



## Important Numbers

Fire, Police, Sheriff, Emergency Medical Service .....	911
Nonemergency situations .....	311
Community Resource and referral .....	211
Crisis Hotline – Mental Health/	
Mental Retardation .....	(512) 472-4357
TDD .....	(512) 703-1395
Aging and Disability Resource Center .....	(855) 937-2372
Travis County Sheriff’s Department.....	(512) 854-9770
Austin Police Department.....	(512) 974-5000
Poison Control Center .....	(800) 222-1222

### Abuse

Elder Abuse 24-hour Hotline .....	(800) 252-5400
(in nursing homes) .....	(800) 458-9858
SAFE Alliance (domestic violence/ sexual assault) .....	(512) 267-7233
Victim Services (Austin Police Department) .....	(512) 974-5037
Medicaid Fraud Unit, OAG .....	(512) 463-2011

### Utilities

Gas – Texas Gas Service	
Customer Service .....	(800) 700-2443
Emergency Service .....	(800) 959-5325
Water and Wastewater .....	(512) 972-0000

### Electricity – City of Austin

Electric Power Outage .....	(512) 322-9100
Customer Service .....	(512) 494-9400

### TDD Relay Texas

If you have TDD .....	(800) 735-2989
If you do not have TDD .....	(800) 735-2988

# Acknowledgements

This edition of *Caregiving in Central Texas: A Community Resource Guide* has been edited by the Aging Services



**Aging Services Council**  
of Central Texas

Council of Central Texas. The Aging Services Council of Central Texas is a strong, effective network of individuals and organizations who work together to ensure that older adults and caregivers have the information and services they need to support themselves and family members as they age.

[www.agingservicescouncil.org](http://www.agingservicescouncil.org)

## *SPECIAL THANKS TO:*

The Gray Panthers of Austin who first created and published this manual in 1985. Their mission is to work for social and economic justice and peace for all people.



**National Gray Panthers**

PO Box 4356, Torrance, California, 90510-4356

[www.graypanthers.org](http://www.graypanthers.org)

The Donald D. Hammill Foundation for editing and printing this manual as a service to the community. The Donald D. Hammill Foundation was established to improve the quality of life for people who have disabilities, the aged, and people who are financially disadvantaged, including the working poor and those who are indigent or chronically ill.

[www.hammillfoundation.org](http://www.hammillfoundation.org)



Donald D. Hammill Foundation

## GUIDE OVERVIEW

This guide is presented as a tool to help older adults and their families understand their options and make wise decisions when wading through the maze of health and social services issues. It provides pertinent information on issues often faced by older adults and their spouses, families, and friends. If any of portion of this manual makes you feel more assured and confident about approaching community care services, our goals will have been reached.

Please keep in mind that while this guide can be used as a resource during an unexpected crisis, it can also be used when planning for situations that may arise in later life. *We cannot overemphasize the importance of planning ahead.* The best time to make critical decisions about health care, residence, and finances is in advance of an illness or other crisis.

It is also important to note that the resources provided, which include services offered, locations, and phone numbers are current as of November 2020. In the world of health care and social services, information can become outdated very quickly. We have therefore attempted to include Central Texas resources that have a history of stability. Additionally, we will provide periodic updates of the manual on the Aging Services Council website

**[www.agingservicescouncil.org](http://www.agingservicescouncil.org)**.

If you are a new caregiver and don't know quite where to start, contact AGE of Central Texas for guidance: (512) 451-4611.

Finally, we wish to thank all of those who helped us provide the Austin community with this specialized resource tool.

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## Adult Day Care

Adult day care provides health oversight, socialization, and therapeutic activities in a supportive group environment. This community resource not only allows seniors with physical and/or cognitive impairment to receive necessary care while continuing to live at home, but also gives their caregivers time away from the demands of caregiving. Because these seniors might otherwise require care in assisted living or a nursing home, adult day care is often a cost-effective source of care and activities for seniors.

Sometimes referred to as *adult day care*, *adult day centers*, or *adult day health care*, these programs are licensed and regulated by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) as **Day Activity and Health Services** (DAHS). Under DADS regulations, their services must include

- Meals and snacks planned by a licensed dietician;
- Medical services provided by a licensed nurse who must be on the premises during hours of operation;
- Personal care services provided by trained personnel; and
- Recreational, fitness, and social activities planned and directed by a qualified activities director.

Costs and times of operation vary from program to program. Programs may also have admission criteria concerning the adult's mobility; continence; or emotional, mental, and social abilities.

Research shows that for participants, adult day health programs may

- Stabilize medical conditions and reduce hospitalizations
- Prevent secondary disabilities that result from excessive bed rest or inactivity
- Lead to improved ability to perform daily activities
- Increase self-esteem and dignity
- Increase verbal ability and mobility
- Elevate mood and improve behaviors
- Improve nutrition
- Provide opportunities for friendship and decrease the harmful effects of isolation and loneliness
- Be something to look forward to
- Foster a sense of belonging
- Create a feeling of belonging to a community

**Austin Thrive Social & Wellness Center (AGE of Central Texas)**

3710 Cedar Street, Austin, TX 78705

(512) 458-6305 or (512) 451-4611

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

M-F 7:00 am – 5:30 pm

Cost: Private Pay or fully covered by Medicaid, VA, or long-term care insurance for those who qualify.

**Williamson County Thrive Social & Wellness Center (AGE of Central Texas)**

475 Round Rock W. Dr. #120, Round Rock, TX 78681

(512) 255-4865 or (512) 451-4611 (main AGE office)

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

M-F 7:00 am – 5:30 pm

Cost: Private Pay or fully covered by Medicaid, VA, or long-term care insurance for those who qualify.

**Assisted Living Communities with Day Programs**

Some Assisted Living communities may offer adult day services in addition to the residential care that they provide.

# Adult Protective Services and Elder Abuse

Texas has a law authorizing protective services for elderly persons (65 and older) and persons with disabilities. Under this law, Adult Protective Services (APS), a program of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, is responsible for investigating allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. When allegations are confirmed, APS provides or arranges services in order to prevent further maltreatment of the individual. These may include short-term services such as emergency shelter, food, medication, heavy cleaning, minor home repairs, restoration of utilities, and mental health assessments. APS in-home staff refers cases that require guardianship services to the Department of Aging and Disability Services. Guardianship is a legal method to protect individuals' well-being when they are legally incapacitated and cannot protect themselves.

The Texas law requires that "a person having cause to believe that an elderly or disabled person is in a state of abuse, exploitation, or neglect shall report the information immediately to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)."

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## Signs of Neglect

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"Neglect" means the failure of an individual or his or her caregiver to provide the goods or services necessary to prevent physical harm, mental anguish, or mental illness. Common signs that indicate neglect

include obvious malnutrition, lack of personal cleanliness, dressing habitually in torn or dirty clothes, obvious fatigue and listlessness, begging for food, needing medical or dental care, being left unattended for long periods of time, or self-reports of neglect. The most prevalent form of neglect is self-neglect.

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## **Signs of Abuse**

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Abuse of an elderly person may take many forms, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal assaults, isolation, and misuse of medications. The abuse of older family members may be as widespread and as unreported as child or spousal abuse. Some signs of physical abuse are frequent injuries, such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns, especially when the caregiver cannot adequately explain how they happened; frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury; passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior; lack of reaction to pain; and self-reports of pain.

Common signs of sexual abuse include physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases, evidence of injury to the genital area, difficulty in sitting or walking, fear of being alone with caregivers, or self-reports of sexual assault.

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## **Signs of Exploitation**

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Exploitation is the illegal or improper use of another person's money or property for personal profit or gain. This includes taking Social Security or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) checks, abusing a joint checking

account, and taking property or other resources. Signs of financial exploitation may include sudden changes in bank account or banking practice, unexplained withdrawal of a lot of money by a person accompanying the victim, adding additional names on a bank signature card, sudden changes in a will or other financial documents, unexplained missing funds or valuables and unpaid bills despite having enough money.

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## How to Report

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In many cases, an abused person is totally dependent on the abuser and is afraid to complain. If you suspect abuse or neglect of an elderly or disabled person, you must report it to the Department of Family and Protective Services. The law specifies that a person who reports abuse is not liable for criminal or civil suits because of his or her role in the report or any later investigation.

**To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation in the community, contact**

**Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**

(800) 252-5400 (24-hour hotline)

[www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

Make a report online at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)

**To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a person in a nursing home, personal care home, or adult day care center, contact one of the following:**

**Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services**

(800) 458-9858 (hotline)

<https://txhhs.force.com/complaint/s>

***To file a complaint about an HHS program or service***

If you have questions or are experiencing difficulty with your

services from HHS, including Medicaid managed care, contact the HHS Office of the Ombudsman.

**Office of the Ombudsman**

P. O. Box 13247

Austin, TX 78711-3247

(877) 787-8999

Relay Texas for people with a hearing or speech disability:

7-1-1 or (800) 735-2989

Online:

[hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/your-rights/hhs-office-ombudsman](https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/your-rights/hhs-office-ombudsman)

Fax: (888) 780-8099

***To file a complaint with a facility or hospital regulated by HHS***

If you have questions or concerns about someone living in a

- State supported living center, contact the Office of the Independent Ombudsman for State Supported Living Centers. (800) 252-5400 or

[slc-independent-ombudsman.texas.gov](https://slc-independent-ombudsman.texas.gov)

- Assisted living facility or nursing home, contact the Texas Long-term Care Ombudsman: (800) 252-412 or

[apps.hhs.texas.gov/news\\_info/ombudsman](https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/news_info/ombudsman)

- Facility regulated by HHS, file a complaint: (800) 485-9858 or [txhhs.force.com/complaint/s/](https://txhhs.force.com/complaint/s/)

***To report a crisis situation or crime, call your local police department. In an emergency call 911.***

**SAFE**

(512) 267-SAFE (7233)

[www.safeaustin.org](https://www.safeaustin.org)

SAFE hotline is the first step for seeking help with sexual or domestic violence. To report a crisis or crime, call your local police department. **In an emergency, call 911.**

# Advance Care Planning and Legal Services

We have all known individuals who have slowly or suddenly lost the ability to make legally competent decisions regarding the care of their person or their finances. If the incapacitated person has not planned for this possibility, a guardianship may be needed. However, planning ahead may help adults and their families avoid the need for guardianship. Planning ahead also can reduce the stress and emotional turmoil that families experience in this situation.

