

# Arizona Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

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Annual Report



# 2020



The Governor's Office  
of Youth, Faith  
and Family



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

[goyff.AZ.gov/GACA](http://goyff.AZ.gov/GACA)



STATE OF ARIZONA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

DOUGLAS A. DUCEY  
GOVERNOR

MARIA FUENTES  
DIRECTOR

December 30, 2020

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

Dear Governor,

It is my pleasure to serve as chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging. I would like to acknowledge the work 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 amazing population so your administration, the legislature and other state departments are aware of critical aging-related matters.

Earlier this year the Council completed our Sunset Review with a recommendation to transfer into the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family. We are grateful to have a new home and look forward to the many opportunities this new partnership affords.

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 an internal nonpartisan perspective, act as an educational resource by providing up-to-date information on issues and research, and participate in collaborative initiatives between public and private organizations.

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

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF YOUTH, FAITH AND FAMILY  
1700 West Washington Street, Suite 230, Phoenix, Arizona 85007

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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. The Advisory Council's mission is to enhance the quality of life for older Arizonans. Through its workgroups, GACA reviews and develops strategies to address wide-ranging issues. GACA works with policy makers, state agencies, local communities, non-profit organizations, private enterprises, and older adults across Arizona to fulfill its purpose and accomplish its mission. This Council is administered by the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF).

As part of its role, GACA gathers and assesses information about the needs of seniors and aging trends by monitoring and raising awareness about programs and policies that affect older adults. GACA also provides support in planning for Arizona's future through the Aging 2020 initiative and the Arizona Alzheimer's Task Force. GACA has been instrumental in providing training and awareness programs concerning vital aging issues.

In addition to six council meetings a year, GACA is able to create workgroups necessary to further facilitate the mission outlined in the body's Executive Order. Each workgroup is composed of members from various geographic, cultural, professional, and personal backgrounds relevant to the issues facing older Arizonans. The Council further develops its work through the following:

- **Aging in Community Workgroup**
- **Alzheimer's Workgroup**
- **Legislative and Policy Education Workgroup**
- **Marketing Workgroup**

## **2020 OBJECTIVES**

Monitor the 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

University of Arizona Center on Aging

**Belinda Akes**, Vice Chair

Pinal/Gila Senior Citizen Council

**David Spelich**, Secretary

Fountain Hills Town Council

**Jaime Aguilar**

Southeastern Arizona Governments  
Area Agency on Aging

**Carol Brown**

Western Arizona Council of Governments  
Area Agency on Aging

**Brenda Holt**

AARP

**Cameron Johnson**

Arizona Department of Veterans' 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

**John Stiteler**

Park Senior Villas

**Wayne Tormala**

Arizona Department of Health Services

**Steve Wagner**

RightCare Foundation, Inc.

## **COUNCIL MEETING PRESENTATIONS**

During 2020, the Council received presentations from issue-area experts on topics related to services provided by GACA state agency partners, liaisons and community partners. These presentations included:

### **Alzheimer's Association in Desert Southwest**

The Alzheimer's Association, a volunteer-powered organization, has a mission of leading the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia by accelerating research, driving risk reduction, early detection, and maximizing care and support. As a result of COVID-19, and the organization's desire to continue services to those in need, the Alzheimer's Association moved its community education and support groups onto a virtual platform; adding education based on feedback from the 24/7 helpline.

### **Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging (AZ4A)**

The Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging (AZ4A) received \$17.5 million, through state and federal partners, which was distributed to local Area Agencies on Aging to support older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AZ4A worked alongside national partners like the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Programs, and other aging advocates to increase funding appropriated by the CARES Act for the Aging Network. These increased funds helped older adults obtain food, groceries, home care, and other critical services to remain safe and healthy. The Association expressed its gratitude to the Arizona Congressional delegation for their work to ensure older adults have the resources and support they need. AZ4A also thanked Governor Ducey for his administration's expeditious work to get this vital funding to local Area Agencies on Aging.

### **Arizona Attorney General's Office (AGO)**

In an ongoing effort, the Arizona Attorney General's Office (AGO) provides information on scams, consumer fraud, and takes legal action against those who prey on seniors. Updates on shred-a-thons and Life Care Planning Packets were shared with the Council as well as an update on the Task Force Against Senior Abuse.

