



**GOVERNOR’S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING**

**December 15, 2021, 10:00 AM**

**Hybrid Meeting**

1700 West Washington Street, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging was convened on December 15, 2021, in a hybrid format, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (14)	Members Absent (1)
Lisa O’Neill, Chair	Jaime Aguilar
Terri Spitz, Vice Chair	
Barbara Marshall	
Belinda Akes	
Bert Ijams	
Bonita Imus	
Brendon Blake (proxy for Brenda Holt)	
Carol Brown	
Senator Lela Alston	
Jakenna Lebsock (proxy for Shelli Silver)	
Steve Wagner	
Representative Tim Dunn	
Teresa Manygoats	
Virginia Rountree	
Staff and Guests Present (5)	
Kim Brooks	Amanda Sokan
Vianney Careaga	Emily Litchfield
Charles Katz	

**Call to Order**

- **Lisa O’Neill, Chair**, called the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. with 14 members and 5 staff and guests present. **Lisa** reviewed the procedures of how the hybrid meeting would be facilitated and welcomed all those present.

**Roll Call**

- **Lisa O’Neill, Chair**, conducted a roll call of the Council and took note of Councilmember proxies.

**Approval of Minutes**

- **Lisa O’Neill, Chair**, requested a review of the **October 13, 2021** meeting minutes.
  - **Carol Brown** moved to accept the **October 13, 2021** minutes with the amendment.
  - **Barbara Marshall** seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed with no dissenting votes at 10:07 a.m.

## Suicide Among Older Adults

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Dr. Charles Katz**, Watts Endowed Family Chair of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Director of the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety at Arizona State University, for a presentation on suicide among older adults. **Dr. Katz** began his presentation by providing background on the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). NVDRS is a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsored surveillance system primarily for homicides and suicides. Arizona has been collecting data as part of the NVDRS since 2015. This data is also known as the Arizona Violent Death Reporting System (AZ-VDRS). The scope of the data encompasses suicide, homicide, legal intervention, deaths of undetermined intent, and unintentional deaths. The data is collected from death certificates, medical examiner reports, law enforcement reports, and other sources. That data extracted from these sources contain information on demographics, causes and manner of death, toxicology reports, types of weapons used, and mental and physical health issues. For the purposes of the major findings from the AZ-VDRS analysis, victims aged 60 and older were defined as the category of "older adults." The cutoff of this age category was pursuant to guidance from the federal Older Americans Act and the Elder Justice Act. In Arizona, older adults make up about 24% of the population and comprise 30.6% of all suicide deaths in the state. Older white, non-Hispanic/Latinx, adults are at significantly higher risk for suicide. Older adult suicide rates are substantially higher in Cochise, Gila, La Paz, Mohave, and Yavapai counties, compared to the statewide rate. The top three zip codes for older adult suicide are in the Sun City area of Maricopa County (85375, 85351, and 85374). The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, which is the principal law enforcement agency responsible for this area, is not a partner with AZ-VDRS. This presents a limitation to their research. More than seven in 10 older adult suicide victims used a firearm. Older adult suicide victims were generally less likely to have any documented mental health problems and were significantly less likely to have interpersonal problems in general (25.3% vs. 48.0%). About six in 10 older adults were experiencing physical health problems that reportedly contributed to the suicide, compared to slightly more than one in 10 for the younger group. The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/gaca/2021/12/15>.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, inquired whether the analysis factors in suicide within the snowbird population and if there is a way to distinguish snowbirds from fulltime Arizona residents. **Dr. Katz** responded by stating that AZ-VDRS measures suicides committed and associated injuries in Arizona, and is not based on the residency of the individual. **Lisa** further inquired whether the data set can determine when the firearms were purchase in cases involving suicide by firearm. **Dr. Katz** responded by stating that that information is made available on an *ad hoc* basis and they have not systematically tracked firearm data in suicide cases.
- **Belinda Akes** inquired about the time of year in which the suicides had occurred. **Dr. Katz** responded by stating that that data point is not something they have looked into in the past, but they are more than willing to provide a breakdown of suicides on a monthly basis.
- **Carol Brown** inquired whether any information has been collected on the category of caregivers. **Dr. Katz** responded by stating that in the past they have looked at caregivers and are categorized under homicide data sets.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, inquired whether AZ-VDRS data captures information on loneliness and isolation. Having more data associated with these categories can help raise awareness around this issue among older adult populations. **Dr. Katz** responded by stating that it is a data set that they would like to collect, however, when it comes to data collection they are at the mercy of the investigators and the information provided to them in investigative reports. Some states have legislation that mandates the collection of particular types of data.
- **Bert Ijams** inquired as to what happens after the data is collected and analyzed. She also inquired whether or not studies have been done on the effectiveness of social isolation visitation programs, similar to Meals On Wheels. **Dr. Katz** responded by stating that social isolation visitation programs are important to the well-being of older adults experiencing loneliness and isolation, but to his knowledge no studies have been undertaken to study their effectiveness. He went on to add that after the AZ-VDRS data is collected and analyzed, it is published in a report and to media organizations, medical practitioners, and other organizations that provide services to older adults. The CDC also uses the data to fund initiatives on suicide prevention. **Virginia**

