conditions, insufficient personal hygiene, and the presence of pets. Additionally, polypharmacy poses risks when multiple doctors prescribe medications without coordination, leading to harmful interactions. Finally, using Durable Medical Equipment (DME), like canes and walkers, can give a false sense of security and raise the risk of falls.

- **Steve Wagner** highlighted the urgent need for improved care management. Falls are the leading cause of hospital stays in a large Arizona county following motor vehicle crashes.
  - In 2022, hospital expenses due to falls exceeded \$3.8 billion, not including socioeconomic costs, leading to shorter life expectancy and diminished quality of life. That year, there were 168,000 emergency room visits and 1,173 deaths from falls, with 89% of those affected being 65 or older. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) reported that 12.4% of their calls were fall-related.
  - In 2024, out of 771,000 911 calls in the region (excluding rural Arizona and Tucson), 555,000 were EMS calls, with a conservative estimate of 69,000 falls. Cognitively impaired individuals have a 2 to 3 times higher likelihood of experiencing falls.
- **Steve Wagner** explained data presents additional thoughts to consider, such as:
  - What do we do about it?
  - What is the solution?
  - How do we address this reality?
  - How do we reduce falls and work with other stakeholders, the Alzheimer's Association, and state agencies?
  - Can we utilize predictive analytics and technology to increase the acuity of care?
- **Steve Wagner** emphasized the importance of increasing engagement in caregiving. He highlighted the need to enhance caregivers' involvement at home and address staffing challenges such as recruitment, compensation, and turnover rates. Additionally, he stressed the significance of developing a standardized approach to care.
  - Falls often occur when individuals are standing, walking, or using the toilet, and additional physical assistance from family, friends, facility staff, or professional caregivers could help reduce these incidents.
  - To prevent falls, he recommended strategies and activities such as Tai Chi, sit-to-stand training, mobility exercises, and healthy eating, which can significantly improve a person's health and decrease the risk of falling.
- **Steve Wagner** concluded his presentation by emphasizing the duty of fall council members and members of the police and fire coalition to enhance the independence, quality of life, and longevity of the citizens they serve.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, suggested that GACA partner to identify a content expert to discuss falls and risks through one of the Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter education programs.
- **Brandon Baker** compared the conversation to evidence-based programming offered at [AZ Aging](#), such as A Matter of Balance, the Senior Adult Independent Living (SAIL) Program, Bingocize®, and Tai Chi.
- **Gwen Welf** asked whether programs are available for older adults where they reside.
  - **Brandon Baker** responded some programming can be completed in person or at home through AZ Aging.
- **Steve Wagner** emphasized that the goal is to enhance the quality of life, independence, and consistency for older adults. Older adults must understand the risks they face, and community stakeholders should actively engage them in this information as the goal is to prevent unnecessary falls. While we cannot avoid all falls entirely, especially when individuals live their best lives, we want to ensure that families are involved; we do not want to restrict fall-risk patients; instead, we want them to be informed and aware.

### Alzheimer's Subcommittee Report

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Brendon Blake**, the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) Subcommittee Chair, to provide an update on behalf of the subcommittee.
- **Brendon Blake** stated that the subcommittee has started organizing tasks for state agencies to fulfill GACA's statutory requirements around data collection. He noted that he believes the subcommittee has a clear path to getting the data GACA needs, and they hope that members will approve the letter that the subcommittee would have **Terri Spitz, Chair**, send to various state agencies.
- **Brendon Blake** stated that **Dr. Kisha Jenkins** is identifying agencies, including first responders, from which we can pull data.
- **Brendon Blake** shared the draft letter before explaining that the subcommittee organizes data requests into Patient—and Provider-level categories. Their goal is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of dementia and cognitive concerns in Arizona, focusing on patients. They are also interested in identifying the available resources and providers, such as neurologists, neuropsychologists, home and community-based services (HCBS), and residential care. Additionally, they aim to explore how patients can access these resources and navigate the system to receive the support they need.
- Suppose the subcommittee can learn more about these two broad areas. In that case, they believe that they can both plug into the state and local plans many agencies are already working on to inform them of these findings and thus move Arizona to be more ready to handle the wave of people who are aging and developing memory concerns and will need the support of this infrastructure.
- **Brendon Blake** stated he'd be happy to answer any questions GACA members have about the subcommittee's work, noting he's open to feedback and suggestions on which agencies the subcommittee should contact, either now or in a future meeting. He also invited members to attend a subcommittee meeting to see what they were doing as the subcommittee aims to be open and thorough in its process, and it would be proud to present its work to the GACA members and the Governor's Office.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, mentioned that the subcommittee aims to continue the listening sessions and provide additional training to increase the number of individuals trained in Alzheimer's care.
- **Brendon Blake** mentioned that it's complicated to get state versus local agency data and that they also seek peer data.
- **Lisa O'Neill** recommended including additional details in the letter. For instance, it would be helpful to clarify whether there is a specific timeframe for the requested data. It may also be beneficial to outline the preferred method of receiving data. Would it be appropriate to include instructions such as, "Please submit data in the following manner"? Furthermore, the letter should emphasize the importance of de-identifying the data and specify the desired timeframe for submission.
- **Carol Brown, Co-chair**, suggested replacing the word "struggling" in the first paragraph with something like "living with."
- **Rebecca Clayton** suggested changing the term "patients" to "individuals."
- **Lisa O'Neill** suggested alternative language, such as "community members or individuals living with Alzheimer's."
- **Brendon Blake** agreed to the recommended changes and will make the necessary updates.
- To view the draft letter, [click here](#).