There are legal tools that allow us to decide what we want in the event of our own incapacitation or incompetence. These include the following:

- Medical Power of Attorney (for health care)
- Directive to Physicians and Family or Surrogates (Living Will)
- Declaration for Mental Health Treatment
- Out-of-Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate Order
- Statutory Durable Power of Attorney (for financial affairs)
- Declaration of Guardian in the event of later incompetence or need of guardian
- Body Disposition Authorization
- Appointment for Disposition of Remains

Each of these documents will be discussed in this section.

## **Medical Power of Attorney (for health care)**

The Medical Power of Attorney allows you to designate a health care agent to make medical decisions for you if you are not able to speak for yourself. When completing

the form, list an alternate “back-up” agent if you can, so there will still be someone to speak for you if the first person you named is unable to serve. The directive must be signed in the presence of two witnesses OR a notary. This directive is available in English and Spanish at [hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/forms/miscellaneous/mpoa-medical-power-attorney](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/forms/miscellaneous/mpoa-medical-power-attorney).

In the absence of an executed Medical Power of Attorney for health care, the law designates certain kin, in order of priority, to make health care decisions. According to the Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 166.039, the order of priority is patient’s spouse, patient’s reasonably available adult children, patient’s parents, or the patient’s nearest living relative. If none of the above are available to make a treatment decision, a decision made by the attending physician must be concurred with by another physician not involved in the treatment or who is a representative of the ethics or medical committee of the health care facility.

The adult should think about the nature and extent of the care he or she may want in certain circumstances and discuss these wishes with the designated people. Once you have completed this document, give copies to your medical agent(s), your health care providers, and your family. Keep a list of everyone who has a copy, so that you can provide them with an updated document if you change agent(s) or make other changes.

## **Directive to Physicians and Family or Surrogates (Living Will)**

The Directive to Physicians—often referred to as a Living



Will—specifies what medical treatments you would or would not want if

- You have an irreversible condition so that you cannot care for yourself or make decisions for yourself and are expected to die without life-sustaining treatment.
- You have a terminal condition from which you are expected to die within six months, even with available life-sustaining treatment

The **Additional Requests** section on page 2 of the directive gives you an opportunity to expand the scope of the directive by giving specific instructions and/or referring to documents you may wish to attach to the Directive to clarify your wishes about a variety of medical situations.

The directive must be signed in the presence of two witnesses OR a notary. This directive is available in English and Spanish at

[hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/forms/miscellaneous/form-livingwill-directive-physicians-family-or-surrogates](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/forms/miscellaneous/form-livingwill-directive-physicians-family-or-surrogates).

Once you have completed this document, give copies to your medical agent(s), your health care providers, and your family. Keep a list of everyone who has a copy, so that you can provide them with updated documents if you make any changes.

## **Declaration for Mental Health Treatment**

A competent adult may declare his or her preferences for mental health treatment should he or she become incapacitated in the future. The mental health treatment covered by the directive includes psychoactive

medications, electroconvulsive or other convulsive treatment, emergency medical care, and other preferences. The declaration only becomes effective should the person be declared to be incapacitated at a later time by a court of law. The form must be signed in front of two witnesses who will not benefit from the person's will and who are not related or caring for the person completing the form. The witnesses must affirm that the person signing the declaration appeared to be of sound mind. Alternatively, the declaration may be signed by the principal and acknowledged before a notary public. The declaration remains in effect for three years unless the principal revokes the declaration or becomes incapacitated; then the declaration stays in effect until the person is no longer incapacitated.

## **Out-of-Hospital Do Not Resuscitate Order**

The OOH-DNR Order directs EMS not to perform CPR and related procedures to restart your heart and breathing. The form requires your signature in the presence of two witnesses OR a notary. **The form also requires the signature of a physician.**

Make sure that the form is easy for EMS and other health care professionals to find. For example, some patients who are bedridden tape it to the headboard of their bed.

You also have the option to purchase an OOH-DNR "device" (either a pendant or a bracelet) from a vendor approved by the state of Texas. The form and the list of vendors is at [dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/dnr.shtm](https://dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/dnr.shtm).

## **Statutory Durable Power of Attorney (for financial affairs)**

The Statutory Durable Power of Attorney is a relatively simple form that is available to anyone, without the need for an attorney. The powers granted by this document are broad and sweeping. The form lists 14 separate kinds of financial powers that can be granted. You can pick among them and add others if you like. This document does not require witnesses but must be notarized. If you have any questions about completing the form, consult an attorney.

The Statutory Durable Power of Attorney is not recognized by the Social Security Administration. A representative payee document must be filed with the Social Security Administration in order to designate another person to manage your Social Security benefits.

## **Declaration of Guardian in the Event of Later Incompetence or Need of Guardian**

This form is also referred to as the Designation of Guardian Before the Need Arises. Simply put, it allows a person to designate who he or she would like to be a guardian of his or her estate and person in the event a guardian is ever necessary. This document is especially useful for persons without living parents or close relatives.

## **Body Disposition Authorization**

Texas' Health & Safety Code 711.002 indicates that you have the right to specify what you want done with your

remains. This is the purpose of the Body Disposition Authorization.

Often, the Body Disposition Authorization is used by people who want to be cremated. Without this document, a funeral director must secure permission of all family members who have the authority to control disposition of your remains.

The form is available on the *Directives* page at [www.fcactx.org](http://www.fcactx.org), or call (512) 480-0555.

## **Appointment for Disposition of Remains**

The Appointment for Disposition of Remains allows you to appoint an **agent** to control the disposition of your remains.

If no one is appointed to control the disposition, the following persons, in the order listed, have the right to control the disposition:

1. the decedent's surviving spouse
2. any one of the decedent's surviving adult children
3. either one of the decedent's surviving parents
4. any one of the decedent's surviving adult siblings
5. any adult in the next legal degree of kinship

Using this document to appoint an agent reduces possible conflict among those persons who would otherwise have equal authority to control the disposition decision, such as several adult children, who may or may not agree with your wishes.

The form is available on the *Directives* page at [www.fcactx.org](http://www.fcactx.org), or call (512) 480-0555.

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## Resources

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Though none of the documents discussed above require the services of an attorney, you should consult one if you do not understand the forms or have questions about what you can and cannot do. Almost everyone needs to have a will, and an attorney can prepare one that is more likely to stand up in court than a self-made version. Finding a lawyer is much like finding a physician. It is best to find a good one before you desperately need legal advice. It is wise to shop for an attorney who is experienced in your specific area of need. It is particularly important to consult an attorney when there are children, stepchildren, second marriages, estate assets, and/or other situations that make legal issues more challenging or may increase disputes.

### **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

6800 Bureson Rd  
Bldg. 310, Suite 165  
Austin, TX 78744  
(512) 916-6062  
(888) 622-9111 ex. 6062

[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)

Information on finding resources for legal assistance.

### **Dispute Resolution Center**

5407 North IH 35 #410  
Austin, TX 78723  
(512) 371-0033 or (512) 279-1904 for special needs

[www.austindrc.org](http://www.austindrc.org)

This center trains volunteers to help people in conflict resolve their differences without the expense of legal action. Agreements are in writing and are signed by all parties. Although not legally binding, they can be used to establish agreement

in court if necessary. There is a sliding scale. Sometimes disputes are not legal issues. Mediation skills can also help in making other kinds of decisions, such as housing and medical care.

### **Elderlaw (Assistant Attorney General's Office)**

(512) 463-2070

Referral service. Assists with consumer complaints.

### **Family Eldercare's Guardianship and Money Management Program**

1700 Rutherford Ln

Austin, TX 78754

(512) 450-0844

[www.familyeldercare.org](http://www.familyeldercare.org)

This program of Family Eldercare offers information and assistance for those who cannot adequately manage their own affairs and who have no family or friends to help. Services range from assistance in everyday financial management to full guardianship. Fees are charged on a sliding scale.

### **Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas**

3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13

Austin, TX 78705

(512) 480-0555

[www.fcactx.org](http://www.fcactx.org)

FCA of Central Texas, a volunteer-run, nonprofit organization, helps people make educated, practical choices that will meet their needs at the end of life. FCA's free funeral home price survey helps you reduce final expenses by comparing prices at funeral homes located in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties.

### **Kitchen Table Conversations**

(512) 787-3402

[www.kitchentableconversations.org](http://www.kitchentableconversations.org)

Kitchen Table Conversations provides education and re-

sources that empower Central Texans to have end of life conversations with loved ones and health care providers and to legally document their wishes ensuring those choices are honored and respected.

### **Lawyer Referral Service of Central Texas**

(512) 472-8303

(866) 303-8303

**[www.austinlrs.com](http://www.austinlrs.com)**

The Lawyer Referral Service is a non-profit group sponsored by the Travis County Bar Association. It refers clients needing an attorney to one who has experience in the appropriate field of law. There is a \$20 fee for the initial 30-minute consultation. The client and attorney negotiate the fees thereafter. Office hours are 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM M-F.

### **Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid**

4920 North IH 35

Austin, TX 78751

(512) 374-2700

(800) 369-9270

**[www.trla.org](http://www.trla.org)**

Legal Aid is a non-profit agency that provides legal services and advice to low-income persons. Legal Aid only handles civil matters. These cases include housing and consumer problems, racial discrimination, entitlement hearings and appeals, domestic matters, and mental health issues. It provides mediation services. Clients must meet low-income guidelines and must be over the age of 60. Office hours are 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM Fri and 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM M-Th.

### **Texas Legal Services Center**

(512) 477-3950

(800) 622-2520

**[www.tlsc.org](http://www.tlsc.org)**

Offers free telephone counseling, Family Law clinics, Impact

Litigation, Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault Network, and South Central Pension Rights Project.