**Rountree** noted that this information would also be relevant to insurers, health plans, primary care physicians, and other medical specialists.

- **Dr. Katz** offered to conduct further analysis that the Council or its members request.

### LGBT Aging Community

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Dr. Amanda Sokan**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health Practice & Translational Research at The University of Arizona, for a presentation on the LGBTQIA+ aging community. **Dr. Sokan** began her presentation by providing context on the older adult population. Census trends provided by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that the older adult population has grown significantly since 1900 and is expected to be around 81 million by 2040 and 95 million by 2060. With the increased number of older adults, there will also be an increase in the diversity of this population, particularly when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity. In 2017, it was estimated that around 3% of adults aged 50 and older self-identified as LGBTQIA+, with about 1.1 million adults aged 65 and older self-identifying as LGBTQIA+. However, it is likely that these numbers are under-reported. Social acceptance is a critical issue to individuals that identify as LGBTQIA+. Lack of social acceptance can breed a variety of concerns to individuals that identify as LGBTQIA+ as they age, including, but not limited to: exclusion from services, greater risk of physical health conditions, greater risk of mental distress, loneliness and isolation, economic insecurity, and lack of access to support services. Building inclusive communities can improve the quality of life and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ older adults. This can be achieved by optimizing the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ older adults, employing evidence-based practices, and fostering an environment that is person-affirming. The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/qaca/2021/12/15>.

### Strategic Plan 2022

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, announced that **Terri Spitz, Vice Chair**, will be assuming the role of Chair of the Council, beginning in 2022. **Terri** thanked **Lisa** for her leadership over the years and provided information on some of the goals she would like to achieve in her tenure as Chair, such as improving the onboarding process for new Councilmembers and increasing the number of workgroups to further amplify the work of the Council. She also welcomed the feedback from Councilmembers.
- **Carol Brown** added that in the past, the Council's workgroups held their meetings the same day as the Council meeting. As more in-person activities increase, this could be an area the Council can look into for the future. **Terri** thanked **Carol** for her suggestion and will look into its possibility for future meetings.