### Strategic Planning/Educational Update

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Leslie Moore** to provide an update on the GACA's Strategic Planning.
- **Leslie Moore** announced that the second Education Series Workshop will occur on February 19, 2025, during the [2025 Annual Caregiver Summit](#). This workshop will feature an open panel where community members can discuss the myths surrounding aging adults under the theme "A NEW YOU." She mentioned she seeks additional participants to assist with two more education sessions before summer, including

topics relevant to northern and southern Arizona. Preliminary topics for these sessions include financial health and safety and fall prevention. If any members are interested in participating, please reach out to her.

- **Steve Wagner** commented that the proposed topics are highly relevant. He added that the burden placed on caregivers can lead to caregiver burnout, which may result in feelings of anger, frustration, and reluctance to provide care. Caregivers often face overwhelming pressures, contributing to the risk of falls among those they care for.

### Liaison Updates

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Rebecca Clayton**, ex-officio, to provide the liaison update for the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES).
- **Rebecca Clayton** shared the following updates:
  - The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) at DES and contractors Myers and Stauffer are developing the State Plan on Aging for the state fiscal year (SFY) 2027-2028. Information about planning meetings and timelines will be available in March 2025.
  - The World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference (WEAAD) occurs on June 16, 2025, and registration will open on March 1. Two AZ Aging chapters, the Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) and the Western Arizona Council of Governments (WACOG), will present a panel discussion at the conference. They expect approximately 300 attendees.
  - DAAS submitted the required annual federal fiscal year (FFY) Older Americans Act Performance System (OAAPS) report at the end of January for FFY24, which includes services provided by AZ Aging.
  - As a result of [HB2764, Arizona Revised Statutes \(ARS\) 46-459](#) outlines changes to the Adult Protective Services (APS), including the Centralized Background Check system and automated checks for employers regarding fingerprint status.
- To view **Rebecca Clayton's** update, [click here](#).
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Brandon Baxter** to provide the liaison update for AZ Aging.
- **Brandon Baxter** shared the following updates:
  - AZ Aging is worried about the freezing of federal funds, which would have a disastrous impact on home-delivered meal services and Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) caregiver programs. The projected funding indicates that the organization could not cover even two weeks of payroll with these federal funds. As a result, they would no longer be able to provide these essential services.
  - The organization has specific concerns related to housing and homelessness, referencing two housing assistance bills: [HB2379](#) and [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1483](#).
  - AZ Aging will now encompass all Area Agencies on Aging, including those from the Navajo Nation; Marinda Littleman, the Health Services Administrator for the Division of Aging and Long-Term Support, will represent the Navajo Nation.
- To view **Brandon Baxter's** update, [click here](#).

### Council Announcements

- **Carol Brown, Co-chair**, mentioned that **Brandon Baxter** will be the Keynote Speaker at the 2025 Annual Caregiver Summit on February 19, 2025. **Leslie Moore** will also be a panel presenter.

### Future Topics/New Meeting Date(s)

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, asked members to consider future agenda items before reminding them that the next GACA meeting will be held on **May 14, 2025**, at **10:00 AM**, in a hybrid format that allows members to attend in person or virtually.

### Adjournment

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, asked for a motion to adjourn.
  - **Carol Brown** moved to adjourn.
  - **Brendon Blake** seconded the motion.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, called for a vote, and at **12:01 PM**, the motion passed with no dissenting votes, adjourning the meeting.

Dated February 15, 2024  
Governor's Advisory Council on Aging  
Respectfully Submitted By:  
Ann Carver  
GOYFF

DRAFT