### **Probate Court of Travis County**

1000 Guadalupe, Room 217  
Austin, TX 78701  
(512) 854-9188

[www.co.travis.tx.us/probate](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/probate)

Filing and probating of wills in Travis County.

### **Texas Advocacy Project**

(800) 374-HOPE

[www.texasadvocacyproject.org](http://www.texasadvocacyproject.org)

Texas Advocacy Project works to prevent domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking throughout Texas through free legal services, access to the justice system, and education.

### **Texas Medical Association**

401 West 15th Street #100  
Austin, TX 78701  
(512) 370-1300

[www.texmed.org](http://www.texmed.org)

Provides Directive to Physicians and Medical Power of Attorney forms free of charge.

### **The Texas Young Lawyers Association**

(800) 204-2222, Ext. 1529

[tyla.org/resource/guardianship-guide](http://tyla.org/resource/guardianship-guide)

Provides a free **Guardianship Guide**, which explains that your fiduciary duties to the ward and the Court last until you are discharged and released by the Court.



## Advocacy Equals Action

In the Austin area we have more resources than many other cities and counties, but there is much room for improvement. Change can come about when groups of individuals with common interests and concerns organize in order to initiate changes. We often forget that as individuals we can influence the social policy and legislation that directly impact our daily lives.

If, like many others, you feel frustrated about a lack of resources and services for impaired and older individuals, maybe the time has come for you to take action. Most of us feel better knowing we have at least tried to improve a problem, but feeling that our efforts alone are futile may prevent us from ever trying.

One way to avoid feeling alone or frustrated in your efforts to bring about change is to join an established organization that advocates for the things in which you also believe. These group experiences can give you the opportunity to meet other concerned persons, to learn about new programs and ideas, and to try out your new “advocacy wings” among friends. These organizations also can keep you updated on relevant issues through newsletters and speaker engagements.

There are many advocacy groups in Austin. Some well-known groups concerned with the problems of the elderly include

### **ADAPT of Texas**

A grassroots disability rights group.

(512) 442-0252

[www.adaptoftexas.org](http://www.adaptoftexas.org)

## **AARP Texas**

A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older.

(866) 227-7443

[states.aarp.org/texas](https://states.aarp.org/texas)

To contact a local chapter, please call (512) 480-2418. To find other chapters, visit [aarp.org/giving-back/aarp-chapter-locator](https://aarp.org/giving-back/aarp-chapter-locator)

## **Aging Services Council**

A network of individuals and organizations who work together to ensure that older adults and caregivers have the information and services they need to support themselves and family members as they age.

[agingservicescouncil.org](https://agingservicescouncil.org)

## **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

Serves older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers with a variety of services and support throughout the region. (512) 916-6062

[capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging](https://capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging)

## **Austin LGBT Coalition on Aging**

Works to improve the condition of the LGBT aging community through advocacy, education, and programs/services.

[algbtcoa.org](https://algbtcoa.org)

## **AustinUP**

A nonprofit community alliance working on issues related to the future of aging in Austin.

[austinup.org](https://austinup.org)

## **Central Texas Advocates for Seniors**

A nonprofit, all-volunteer organization that acts as a community advocate for senior citizens in Comal, Guadalupe, and Hays counties.

(830) 822-1187

[ctasrs.org](https://ctasrs.org)

## **City of Austin Commission on Seniors**

A volunteer advisory board to the Austin City Council concerning quality of life for senior citizens in the Austin area.  
[austintexas.gov/content/commission-seniors](https://austintexas.gov/content/commission-seniors)

## **Coalition of Texans with Disabilities**

A nonprofit working to ensure that persons with disabilities may work, live, learn, play, and participate fully in the community of their choice.  
(512) 478-3366  
[txdisabilities.org](https://txdisabilities.org)

## **LeadingAge Texas**

A trade association representing the full continuum of mission-driven, not-for-profit aging services providers in Texas.  
(512) 467-2242  
[leadingagetexas.org](https://leadingagetexas.org)

## **Texas Impact**

Advocates for freedom, justice, and economic opportunity for all people, consistent with the values of mainstream faith communities.  
(512) 472-3903  
[texasimpact.org](https://texasimpact.org)

## **Texas Senior Advocacy Coalition**

Develops and actively supports public policy to protect and enhance the quality of life for older adults and their families.  
(254) 292-1837  
[txsac.org](https://txsac.org)

## **Texas Veterans Portal**

Connects veterans, their families and caregivers to the benefits and services earned through their military service.  
[veterans.portal.texas.gov](https://veterans.portal.texas.gov)

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## Voting

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One of the best ways to advocate for change in your community is to vote. Find out more about how to vote in Central Texas by visiting the websites listed below.

### Voting in Travis County

[countyclerk.traviscountytexas.gov/elections.html](http://countyclerk.traviscountytexas.gov/elections.html)

### Travis County Information for Senior Voters and Voters with Special Needs

[countyclerk.traviscountytexas.gov/elections/senior-voters-and-voters-with-special-needs.html](http://countyclerk.traviscountytexas.gov/elections/senior-voters-and-voters-with-special-needs.html)

### Voting in Williamson County

[wilco.org/Departments/Elections](http://wilco.org/Departments/Elections)

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## Communicating Your Concerns

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Effective advocacy inevitably involves contact with a wide variety of public policy makers. People who hold office cannot read minds. If we do not communicate our needs, we cannot expect anyone else to meet them. It is important to know that to an elected official, every letter, phone call, or visit represents about 5,000 other people with the same concern (the “silent majority” theory). So, in a very real sense, you are never alone as an advocate.

“So,” you say, “how do I go about it?” Here are some helpful hints.

- Get the facts. The more you know about the issue, the more likely you will be to get the attention of the person you are trying to influence. Some research beforehand will give you more credibility and more confidence.

- Express your opinion to as many of those persons capable of positively influencing the situation as possible.
- Whether you write, call, or visit, remember to be direct, brief, and polite.
- Whenever possible, try to compliment the person on something he or she has done, especially in an area related to your concern.
- Always focus on your major point, as you will be more effective if you don't stray from your main objective.
- Send a personal note whenever possible; a signed but pre-printed card is not as effective.
- A direct phone call can be helpful; try to get past the receptionist.
- A personal visit is considered the most effective tactic. An appointment is desirable but not necessary, since schedule changes can affect the best of plans. Remember that staff persons are generally well informed and can carry your message to the official.

You CAN make a difference if you care enough to take action. If you get someone to join you, you'll be that much closer to your goal.

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## **Find Your Representatives**

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This resource is helpful for finding contact information for your Texas representatives based on your home address.

**<https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home>**

The League of Women Voters of the Austin Area provides nonpartisan information on elections and vot-

ing. Their goal is to offer the complete list of all contests on your ballot, including state and local offices and propositions. This service is free to voters and free to candidates.

**League of Women Voters of the Austin Area**

(512) 451-6710

**[lwvaustin.org](http://lwvaustin.org)**

## Aging and Caregiving

Aging is a part of living, not a disease! Look around you to see the wide variety of activities and work in which older people are engaged. When an older person experiences physical impairment and can no longer be completely independent, there can still be meaning and joy in life.

Those of us who are professional helpers have had the opportunity to know many older people affected by serious health problems. They are fighting diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, emphysema, and arthritis. They are coping with weakness, paralysis, and confusion. Such difficulties are a challenge to living a full, satisfying life.

We have learned that elders take on that challenge. They are determined to continue living at home, to live much as they always have, and to keep their humor and enjoyment of life. At times, this challenge can only be met with some degree of family and community assistance.

### Common Myths About Aging

Some slowing down and physical changes are natural parts of aging. But *serious* interference with daily activities usually comes from conditions that are not “just a part of old age.” The following are some commonly held beliefs about aging, coupled with the true facts.

**MYTH:** Older adulthood begins at 65.

**FACT:** There is absolutely no scientific, biological, or

psychological reason or evidence for choosing the 65<sup>th</sup> year as the year at which to mark a dramatic life transition.

**MYTH:** Growing older results in mental deterioration and senility.

**FACT:** Symptoms such as gross intellectual impairment, confusion, depression, hallucination, and delusions are most likely the result of disease and/or adverse drug interactions and not the normal aging process.

**MYTH:** Old people are frail.

**FACT:** Although chronic conditions like arthritis or heart problems affect at least 75% of the elderly, the vast majority finds that they can continue to perform their daily activities with relative independence. Only about 5% of the over-65 population resides in nursing homes, hospitals, or other institutional settings at any given time.

**MYTH:** Older people are less competent workers and should retire.

**FACT:** Workers over 50 receive high evaluations in performance and productivity, are punctual, have good attendance, and are cost effective. A New York University study found that as we grow older, our productivity increases moderately but steadily. Some 13% of the over-65 population are in the workforce. Many volunteer.

**MYTH:** Old people have no interest in or ability to participate in sex.

**FACT:** Sexuality remains an important part of human



life at any age. People usually can continue to express their sexuality well into their later years. Serious physical illness or emotional problems can interfere with sexual expression at any age; talking to medical or mental health professionals can help.

As is true for most everyone, pursuing life goals is the main occupation of older people. The physical, personal, and social demands of aging can make this pursuit more challenging than at other stages of life. How easily and successfully a person will adapt and accomplish goals depends on the interaction of many complex factors.

## **For the Elder: How to Feel More like Yourself When You're Not Feeling Quite Yourself**

### **DEPENDENCY**

In this section, we want to speak directly to you, the elder who is facing life with a disability or a disease that must be dealt with because it will not disappear. When you must depend on others, you may

- Feel your body has let you down.
- Realize there are things you just cannot do anymore.
- Resent needing help from others.
- Feel guilty that your lived ones must spend time and energy helping you.
- Feel like giving up and not trying anymore.
- Feel depressed, listless, blue, not your usual self.
- Not want to be left alone, but feel resentful of someone always being with you.

## **BASIC NEEDS**

Every person has basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. In addition to these needs, consider the importance of

- Feeling in control of your life.
- Feeling needed and useful.
- Feeling loved and cared for.
- Having something to look forward to.
- Feeling safe and secure.