### Councilmember & Liaison Roundtable

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, provided an update from The University of Arizona Center on Aging. **Dr. O'Neill** informed Councilmembers that the Center continues to develop the curriculum for the graduate certificate in innovations in aging. After completing the certificate program, individuals can complete the examination for the National Association for Professional Gerontologists.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Barbara Marshall** for an update from the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO). **Barbara** informed Councilmembers that during the COVID-19 Pandemic, MCAO has noticed a spike in domestic violence involving older adults and scams targeted to older adults.
- **Terri Spitz, Vice-Chair**, introduced **Belinda Akes** for an update from the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens. **Belinda** informed Councilmembers that the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens has started a new program to get more senior citizens vaccinated against COVID-19. On December 6, 2021, 120 individuals received the vaccination. Another vaccination clinic will be held in January 2022. They are targeting senior residents of Hayden, Arizona City, Superior, Apache Junction, Casa Grande, Payson, Florence, Maricopa City, Eloy, and San Tan Valley. As far as the Eloy food bank, they continue to distribute food boxes to seniors for the holidays.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Bert Ijams** for an update from the Prescott Meals on Wheels. **Bert** informed Councilmembers that she is working on an initiative to enhance better communication with people experiencing dementia. She is also embarking on a new initiative to serve more people who are aged 65 and older that have been discharged from regional hospitals and are on Medicare Advantage.

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Bonita Imus** for an update from the Arizona Indian Council on Aging. **Bonita** informed Councilmembers that in her community, the number of COVID-19 cases has increased and the community is being extremely careful to reduce exposure by enacting several COVID-related health protocols.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Brendon Blake** for an update from the Arizona State Office of AARP. **Brendon** informed Councilmembers that the state office has done some outreach with the Tuba City Division on Aging and were able to provide resources and supplies to assist 13 closed senior center facilities. Through this effort, they have impacted the lives of 5,834 individuals. In regards to advocacy and ahead of the legislative session, AARP is looking at ways to improve the long-term care systems. AARP is also working on a program called "Work and Save" to help individuals plan for retirement when their employment does not offer a 401k or 403b retirement plan.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Carol Brown** for an update from the Western Arizona Council of Governments (WACOG) Area Agency on Aging. **Carol** informed Councilmembers that they are focused on recruiting for staff to meet the demand in the community. Mohave County has one of lowest rates of vaccination in the state. To address this, they are working on vaccination campaigns. They are also providing jar openers to older adults with information on how to connect with WACOG-AAA.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, noted that **Jaime Aguilar** was not present and that no report was submitted..
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Senator Lela Alston** for an update. **Senator Alston** informed Councilmembers that she is working on several pieces of legislation that affect older adults in anticipation of the upcoming legislative session. One of these pieces involves the creation of a subsidy for individuals who own their home but are becoming homeless because they can not afford the property taxes that are assessed. There is a program available in Maricopa County that already does that. Legislation would take the program statewide.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Jakenna Lebsock** for an update from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). **Jakenna** informed Councilmembers that AHCCCS is getting its presentations ready for the legislative session to seek expenditure authority for the funds made available from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). In coordination with the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), AHCCCS is working to update its Homestead Plan to provide enhanced access to quality care. AHCCCS is also working on updating its home and community-based services rules.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Steve Wagner** for an update from The RightCare Foundation. **Steve** informed Councilmembers that the newly chaptered A.R.S. 36-420 and A.R.S. 36-421 have generated a lot of buzz in the care industry. They are equally thoughtful of reports of non-compliance and are working with state agencies to encourage more compliance. **Steve** reminded Councilmembers that the law creates an affirmative duty of care. He continues to work with stakeholders to encourage better compliance and invites **Senator Lela Alston, Representative Tim Dunn**, and other Councilmembers for their input.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Terri Spitz, Vice Chair**, for an update from the Desert Southwest Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. **Terri** thanked Councilmembers for their support of the Walks to End Alzheimer's in Arizona. Over 10,000 people participated throughout the state. These Walks provide a snapshot of the work the Association does for the Community. She added that February 23, 2022 will be Alzheimer's State Day at the Capitol.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Representative Tim Dunn** for an update. **Representative Dunn** informed Councilmembers that he has been engaging with stakeholders and other members on issues for the upcoming session. He wants to ensure that if AHCCCS is granted expenditure authority, that there is a plan for a sustainable future for the programs assisted by the additional federal funds. He further offered to meet the Councilmembers during the upcoming legislative session.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Teresa Manygoats** for an update from the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS). **Teresa** informed Councilmembers that DHS has recently hired a new office chief and is working on hiring a manager. DHS is getting ready to launch an initiative in January and February around wildfires throughout the state. She reminded Councilmembers that COVID-19 booster vaccination shots are available. If there are specific updates Councilmembers would like to hear from DHS, she asked that Councilmembers inform **Kim Brooks** and she will reach out to Teresa to obtain the requested information.