### **Arizona Department of Economic Security-Division of Aging & Adult Services (DES/DAAS)**

As one of its initiatives in 2020, the Division of Aging & Adult Services (DAAS) continues to work with the Area Agencies on Aging to reduce the statewide Non-Medical Home and Community Services waitlist. This partnership has been successful, largely as a result of receiving additional federal Social Service Block Grant funding to support seniors throughout Arizona.

In January, the Family Caregiver Reimbursement Program launched. This program supports caregivers, enabling them to keep their family members at home for as long as possible through purchasing home modifications or assistive technology, using funding for reimbursement of the purchase cost of the equipment up to \$1,000.

DES' response to the pandemic has been extensive, with over \$70 million dollars distributed through CARES Act and State Emergency Funding. The funding has been distributed to a variety of community partners to support the expansion of services to Arizonans in need. The Division of Developmental Disabilities, a

managed care plan contracted through Arizona Health Care Containment Cost System, has distributed \$120 million dollars into the networks, most of which has gone to providers to purchase PPE and necessary cleaning supplies.

### **Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS)**

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) held a training, “Finding Meaning and Hope,” as part of the Dementia Caregivers Self-Management support initiative in collaboration with County Public Health Department staff.

The Healthy Aging Program continues to participate in the Alzheimer's Association's Healthy Brain Initiative Learning Lab, in partnership with The University of Arizona College of Public Health, Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter, and Vitalyst Health Foundation. This program focuses on caregiver support for Alzheimer-related dementia and fall prevention.

ADHS is planning to launch a new five-year Arizona Health Improvement Plan in January 2021, with a focus on improving mental health and well-being for Arizonans, diving deeper into social isolation and how it ties into the opioid epidemic, suicide, and other critical issue areas.

### **Arizona Department of Veteran Services (ADVS)**

Arizona Department of Veteran Services (ADVS) provides critical, state-wide coordination and technical assistance to services and organizations serving veterans. This includes activities such as coordinating services across private and public sectors in serving targeted populations. Veteran Benefits Counselors are active within the community and work with a full spectrum of veterans to file pensions and compensation claims on the veteran’s behalf. ADVS also supports programming with two State Veteran Homes in Phoenix and Tucson, with two additional homes opening in 2021 in Yuma and Flagstaff.

### **Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)**

In 2020, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) made many additions to services to support efficiencies and increase services to those receiving support through AHCCCS. Some of the initiatives launched in 2020 were: Electronic Visit Verification, Community Intervener Service, and Whole Person Care Initiative.

Congress has made available additional temporary federal Medicaid Program funding to support Arizonans. AHCCCS has increased its ability to deliver services via telehealth and expand benefits for long term care members.

### **Arizona Indian Council on Aging**

The Arizona Inter Tribal Council of Arizona and the Area Agency on Aging, Region VIII invited Arizona State Legislators to attend an information session during the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day. The session, “Elder Discussion,” focused on the need for Home and Community Based Services for elders in Tribal communities and throughout Arizona.

### **Arizona Long Term Care Taskforce**

Visitation at long-term care facilities has been limited to help protect residents from potential exposure to COVID-19. Governor Ducey established the Task Force on Long Term Care to develop recommendations and benchmarks for the gradual re-opening of visitation and to ensure proper protocols are put into place. Members of the task force include operators of a variety of facility types, family members, advocates, and government officials.

The Task Force has been established to complete the following: make recommendations about how and when in-person visitation can safely resume at long-term care facilities, assisted living facilities, and intermediate care facilities, and make recommendations on how best to keep families informed about their loved ones in long-term care facilities and assisted living facilities.

### **AARP**

AARP services have been transitioned into a virtual space to continue to grow and partner with other organizations, which has increased the overall engagement on all social media platforms for the membership. During the annual day of service in September, AARP partnered with the VA hospital to provide lunches to 575 first responders and employees. AARP also sponsors a fraud-prevention initiative with no-contact document shredding.

A complete summary of council presentations can be found at [goyff.az.gov/gaca](http://goyff.az.gov/gaca).