### *To Feel in Control of Your Life:*

- Participate in your care to the extent you are able.
- Express your ideas to others about how you would like things to be done.
- Arrange your activities so that you succeed in what you do.

### *To Feel Needed and Useful:*

- Participate in family and neighborhood activities and decisions.
- Explore volunteering, either in or out of your home.
- Adapt hobbies or other activities to your present capabilities.
- Bring your experience to others. You have survived personal, national, and international crises. Share the benefit of your experience with those around you.

### *To Feel Loved and Cared For:*

- Share your feelings with your loved ones; don't let resentments build up.
- Try to understand the point of view of others; they will appreciate it.

- Tell someone if you are lonely and need companionship—volunteers, neighbors, young people may be able to spend time with you, doing something you both enjoy.
- Keep your sense of humor.

*To Have Something to Look Forward to:*

- Reach out and try something new.
- Change your routine or try doing things a different way to add variety.
- Ask people around you about new things in their lives—you may get ideas.

*To Feel Safe and Secure:*

- Express your fears and take action to relieve them.
- Talk to others in similar situations—it's comforting to know that you are not alone.

You may have ideas about ways to make positive changes. Sharing your ideas with those who are close to you may be a step in the right direction.

## **DEPRESSION**

Depression is the most common mental health problem of older people. It can be triggered by

- Loss;
- Grief;
- Illness;
- Immobility;
- Isolation;
- Retirement;
- Medication interactions, side effects, or misuse;
- Alcohol or other drug abuse; or
- Physical illness.

Severe depression is not normal at any age. When depression lasts more than a few days or a week and interferes with enjoyment of life, it deserves attention, regardless of your age. Symptoms of depression include

- Feeling listless,
- Having many physical complaints,
- Sleeping or eating too much or too little,
- Feeling very pessimistic,
- Complaining of memory loss, or
- Forgetting recent and past events.

If you are depressed, family and friends may try to help by encouraging you to get mental health treatment. Supportive therapy from a professional, with or without medication, is often helpful. Sometimes a stay in the hospital may be needed. (See “Counseling” and “Alcohol/Drug Abuse” sections for more information.)

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## **For the Caregiver**

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If you have decided to care for an older loved one in your home, you deserve enormous credit. The task is probably more difficult than you first imagined. At the same time, you are probably more capable than you thought yourself to be. You have a great deal of common sense and what you don't know, you can learn.

Whether you are providing care in your home or are commuting to provide care where your elder lives, you have a big job. Certain aspects of the situation may be discouraging, no matter how much you want to help or

how much satisfaction you derive from helping. In this situation you may feel

**Resentment** at having to give care, always attending to someone else's needs; "I thought I'd have some time to myself when the kids grew up. Instead, I have less time than ever, caring for Mom since her stroke."

**Exhaustion** from the never-ending nature of the tasks. Personal care, cooking, and housework are repetitive chores that may offer little sense of accomplishment: "I work so hard, but there's always more laundry to do and then another meal to prepare."

**Sadness** that the role your family member used to play in your life has changed: "I never expected to have to give my husband the kind of care I gave my children."

**Frustration** that you don't have time for your own needs and pleasures: "When will it be my turn, and will I be healthy enough to enjoy it when it comes?"

**Anger** that others don't offer more help: "Everyone says Jean is such a good daughter, but where is she now?"

**Guilt** that you wish for more gratitude than your elder can express: "She could at least say 'thank you' when I bring in her dinner!"

**Pain** at seeing your loved one deteriorate; "She was always so independent. It hurts to see her in a wheelchair."

**Exasperation** with barriers to assistance within the social service system: "If I have to make one more phone call!" Often long waits and repeated calls are necessary. So are patience and persistence!

## STRESS

All the feelings discussed above can cause stress. Unrelieved stress may lead to a decline in your own health and emotional well-being, and it may affect other members of your family. Signs of stress include irritabil-

ity, pessimism, sleeplessness, physical symptoms such as constipation or diarrhea, or impatience with others.

### ***Relieving Stress***

***Get adequate rest and good nutrition.*** This will help prepare you to face each day. If caring for your elder keeps you from sleeping, ask a family member to take over periodically and allow you to get a full night's sleep.

***Exercise regularly.*** Even taking a short walk helps relieve tension. Regular physical activity keeps the body working better.

***Get away.*** This gives you needed time off for activities you enjoy. Arrange for someone else to take over for you on a regularly scheduled basis. Knowing that every Tuesday evening is yours can help.

***Allow others to help.*** If you do it all yourself, you risk exhaustion. Ask others to help; they may enjoy feeling useful, and you can do a better job.

***Talk about your frustrations.*** Telling a supportive family member or friend about your problems can make them easier to bear.

***Go easy on yourself.*** You are probably feeling just what others in similar situations feel. Try not to link your personal sense of accomplishment or failure to the health or mood of the person for whom you are caring.

***Set personal milestones that you can achieve.*** Plan to spend 15 minutes doing something that is important to you—then do it.

***Reorganize your work.*** Make sure you're doing things the easiest way. Also, a mere change in routine can combat boredom and fatigue.

***Get involved in spiritual activities.*** Spiritual activities and religious ritual can be a source of strength. Rabbi Shalomi calls caregiving "a sacred vocation . . . a noble path of service."

## OTHER WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS

Each of the following exercises will help you to relax. You also can combine them into one super-relaxation session.

***Listen to music.*** Take a few minutes to listen to music that you find especially relaxing. In addition, recordings of the ocean, mountain streams, rain, and other relaxing sounds are available in stores and most public libraries.

***Breathe rhythmically.*** Slowly take deep breaths, fully expanding your abdomen and chest, and then breathe out slowly. As you inhale, imagine the fresh air going through your mind and body. As you exhale, imagine tensions and negative feelings leaving your body.

***Relax your body systematically.*** Tighten the muscles of your body one group at a time. Start by clenching your feet and toes; relax them and enjoy the sensation of letting go. Continue with your lower legs, alternately tensing and relaxing, and so on up your body. Don't forget to include your face, especially your jaw and eyes. Imagine the tension leaving your body, and it will.

***Visualize pleasant surroundings and happenings.*** When you have finished relaxing your body, imagine that you are in your favorite vacation spot or retreat space.

*It is extremely important to take care of yourself so that you can be and do your best. Accessing and sharing humor are vital.*

### CaregiverU

(512) 451-4611

[www.CaregiverUcentx.org](http://www.CaregiverUcentx.org)

CaregiverU is a collaboration of more than 20 Central Texas non-profit agencies and community organizations. The

collaboration offers free classes that provide education, support, and resources to older adults and family caregivers. In person courses are offered multiple times throughout the year at various locations in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop counties. Online classes are also available. Class days and times vary depending on which agency is hosting the course.



## Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Alcohol can often help people relax, socialize, and celebrate events. Prescribed and over-the-counter medications can cure illness, manage symptoms, and save lives. For older adults, however, alcohol and medication misuse can become hidden problems that affect their health, well-being, and families.

Up to 3.5 million older adults may have a serious alcohol problem. In addition, up to three-fourths of all older adults may not be using medications as prescribed or directed. The misuse, abuse, and/or adverse interactions of these substances may be difficult to spot, especially in persons with little social contact from neighbors, friends, or family. Even observant family members and friends may fail to detect an alcohol or drug problem due to denial, misguided tolerance of the problem, or a lack of knowledge about alcohol and drugs in later life.

There are two groups of older adults who have drinking problems:

- Those who have a long history of alcohol abuse and continue excessive drinking in their older years.
- Those who begin to abuse alcohol in reaction to the stresses of aging, especially retirement, death of a spouse, or health or financial problems.

Alcohol and drugs are assimilated differently in the older adult's body than in a younger person's. Alcohol has a greater effect on the aging body because it is burned off more slowly, is more concentrated in the body, and gets into the brain more easily and quickly. Medications may also have a greater effect in older

adults; this can result in overdose. Combinations of drugs can cause adverse reactions. Finally, combining alcohol and medications can have very dangerous effects: drowsiness and lack of alertness, a tendency to fall or have accidents, life-threatening depression of the central nervous system, and interference with the effectiveness of the medication.

## **Recognizing the Problem**

The following problems may be caused or made worse by alcohol or medication misuse: depression or suicidal thoughts, mood changes, memory problems, social isolation, resentment and hostility, malnutrition, stomach problems, incontinence, sleep problems, memory loss, confusion, tremors, falls, bruises and cuts, poor hygiene, an unkept home. In addition, having more than two drinks per day on a regular basis may indicate a problem.

Physicians are often unable to recognize alcohol and medication abuse in their older patients. In addition, health care providers who are not sensitized to the problems of elderly alcoholics frequently see physical and mental disorders as a symptom of aging rather than as conditions aggravated or caused by alcohol or medication abuse. Therefore, it is very important to carefully observe the ways in which the older adult is using alcohol and medications.

## **Taking Action**

Sometimes a person with an alcohol or medication problem can stop when confronted. In fact, older people have the highest recovery rate of all age groups. Research

shows that a key factor in the recovery of older people is the concern and involvement of family and friends.

Sometimes, however, the person cannot stop without professional help. A range of effective treatment options is available, including programs tailored for the needs of older adults. It is critical that family, friends, neighbors, and caregivers who notice these problems take action. With help, older adults can understand and make peace with life, with themselves, and with their families.

**Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**

Meets in multiple locations across the Central Texas area.  
(512) 444-0071

[www.austinaa.org/meetings](http://www.austinaa.org/meetings)

**Austin-Travis County Integral Care (ATCIC)**

(512) 472-4357, (512) 703-1395 TDD, **24-hour Hotline to Help**

[www.integralcare.org/en/home](http://www.integralcare.org/en/home)

Provides a variety of substance abuse services.

**Texas Health and Human Services: Mental Health & Substance Abuse**

(844) 309-6385

OSAR (Outreach, Screening, and Referral Program) for information and referral.

**Austin Recovery**

Recovery and Addiction Treatment, In-patient and Outpatient treatment available, all ages.

(512) 697-8600

[www.austinrecovery.org](http://www.austinrecovery.org)

**AL-ANON/ ALATEEN**

Provides support groups for friends and family members.