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Virginia Rountree** for an update from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). **Virginia** informed Councilmembers that a team is working on developing an enhanced training curriculum for Adult Protective Services (APS) investigators that handle cases with adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. APS has also launched a small campaign focused on increasing awareness of scams that prey on older adults. The Family Caregiver Reimbursement program has been extended through June 2024. The program team conducted a marketing campaign to increase the visibility of the program. She has asked Councilmembers to help distribute information about the program to their networks to assist in amplifying the program. The State Plan on Aging is nearing completion and DES will be requesting time on the Council's agenda at a future meeting date to get the Council's approval. On June 13 to 14, 2022 DES will be hosting the 4th World Elder Abuse Awareness Conference.
- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, noted that **Mary Beals-Luedtka** was unable to attend the meeting due to technical difficulties but did submit a written report from the Arizona Area Agencies on Aging (AZ4A). In the upcoming legislative session, AZ4A is asking legislators to continue supporting the work they are doing statewide by not reducing funding. AZ4A received one time funds that need to be put in the regular budget and they are meeting with the Governor's office regularly to provide data on how the one time monies are being utilized. Cutting these vital funds would result in a larger wait list than the area agencies have now. The current statewide waitlist is about 1,559 clients waiting for services. All regions are focused on vaccinations, access to vaccinations, and all regions have completed the annual Medicare open-enrollment process. The following are region-specific updates:
  - Region I: The agency has been working to implement Trualta, a web-based professional caregiver training that has been promoted by USAging. It was launched to all Agency caregivers who are receiving respite services. A public roll-out is planned for early 2022. The agency was awarded \$57,000 from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona through their Mobilize AZ Grant program. Funding will be used to implement the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program. Through a grant from Office of Violence Against Women, the agency has been working in partnership with Department of Economic Security, the Maricopa Association of Governments, and other community partners on an abuse in late-life grant. The focus of the grant is on training and creating an organized community response to late-life-abuse. The grant does allocate some funds for victims' services which will be used to support older adult victims who are seeking safe and secure housing. The agency's ElderVention Prevention program has a contract with AHCCCS to focus on medication management and suicide prevention. The agency is being awarded an additional \$53,000 from AHCCCS ARPA funds which will be added to the existing prevention contract. Funds are for three years and will be used to train more Mental Health First Aid Instructors, buy more medication disposal envelopes, and to help cover the cost of pharmacy consultation for the Agency's Home Meds program.
  - Region II: Region II's "Take YOUR Shot" campaign launched a wide-reaching marketing campaign focused on traditional media like television and radio and on social media. In addition, in December, the agency launched a canvassing operation to inform people in the community of a COVID-19 vaccination location near them and to help break down barriers in access to the vaccine. The agency is encouraging people to get involved with the campaign virtually by sharing your #MyWhy, explaining why you decided to #TakeYOURShot. The agency continues to focus on providing direct care to clients while continuing to address the direct care workforce shortage. A few months ago, W. Mark Clark, President and Chief Executive Officer of Region II was appointed to the Nursing Care Institutions & Assisted Living Facilities Board Legislative Study Committee to represent the needs and interests of older adults and the Area Agencies on Aging.
  - Region III: Region III issued new contracts to providers for home care services beginning November 1, 2021. The new contracts reflect rate increases with the stipulation that three-fourths of the rate increase must be passed on to the Direct Care Workers. In addition, each provider was allotted one time funds for staff incentives such as sign on bonuses and retention bonuses.
  - Region V: In partnership with contracted community organizations, Region V will offer a series of free community vaccine clinics in both Pinal and Gila Counties over the month of December 2021. To date, nine vaccination clinics have been scheduled in Pinal County and one in Gila County over