[www.austinalanon.org](http://www.austinalanon.org)

## Alzheimer's and Dementia

Alzheimer's (AHLZ-high-merz) is a disease of the brain that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. It is not a normal part of aging. Alzheimer's gets worse over time. Although symptoms can vary widely, the first problem many people notice is forgetfulness severe enough to affect their ability to function at home or at work, or to enjoy lifelong hobbies. The disease may cause a person to become confused, lost in familiar places, misplace things, or have trouble with language.

### == When Memory Loss is a Warning Sign ==

Many people worry about becoming more forgetful as they grow older. Our brains change as we age, just like the rest of our bodies. Most of us eventually notice some slowed thinking and problems remembering certain things. However, serious memory loss, confusion, and other major changes in the way our minds work are not typical parts of aging. Many conditions can disrupt memory and mental function. Symptoms may improve when the underlying cause is treated. Possible causes of memory problems include depression, medication side effects, excess alcohol use, thyroid problems, poor diet, vitamin deficiencies, certain infections, and Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Anyone experiencing significant memory problems should see a doctor as soon as possible. Methods for early diagnosis are improving dramatically, and treatment op-

tions and sources of support can improve quality of life. An early diagnosis helps individuals receive treatment for symptoms and gain access to programs and support services. It may also allow them to take part in decisions about care, living arrangements, money and legal matters.

## **10 WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE**

It may be hard to know the difference between age-related changes and the first signs of Alzheimer's disease. Some people recognize changes in themselves before anyone else notices. Other times, friends and family are the first to observe changes in the person's memory, behavior, or abilities. To help identify problems early, the Alzheimer's Association has created a list of warning signs for Alzheimer's and related dementias. Individuals may experience one or more of these signs in different degrees.

### **1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life**

Forgetting recently learned information, important dates or events; repeatedly asking for the same information; and increasingly needing to rely on memory aides

#### **What's a typical age-related change?**

Sometimes forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later.

### **2. Challenges in planning or solving problems**

Changes in ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers; trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills.

#### **What's a typical age-related change?**

Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.

**3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure**

Find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work, or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Occasionally needing help to use the setting on a microwave or to record a television show.

**4. Confusion with time or place**

Lose track of dates, season, and the passage of time; trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately; forget where they are or how they got there.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

**5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships**

Difficulty reading, judging distance, and determining color or contrast, which may cause problems with driving.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Vision changes related to cataracts.

**6. New problems with words in speaking or writing**

May have trouble following or joining a conversation, or stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

**7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps**

May put things in unusual places; may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again; may sometimes accuse others of stealing.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

**8. Decreased or poor judgment**

Changes in judgment of decision making; may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketer; may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Making a bad decision once in a while.

**9. Withdrawal from work or social activities**

May start to remove themselves from hobbies, social activities, work projects, or sports; may have trouble keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering how to complete a favorite hobby. They may also avoid being social because of the changes they have experienced.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Sometimes feeling weary or work, family, and social obligations.

**10. Changes in mood and personality**

Can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful, or anxious; may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends, or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.

**What's a typical age-related change?**

Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

## Alzheimer's Disease and Other Types of Dementia

More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. That includes 13% of those over age 65 and nearly 50% of those 85 and older. By 2050, the number of individuals with the disease may reach 16 million. Because 70% of those with Alzheimer's live at home, its impact extends to millions of family members, friends, and caregivers. Dementia is a general term for the loss of memory and other intellectual abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia. Alzheimer's accounts for 60% to 80% of dementia cases. Other disorders that can cause memory loss, confusion, and other symptoms associated with dementia include:

- **Vascular dementia**, often considered the second most common type of dementia, refers to the impairment cause by reduced blood flow to parts of the brain. One type may develop after a single major stroke blocks blood flow to a large area of brain tissue. Another kind, formerly called multi-infarct dementia, can occur when a series of very small strokes clog tiny arteries. Individually, these strokes are too minor to cause significant symptoms, but over time their combined effect becomes noticeable. Vascular dementia symptoms can be similar to Alzheimer's disease. They include problems with memory and confusion and difficulty following instructions. In some cases, the impairment associated with vascular dementia can occur in "steps" rather than in the slow steady decline usually seen in Alzheimer's.



- **Mixed dementia** is a condition in which Alzheimer's disease and one or more other dementias occur together. Evidence shows that this type of dementia is much more common than once believed.
- **Dementia with Lewy bodies** often starts with wide variations in attention and alertness. Individuals affected by this illness often experience visual hallucinations as well as muscle rigidity and tremors similar to those associated with Parkinson's disease.
- **Physical injury to the brain** caused by an automobile accident or other trauma can damage or destroy brain cells and cause symptoms of dementia such as behavioral changes, memory loss, and other cognitive difficulties.
- **Huntington's disease** is an inherited, progressive disorder that causes irregular movements of the arms, legs, and facial muscles; personality changes; and a decline in the ability to think clearly.
- **Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD)** (CROYZ-felt YAH-kob) is a rare, rapidly fatal disorder that impairs memory and coordination and causes behavior changes. Recently, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) was identified as the human disorder believed to be caused by eating meat from cattle affected by mad cow disease.
- **Frontotemporal dementia** is a term describing several conditions (such as Pick's disease and primary progressive aphasia) in which front and side areas of the brain are especially affected. Personality and behavior changes are often the first symptoms.
- **Normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH)** is caused by a buildup of fluid in the brain. The cause of most cases is unknown. Symptoms include difficulty walking, memory

loss, and inability to control urine. NPH can sometimes be corrected with surgery to drain the excess brain fluid.

- **Mild cognitive impairment (MCI)** is a term some doctors use to describe a situation in which a person may have problems with memory or another thinking skill that is serious enough to show up on tests, but not severe enough to interfere with daily life. Research has shown that individuals with MCI have an increased risk of progressing to Alzheimer's disease, especially when their main area of difficulty involves memory. But a diagnosis of MCI does not always mean the person will develop Alzheimer's.

## HOW TO FIND OUT IF IT'S ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

The first step in following up on symptoms is finding a doctor with whom a person feels comfortable. There is no single type of doctor that specializes in diagnosing and treating memory symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Many people contact their regular primary care physician about their concerns. Primary care doctors often oversee the diagnostic process themselves. In many cases, the doctor may refer the patient to a specialist such as a neurologist who specializes in diseases of the brain and nervous system, a psychiatrist who specializes in disorders that affect mood or the way the mind works, or a psychologist with special training in testing memory and other mental functions. There is no single test that proves a person has Alzheimer's. The workup is designed to evaluate overall health and identify any conditions that could affect how well the mind is working. Experts estimate that a skilled physician can diagnose Alzheimer's with more than 90% accuracy. Physi-

cians can almost always determine that a person has dementia, but it may sometimes be difficult to determine the exact cause. Steps to a diagnosis include understanding the problem, reviewing medical history, evaluating mood and mental status, physical exam and diagnostic tests, and a neurological exam, which may also include a brain imaging study.

## TREATING THE SYMPTOMS

Drugs and non-drug treatments may help with both cognitive and behavioral symptoms. A comprehensive care plan for Alzheimer's disease considers appropriate treatment options, monitors treatment effectiveness as the disease progresses, changes course and explores alternatives as necessary, and respects individual and family goals for treatment and tolerance for risk. While they may temporarily help symptoms, they do not slow or stop the brain changes that cause Alzheimer's to become more severe over time. Doctors sometimes prescribe vitamin E for cognitive symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

### Behavior: Some Tips for Caregivers

Create a calm, safe environment that may be better suited for the person's abilities.

- Eliminate clutter, noise, glare, and excessive noise.
- Develop soothing rituals with regular daily routines, comforting objects, gentle music, and a reassuring touch.
- Provide opportunities for exercise and satisfying activities geared to the person's abilities.

- Monitor personal comfort: ensure a comfortable temperature and check regularly for pain, hunger, thirst, constipation, full bladder, fatigue, infection, and skin irritation.
- Be sensitive to frustration about expressing wants and needs.
- Rather than argue or disagree, redirect the person's attention.
- Simplify tasks and routines.
- Avoid open-ended questions; ask yes or no questions instead.
- Allow enough rest between stimulating events such as visits from friends or neighbors.
- Use labels to cue or remind the person.
- Equip doors and gates with safety locks.
- Remove guns from the home.

### **Aging and Disability Resource Center**

(855) 937-2372

[www.adrccap.org](http://www.adrccap.org)

E-mail: [adrccap@capcog.org](mailto:adrccap@capcog.org)

A single access point to long-term services and support program benefits for older adults, those with disabilities, and their caregivers. With a network of federal, state, and local governments and nonprofit organizations, the resource center supplies older and disabled residents the single best resource for discovering information about services and benefits they need. May also have assistance with short-term respite care depending on funding availability.

### **Alzheimer's Association Capital of Texas Chapter**

(800) 272-3900; (512) 592-0990

[www.alz.org/texascapital](http://www.alz.org/texascapital)

Provides free comprehensive information for family care-

givers, healthcare providers, researchers, and the media on risk factors, diagnosis, and treatment options; day-to-day care; legal and financial planning; safety services and MedicAlert+SafeReturn; funds local researchers; shares Alzheimer's Disease related news releases; advocates for patients and caregivers

**Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center**  
(800) 438-4380

[www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers)

Provides current and comprehensive Alzheimer's disease information and resources from the National Institute on Aging; research updates; directory of National Institute on Aging Alzheimer's Disease Centers; clinical trials database; recommended reading list for caregivers; and press releases.

**Alzheimer's Foundation of America**

(800)-232-8484

<https://alzfdn.org>

Disease information, Resources, Caregiver Tips, News

**Alzheimer's Texas**

(512) 241-0420

[www.txalz.org](http://www.txalz.org)

Alzheimer's Texas (formerly known as Alzheimer's Association Capital of Texas Chapter) works to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research and to enhance care and support for individuals, their families, and caregivers. Alzheimer's Texas provides information, referrals, education and training, care consultations, support groups, early stage programs, and community based respite development.

**Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

(512) 916-6062

[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)

E-mail: AAAInfo@capcog.org

The Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area provides quality services to support and advocate for the health, safety,

and well-being of older adults in the 10-county region. Serving the people of Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, and Williamson counties in Texas since 1982, it strives to provide services that help meet the needs of the individual consumer or the needs of someone you care for. Trained staff provides contact information for referral agencies or outside service providers to assist you, including access to respite care.

**Take Time Texas**

(512) 438-5555

**<https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/taketimetexas>**

The Texas Lifespan Respite Care Program (TLRCP) was initiated by the 81st Legislature to increase the availability of respite services for family members who care for a person of any age with any chronic health condition or disability.

**Texas Department of State Health Services Alzheimer’s Disease Program**

(800) 242-3399

**<https://dshs.state.tx.us/alzheimers>**

Provides information, education, and support to individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers; addresses the burden of Alzheimer’s disease through statewide strategic planning with the Texas Council on Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders and the Texas Alzheimer’s Disease Partnership; staffs the legislatively mandated Texas Council on Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders; and serves as the state’s liaison to the Texas Alzheimer’s Research and Care Consortium.

**Texas Department of Public Safety Silver Alert Program**

(512) 424-2080

**<https://dps.texas.gov/dem/Operations/Alerts/SilverAlertOverview>**

Assists law enforcement in the recovery of missing senior citizens with a documented mental condition. Caregivers should

immediately report wandering incidents to their local law enforcement agency. Only law enforcement can request activation of the Texas Silver Alert Network, having met state alert criteria. Caregivers should prepare in advance through obtaining a physician's letterhead (with signature), indicating the missing senior citizen's name, condition, and date of diagnosis.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Alzheimer's website**

**[www.alzheimers.gov](http://www.alzheimers.gov)**

The Federal Government portal to information on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias care, research, and support.

## **Being Responsible for Another's Well-Being and Personal Care**

You may be giving very personal kinds of care to your elder. For yourself, you do these activities automatically. Doing them for someone else requires practice and concentration. Special consideration of your elder's medical needs will determine how you perform these tasks.

The following information on personal care and nutrition is designed to teach necessary skills to people who give care. For individualized instructions, you may wish to call a certified home health agency for information.

The informal caregiver, as the primary contact person in the home, acts as the eyes and ears of the formal care system. Informal caregivers can observe and evaluate the signs and symptoms of illness and report them to health care professionals. This process includes careful observation of the person as well as asking the person how he or she feels.

Each person has an individual response to an illness. Symptoms are usually less evident in elderly persons, and the disease process may move more slowly than in younger adults. Older people may not feel pain or other symptoms as acutely as younger adults. In addition to observing, therefore, it is very important to question carefully the older person about how he or she is feeling.



Meeting the human needs of the person receiving care is very important. These needs are love and affection, recognition, acceptance, security, trust, socialization, food, clothing, shelter, rest, activity, avoidance of pain, and escape from danger. The caregiver needs to know how the individual feels about receiving personal care. Some persons may be embarrassed or reluctant to undergo procedures of an intimate nature, or they simply may not want to be touched. Talking to the person about his or her feelings can lead to better understanding.

## **Problems to Watch For**

Watch for signs and symptoms that may indicate problems and the need for medical attention.

### **SKELETAL AND MUSCULAR SYSTEMS**

- Swelling of ligaments and limbs around joints
- Grimacing as the person moves
- Slow movements
- Bruising of the skin
- Whiteness, shiny red or hot areas over a swollen joint
- Loss of strength

### **SKIN**

- Color, texture, or temperature changes
- Swelling
- Clamminess or moistness to the touch
- Dry, oily, white, or scaly patches
- Markings such as moles, scars, or warts
- Sores, wounds, lumps
- Odor

- Hair condition -- oily, dry, dull, brittle, infestations, or hair loss
- Scalp condition -- scaly, dandruff, or red

### **CIRCULATORY SYSTEM**

- Swelling of ankles and feet
- Swelling or hard knots in the lymph nodes of the neck, groin, or armpit
- Blue or white color of the nail beds, lips, feet, or hands
- Changes in the pulse rate -- faster, slower, irregular, weak, or strong

### **RESPIRATORY SYSTEM**

- Changes in the rate of respiration
- Breathing -- difficult, shallow, or noisy
- Cough
- Sputum -- white, yellow, odorous, thick, or liquid
- Nose -- stopped up, bleeding, dry, draining
- Throat -- sore, red or white spots, swollen tonsils, difficulty swallowing

### **DIGESTIVE SYSTEM**

- Mouth and tongue -- red, swollen, spotted
- Bad breath
- Diseased or bleeding gums
- Lined or coated tongue
- Cracks at the corner of the mouth
- Bloated stomach
- Signs of nausea or vomiting
- Poor appetite or refusal to eat
- Drinking large amounts of fluid
- Intestines -- bloated or reaching for the abdomen or showing facial contortion

- Bowels -- movements frequent; soft or loose; stools hard to move; stools black, blood-tinged, clay colored, or with mucus; grimacing with pain when moving the bowels

## **NERVOUS SYSTEM**

- Shaking of limbs or body
- Slowness in reacting
- Cannot easily awaken the person after a head injury
- Eyes -- sudden onset of impaired vision; sensitive to light; dull; over-bright; with discharge; bloodshot; whites are yellow in color; moist; glassy
- Facial drooping on one side
- Slurred speech
- Confusion
- Weakness -- may be one sided
- Ears -- discharge; pulling ear as if in pain; ringing in ears; sudden onset of impaired hearing

## **URINARY SYSTEM**

- Urine red, rust-colored, or with sediment
- Urination frequent
- Difficult to start stream
- Small or large amount of urine with an urgent feeling to urinate
- Dribbling, cannot empty bladder completely
- Foul odor to urine
- Pain with urination

## **REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**

- Vaginal discharge -- green, yellow, white; watery, cheesy consistency; odorous
- Breasts -- lumps, thickening, dimples; nipple discharge; swollen; change in contour of nipple or breast tissue

- Male genitalia -- abnormal discharge yellow or white in color; testicles lumpy or swollen

### **ENDOCRINE SYSTEM**

Signs will be reflected in other systems, such as

- Increased fluid intake, thirst
- Frequent urination
- Dry skin
- Mood changes

### **CARDIAC SYSTEM**

- Pain and/or heaviness in chest
- Nausea
- Profuse perspiration
- Pain radiating to jaw, neck, shoulder, left arm

### **BEHAVIOR AND/OR MOOD CHANGES**

The caregiver may observe that the elder is being overly critical, aggressive, irritable, listless, withdrawn, angry, demanding, sullen, abusive, anxious, sad and crying, or depressed. Depression is the most common mental health problem faced by older people. Severe depression is not normal at any age. (See "Depression" in the "Counseling" section; for a list of causes and symptoms, see the sections on "Counseling" and "Alcohol and Drug Abuse.")

# Care Management

Older adults and their families may feel confused and frustrated by the challenges facing the elder person in today's world. Care management is a service that helps an individual navigate and assess the availability of services and resources. It is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's and family's comprehensive needs through communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes.

Identifying and accessing needed services and resources can seem to be an overwhelming and impossible task. However, there are individuals, called care managers, who provide support services to families with aging relatives. A care manager can be the link with the community to keep an aging person independent and safe in his or her home.

In general, the care manager provides the following professional services:

- Assesses the needs of the elder client and his or her family.
- Advocates on behalf of the elder.
- Develops a care plan with agreed-upon goals.
- Identifies and coordinates the delivery of all services to meet those goals.
- Monitors progress.
- Adjusts services as needed.

Examples of other services that may be offered by a care manager include the following: consultations;

money management; processing of insurance claims or other necessary forms; arrangements for housing or home modifications; arrangements for home health care and other in-home services; guardianship, advocacy, and assistance in personal, legal, and community matters; and counseling for families who are in conflict over the care of an elder.

The following agencies and organizations provide different levels of care management services.

### **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

(512) 916-6065

[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)

E-mail: AAAInfo@capcog.org

The Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area provides quality services to support and advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of older adults in the 10-county region. Serving the people of Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, and Williamson counties in Texas since 1982, and it strives to provide services that help meet the needs of the individual consumer or the needs of someone you care for. Trained staff will also provide contact information for referral agencies or outside service providers to further assist you. Services include the following:

#### **• Information and Referral**

Information and links for older adults and their caregivers regarding region-wide resources and options for next steps in seeking assistance.

#### **• Benefits Counseling**

The Benefits Counseling Program provides HICAP/SHIP-certified Medicare Benefits Counselors to answer questions about Medicare health care coverage, issues, and public benefits. A Benefits Counselor provides information and counseling free of charge to seniors 60 years of age or older and to Medicare beneficiaries of any age.

Benefits Counselors assist Medicare beneficiaries in the following areas:

- Medicare Parts A & B
- Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (Part D)
- Medicare Advantage Plans (Part C)
- Extra Help with Part D Prescription Drug Costs (a program through Social Security Administration)
- Medicare Savings Programs to help pay for Medicare Part B premium (through Texas HHSC)
- Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) Policies
- Medicare Appeals Rights and Representation
- Medicare and Employer/Secondary Health Insurance interaction
- Public Benefits Programs
- Medicare Fraud Prevention
- Medicare Preventive Health
- Understanding Medicare when you first become eligible
- Open Enrollment Period plan selection for Part D Drug Plans and Advantage Plans

For free one-on-one confidential counseling, call a Medicare benefits counselor today at (512) 916-6062 or toll free (888) 622-9111, ext. 6062.

• ***Care Coordination***

The Care Coordination Program assists older adults (60 years and older) who have been recently hospitalized or suffered a health crisis and reside in the 10-county CAPCOG area. The program provides short-term services to help our clients to remain independent and make future plans. A Care Coordinator will complete an assessment to identify client needs and develop an individual care plan. Arrangement for appropriate services and follow up is managed by the assigned Care Coordinator. The Care Coordination Program provides assistance for older adults (60 and over) who have recently been hospitalized or suffered a health care crisis (within 30 days) and who are without the financial resources to pay for the total cost of needed care. The Care Coordinator assesses

a person's needs, then links clients to in-home services on a temporary, short-term basis.