the first two weeks of December. Region V expects to continue to schedule additional clinics through the month of January at various locations throughout the two-county area. In addition to vaccination outreach, Region V plans to offer free corona virus testing kits to all clients and caregivers participating in agency programs. The goal is that by providing in-home testing kits seniors will be able to get results in their home versus going to a testing facility. It is also the Region V's goal to facilitate quicker testing results and treatment, should a senior be concerned about possible exposure. Region V reported over 500 individuals assisted with Medicare enrollment and plan counseling. Due to COVID-19 exposure concerns, the agency served most individuals over the phone, or via in-office appointments. They also hosted two very successful face-to-face enrollment events during the service period. Region V is moving forward with the Meals on Wheels Central Arizona kitchen expansion project for the facility located in Casa Grande. The project will allow for additional cool storage space for raw food and frozen meals, as the agency anticipates taking on a larger service area in the next year. Due to supply chain challenges being experienced throughout the nation, including local programs, Region V has brought in two large, temporary cold storage units which will allow staff to increase bulk food orders and keep as much product in stock as possible. This will ensure that the kitchen functions smoothly and lessens any potential disruption to meal services.

- Region VI: To address the Direct Care Worker (DCW) shortage, Region VI is issuing a one-time Thank You bonus to those DCW's who have helped the Area Agency on Aging clients during the pandemic. For the next six months, DCW's will have the opportunity to qualify for incentives based on a point-based system of the hours of service provided to AAA clients. A tracking system will help them monitor those DCW's who are committed and qualify for a pay increase within their specific organization. The Family Caregiver Support Program partnered with AARP and Cochise County Health and Social Services to host a Caregiver Appreciation Mingle on November 16, 2021. Caregivers were invited to a hybrid in-person/ virtual painting experience at the Bisbee Senior Center.

### Workgroup Update

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced **Carol Brown** for an update on the Aging in Community Workgroup. **Carol** informed Councilmembers that the Workgroup met its objectives for 2021. She further thanked the support and participation of Councilmembers in the Workgroup's initiatives throughout the year.

### AmeriCorps Programming

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, introduced Emily Litchfield, Director of Service and Volunteerism with the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family, to share information about AmeriCorps programming surrounding seniors. The AmeriCorps Seniors Program has announced a notice of funding opportunity with \$10 million available in grant awards. Priority counties for Arizona are Cochise, Gila, and Santa Cruz Counties. Secondary counties are La Paz, Yuma, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties, where there is currently no AmeriCorps Seniors Program. The match requirement on this grant has been reduced to 10% (previously varied from 25% to 50%) and there is the ability to request a match waiver. This is a two-year grant and the awardee may use up to six months for planning prior to executing on the program. The focus is on COVID-19 recovery. This encompasses a broad range of programming, including education, social isolation, and mental health. The application deadline is February 3, 2022. The application materials can be accessed at <https://americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2022-ameri-corps-seniors-american-rescue-plan-senior-demonstration-program>.

### Upcoming Meeting

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, reminded Councilmembers to mark their calendars for their next meeting on February 9, 2022 in a hybrid format, with in-person and virtual (as needed) options. **Lisa** noted that the Council continues to solicit agenda items from its members and to forward those suggestions to **Kim Brooks**.



### Council Update

- **Terri Spitz**, Vice-Chair, thanked **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, for her outstanding leadership and tenure to the Council. She then invited **Kim Brooks** to read and present **Lisa** with a commendation from **Governor Doug Ducey**. **Lisa** thanked **Governor Ducey** and **Terri** for their kind words, and expressed her excitement for Terri's leadership as Chair of the Council.

### Adjournment

- **Lisa O'Neill, Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
  - **Carol Brown** moved to adjourn.
  - **Steve Wagner** seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed with no dissenting votes and the meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

Dated 15 of December 2021  
Governor's Advisory Council on Aging  
Respectfully Submitted By:  
Vianney M. Careaga  
GOYFF