Care Coordination Services may include the following

- Homemaker services
- Limited personal assistance
- Durable medical equipment not accessed through Medicare
- Emergency Response System
- Other services that can address needs identified by assessment and care planning

#### • ***Caregiver Support Services***

Short-term support for unpaid, primary caregivers with minimal resources. Caregivers must be

- The primary caregiver, 18 years of age or older, caring for an adult 60 years of age or older OR,
- An individual of any age diagnosed with Alzheimer's or a disease-related dementia
- A family caregiver who is 55 or older and who is a grandparent or other NON-PARENT relative with primary care of a child 18 or younger
- OR a family caregiver who is 55 or older and who cares for a child or an individual with a disability.

**Important note:** All services are short-term, temporary, and are provided at no charge. Contributions toward the cost of the service are encouraged and welcome!

#### • ***Health and Wellness Programs***

Promotes and assists with healthy aging, such as physical activity and fall prevention, with the goal of supporting the independence of older adults. The program offers free, evidenced-based courses for persons over 60, including

- Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions
- Diabetes Self-Management



## **Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

(800) 252-2412 or (877) 787-8999

The Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area has Long-Term Care Ombudsman as advocates for resident rights. They help protect the quality of life and the care of anybody that lives in a nursing home or assisted living facility. All services are free and confidential.

## **AGE of Central Texas**

(512) 451-4611

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

### ***Caregiver Information and Resources***

AGE offers educational events, information, resources, and support groups for people who provide care to an aging or disabled adult. All services are provided at no cost.

- Personal One-on-One Consultations
- Caregiver Seminars and Workshops
- Annual 'Striking A Balance' and Williamson County Caregiver Conferences
- Annual Pflugerville Seniors Conference
- CaregiverU: Evidence-based training class series for family caregivers, and fall prevention classes for older adults.

## **Family Eldercare**

(512) 450-0844

[www.familyeldercare.org](http://www.familyeldercare.org)

See their website for current list of properties served.

### **• *Service Coordination***

Family Eldercare helps coordinate a range of services for older adults living at several senior housing properties in the community. Family Eldercare's Service Coordinators work to help clients identify and acquire the services they need to remain self-reliant.

### **• *In Home Counseling – Referrals*** (512) 483-3556

Our Licensed Social Workers (LCSW) meet you where you

are and provide individualized counselling to those who are homebound. We assist in managing ongoing mental health issues and concerns that arise as a result of the aging process. Medicare B and other Advantage plans accepted.

### • **Money Management**

Family Eldercare's Money Management Program helps seniors and people with disabilities continue to live independently in their homes and achieve financial and housing stability. Within the program, we offer many services:

- *Bill payer* assistance is available to older adults and people with disabilities who have the capacity to remain in control of their finances and voluntarily receive the services. Services include sorting mail, making sure bills are sent in a timely manner, balancing accounts, advocacy, and other supports.
- For individuals determined to be incapable of handling their own finances, *Representative Payees* are approved to receive benefits issued by Social Security and the Office of Personnel Management on behalf of the clients. Services also include budget setup, check-book balancing, and management of monthly bill payments. Clients may receive additional case management services to ensure adequate food, shelter, and access to medical care. All bank accounts are insured and monitored by third-party volunteers who ensure accountability.
- Rapid Re-Housing services are available to seniors, veterans, and individuals living on a fixed income. These groups experience severe housing barriers, cost burdens, and chronic homelessness. Services include assistance with locating housing, negotiating agreements with housing providers to remove barriers and offer reasonable rents, case and tenant-based rental assistance. Clients must be referred through the Coordinated Entry process (see [austinecho.org/get-help/experiencing-homelessness](https://austinecho.org/get-help/experiencing-homelessness) for details on this process.)

Clients eligible for Money Management services must

- Be an older adult or an adult with disabilities
- Reside in Austin/Travis County

Other service specific eligibility criteria may apply.

• ***Lifetime Connections Without Walls/Healthy Connections***

(888) 500-6472

Lifetime Connections Without Walls is a telephone activities program that provides opportunities for older adults to connect with others in their community and across the country. We offer social and educational sessions, support groups, and friendly conversation, all from the comfort of home.

• ***Summer Fan Drive***

(512) 459-4Fan (4326)

**[www.summerfandrive.org](http://www.summerfandrive.org)**

The Summer Fan Drive serves seniors, adults with disabilities, and families who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- At or below 200% of Federal Poverty Index
- Be over age 55 OR
- Be disabled and receiving disability benefits OR
- Be in a household with children under 18 years of age

This is a seasonal program, typically operating from May into September each year.

## **Jewish Family Services**

(512) 250-1043

**[www.shalomaustin.org](http://www.shalomaustin.org)**

### ***Senior Adult Services***

Jewish Family Services offers outreach to older Jewish adults living in congregate living settings. JFS geriatric case management services provide help to older Jewish adults needing assistance in order to continue living in their own homes. JFS also offers assistance to families who seek information on area assisted living facilities and nursing homes, and provides

consultation on end-of-life planning. For information about outreach or care management services, call (512) 250-1043.

In addition, the Jewish Community Center offers programs and activities for senior adults in the Greater Austin area.

## **Meals on Wheels Central Texas**

(512) 476-6325

[www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org)

Meals on Wheels Central Texas offers Case Management for those individuals who are enrolled in any of our internal programs. Our Case Management is made up of two tiers:

- Supportive Case Management
- Comprehensive Case Management (CARE)

The Supportive Case Management team conducts in-home visits at least once a year to holistically assess each client's needs, not only in terms of nutrition and meal eligibility, but to determine whether the client may require additional support. The Supportive Case Managers work closely with our clients, their loved ones, State and local agencies, and other Central Texas Meals on Wheels programs to fulfill any unmet needs. Any needs requiring intensive attention will be referred to the Comprehensive Assessment Resources and Education (CARE Services) for greater attention and resources.

CARE Services provides comprehensive case management to assist clients by addressing their basic needs and financial assistance, along with assistance in applying for other benefits. The ultimate goal is to provide resources necessary to help clients solve complicated problems that will help them remain stably housed and that, if left unsolved could lead to premature institutionalization.

CARE collaborates with several agencies in the community to assist client(s) with their needs. Best Single Source Plus (BSS+), Travis County's Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP), and Austin Energy's Plus 1 Program are a

few of the programs CARE may use to help a client in financial crisis.

### **Ageing Life Care Association (formerly NAPGCM)**

#### **Aginglecare.org**

ALCA is a non-profit professional development organization whose mission is to advance professional geriatric care management through education, collaboration, and leadership. A professional Life Care Manager is a health and human services specialist who helps families who are caring for older relatives. The Ageing Life Care Manager is certified, trained, and experienced in a variety of specialties and acts as a facilitator and advocate for services on behalf of the older adult.

For a list of Care Managers resources in the community go to [www.aginglecare.org](http://www.aginglecare.org) and search by zip code.

## Counseling

A sense of emotional well-being is a vital part of maintaining a comfortable and healthy lifestyle for persons of any age. Sharing concerns and exploring feelings can reduce or relieve problems experienced by an individual, a couple, or a family.

Sometimes, however, you may not feel comfortable discussing such concerns with those family members closest to you. When a problem grows to the point that you feel an objective and more experienced professional could better assess and guide you toward a solution, contacting a professional counselor can help.

Counselors are professionally trained in various fields such as pastoral care, health care, law, psychology, or social work. Obviously, when the problem concerns legal issues, you contact an attorney. For medical concerns, you call a physician or other medical professional. Less understood, is the assistance that clergy, pastoral counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinical social workers can provide. These professionals assist with emotional difficulties (e.g., grief or depression), family relationship problems (such as a troubled marriage or conflict between generations), and personal life adjustment difficulties (such as illness, retirement, or alcohol and drug abuse).

Counseling professionals have various educational backgrounds. Clergy and pastoral counselors have specific training and some have college degrees. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has specialized in psychiatry and can diagnose physical illnesses and prescribe medication. Psychologists, psychotherapists, licensed

professional counselors, and clinical social workers have Master's degrees, and all should have a license or certification in order to practice. Most have areas in which they specialize, with an increasing number specializing in care of the elderly.

Geriatric care managers specialize in coordinating services for the family in order to better care for the elder. When the family is not available, they also counsel and advocate for the elder. Social workers, in both hospitals and many other agencies, also can help with community resource information. (See "Care Management" and "In-Home Care and Support Services" sections.)

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## Depression

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Depression is a significant problem for adults over 65. Some researchers say that about one-third of those over 65 will experience depression that is severe enough to seriously affect their daily living. Depressed older adults have the highest risk of suicide of any group in our society. However, depression is treatable and often resolved with proper care. In fact, more than 80% of older adults who get help are successfully treated. Many times, older adults go untreated because family, friends, or professionals do not recognize the depression. Some of the basic symptoms are

- Insomnia or too much sleep;
- Crying spells;
- Low, sad mood;
- Disregard for personal appearance;
- Sad or blank look on the face;
- Thoughts of suicide;
- Forgetfulness, confusion, disorientation.

Frequently, older adults, their physicians, and family members think that the forgetfulness, confusion, and disorientation they are observing is a natural consequence of aging or is due to physical problems called dementia (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, multiple strokes) that involve brain disorders. Because the cause of symptoms may not be clear, assessment by a professional should help determine if depression is present. Because depression also can be associated with alcohol and drug abuse, family members, friends, and other caregivers should observe and monitor the older adult's patterns of medication and alcohol use. These observations should also be reported to the professional. (See the "Alcohol and Drug Abuse" section.)

Persistent depression, anxiety, or other emotional or cognitive problems can be severe enough to pose significant risks or danger to the older adult, to others, or to property. In these instances, evaluation for psychiatric hospitalization is warranted.

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## **Payment**

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Forms of payment for counseling vary greatly. Many agencies use a fee scale based on income. Tax-supported and privately funded agencies may waive or reduce fees on an individual basis. Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurance usually cover behavioral health services by a psychiatrist (MD) and licensed counselors (LPC, LCSW). Be sure to check your insurance coverage before selecting from the variety of counseling services available.



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## Finding Help

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The following agencies provide counselors or can help you locate a professional counselor.

**Austin Center for Grief and Loss**

(512) 472-7878

[www.austingrief.com](http://www.austingrief.com)

**Austin Vitality Counseling**

(512) 572-9217

[www.austinvitalitycounseling.com](http://www.austinvitalitycounseling.com)

**Blue Moon Senior Counseling**

(855) 241-7160

[www.blumoonseiniorcounseling.com](http://www.blumoonseiniorcounseling.com)

**Integral Care**

(512) 472-HELP (4357)

[www.integralcare.org](http://www.integralcare.org)

**Capital Area Counseling**

(512) 302-1000

[www.camhc.org](http://www.camhc.org)

**Caregiver Resource Center A.G.E.**

(512) 451-4611

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

**Copper Bridge Counseling**

[www.copperbridgecounseling.com](http://www.copperbridgecounseling.com)

**Family Eldercare In-Home Counseling**

(512) 450-0844

[counseling@familyeldercare.org](mailto:counseling@familyeldercare.org)

<https://www.familyeldercare.org/programs/counseling>

**Jewish Family Services**

(512) 250-1043

[www.shalomaustin.org](http://www.shalomaustin.org)

**New Life Institute**

(512) 469-9447

[www.newlifetexas.org](http://www.newlifetexas.org)

**Plumeria Counseling Center**

(512) 344-9181

[www.plumeriacounseling.com](http://www.plumeriacounseling.com)

Sliding scale counseling.

**Samaritan Center for Counseling and Pastoral Care**

(512) 451-7337

[www.samaritan-center.org](http://www.samaritan-center.org)

**Senior Adult Specialty Healthcare**

(512) 476-3556

Geriatric Psychiatrists

[www.senioradults.net](http://www.senioradults.net)

**Seton Mind Institute**

(512) 324-3380

<https://www.seton.net/behavioral-health-care/seton-mind-institute>

Offers geriatric psychiatry clinic.

**Staff at your local church or synagogue**

**Travis County Medical Society**

(512) 206-1249

[www.tcms.com](http://www.tcms.com)

**Waterloo Counseling**

(512) 444-9922

[www.waterloocounseling.org](http://www.waterloocounseling.org)

Expertise in serving the LGBTQIA+ community. Takes traditional Medicare insurance.

**Your family doctor**

**YWCA Women's Counseling and Resource Center**

(512) 326-1222

[www.ywca.org](http://www.ywca.org)

Psychology Today  
[www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

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## **In-Patient, Intensive Out-Patient, Group Counseling**

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### **Ascension Seton Shoal Creek Hospital – Senior Adult Services**

3501 Mills Avenue  
Austin, TX 78731  
(512) 324-2000

[healthcare.ascension.org/Locations/Texas/TXAUS/Austin-Ascension-Seton-Shoal-Creek](http://healthcare.ascension.org/Locations/Texas/TXAUS/Austin-Ascension-Seton-Shoal-Creek)

Ascension Seton Shoal Creek serves older adults and their specific needs. Programs address depression, substance abuse, acute conditions related to dementia (including Alzheimer's and other), and other emotional disorders. Both inpatient and outpatient programs are offered. (Accepts Medicare and third party insurance payments.) The hospital provides a telephone consultation and referral service at (512) 324-2029.

### **Austin Lakes Hospital-Senior Adult Program**

1025 East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Austin, TX 78705  
(512) 544-5253

[austinlakeshospital.com](http://austinlakeshospital.com)

Austin Lakes Hospital-Senior Adult Program is located in St. David's Pavilion, focuses on treatment of patients age 55 or older with affective disorders, major depression, adjustment disorders of aging, and other mental health problems. Services include consultation, assessment, treatment, and aftercare planning. Options include both an inpatient treatment program and a partial hospitalization program for patients who are able to return home each day.

A weekly support group is available to discuss caregiver concerns, legal and medical issues, community resources, etc. Accepts Medicare and third-party insurance payments.

### **Cross Creek Hospital**

8402 Cross Park Drive  
Austin, TX 78754  
(512) 823-0570

[crosscreekhospital.com/programs/older-adults](http://crosscreekhospital.com/programs/older-adults)

We at Cross Creek Hospital are here to serve this underserved population in need of psychiatric care in the event of an acute psychosis requiring a short hospital stay for stabilization so they can safely return back to their facility/home.

Some key points about our Geriatric Unit are

1. Assigned CNA's (assist w/transfers/gait, ADL's, & toileting)
2. Hall with handrails
3. Unit separate from other population
4. Accept: Mild Dementia w/psychosis, Bipolar, Schizophrenia, Depression w/Deterioration, Anxiety, Trauma, & Detox, etc..
5. Offer: Medicine Management along with Behavior Stabilization
6. Therapies: Montreal Cognitive Assessment, Memory related treatment, cognitive skills building, individual/group therapy, recreational therapy, family therapy

### **Georgetown Behavioral Health Institute**

3101 S Austin Ave.  
Georgetown, TX 78626  
(512) 819-1100 or (866) 249-1963

[georgetownbehavioral.com](http://georgetownbehavioral.com)

Georgetown Behavioral Health Institute (GBHI) is a state-of-the-art 118-bed acute care psychiatric hospital offering comprehensive mental healthcare programs and services

for adults, teens, active duty military members and older adults. In addition to offering inpatient acute care services, we provide outpatient programs that help support patients as they discharge or as an alternative to hospitalization. Our hospital provides a safe environment staffed by caring and highly educated professionals where we support a person-centered treatment program that promotes stabilization and healing.

## **COVID-19 and Telemedicine Counseling**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many clinicians are using telemedicine to provide safe, remote/virtual counseling. Telemedicine (a form of telehealth) is currently covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurances. It is not known if telemedicine services will continue to be covered by Medicare and/or other insurance once the pandemic is over. Ask your counselor or medical care provider if they offer telemedicine options.

### **WHAT IS TELEMEDICINE?**

Telemedicine is the use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to extend care when you and the medical provider aren't in the same place at the same time. It most commonly refers to two-way, real-time conferencing (such as video or audio calling) between the doctor and patient, or between two providers. It can be used by a physician seeking a remote consult from a specialist in another location, or by a patient seeking a virtual "visit" with their doctor or nurse. If you have a phone or a digital device with internet connection, you already have everything you need to do telemedicine.

## TELEMEDICINE COUNSELING

Many psychotherapy providers offer telemedicine services as an alternative option for in-office counseling sessions. Providers are moving to these virtual services during the pandemic to ensure health, safety, and continuity of care.

Telemedicine/virtual therapy is just like an in-person session with a therapist, only over phone or video conferencing. Telemedicine counseling primarily refers to two therapy options:

- *Video Therapy*: counseling sessions provided via video conferencing
- *Telephone Counseling*: counseling sessions provided via telephone

There are many benefits to having sessions using telemedicine:

- It can be easier and more efficient for you to access mental health care.
- There may be more flexibility to schedule a time convenient for you.
- You can talk to a therapist without physically coming to an office.

For video therapy, medical providers use confidential and secure video and audio technology systems. These platforms incorporate industry standard network and software security protocols to protect your privacy and secure your health information. by the psychiatric RN to assess the patient's physical and mental health status. Services are provided in the patient's home setting and may include psychiatric and medical nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, medi-

cal and social services, as well as assistance by a home health aide. All services are performed under a physician's order. For questions regarding eligibility, contact StarCare. Homebound status of the patient, physician's orders, and the need for skilled services will be reviewed. Medicare, Medicaid, and/or private insurance may cover all/part of the cost. StarCare is a Medicare-certified agency and is JCAHO accredited.

# COVID-19 Safety

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person. COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness. Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age. The greatest risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is among those age 65 years or older, and those with underlying medical conditions. Severe illness means that the person with COVID-19 may require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe. COVID-19 can be fatal, so it is important to take proper precautions in your daily life. For updated information, check the CDC website: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

## How It Spreads

- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
  - COVID-19 can be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.
  - There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
  - The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.



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## Prevention

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There are many ways to reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. **It is especially important for people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and those who live with them, to protect themselves from getting COVID-19.** The best ways to protect yourself and to help reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 are to

- Practice physical distancing: Limit your interactions with other people as much as possible, and keep space between yourself and others (stay 6 feet away, which is about two arm lengths).
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Then wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and things you touch often.
- Wear a mask and ask others to do the same when in closed spaces.

### PHYSICAL DISTANCING

People at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and those who live with them, should consider their level of risk before deciding to go out and ensure they are taking steps to protect themselves. Consider avoiding activities where taking protective measures may be difficult, such as activities where physical distancing can't be maintained. **Everyone should take steps to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19** to protect themselves, their communities, and people who are at increased risk of severe illness.

- If you decide to engage in public activities, continue to protect yourself by practicing everyday preventive actions.
- Keep these items on hand and use them when venturing out: a mask cloth, tissues, and a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, if possible.
- If possible, avoid others who are not wearing masks or ask others around you to wear masks.
- Delay or cancel a visit if you or your visitors have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Anyone who has had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should stay home and monitor for symptoms.

## **WEARING MASKS**

- Masks should be worn over the nose and mouth. Masks are especially important when it is difficult to stay at least 6 feet apart from others or when people are indoors to help protect each other.
- Masks slow the spread of the virus by protecting you and others from contracting it.
- Masks help prevent people, who may unknowingly have the virus, from transmitting it to others.
- Wear a mask in public settings when around people who don't live in your household.
- Wear a mask correctly for maximum protection.
- **Who should NOT use masks:** Children under age 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

## **WEAR YOUR MASK CORRECTLY**

- Wash your hands before putting on your mask.

- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face.
- Make sure you can breathe easily.
- CDC does not recommend use of masks or cloth masks for source control if they have an exhalation valve or vent.
- **Don't** put the mask around your neck or up on your forehead.
- **Don't** touch the mask, and, if you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect.

### **WASH HANDS OFTEN**

- Everyone should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds at the beginning and end of a visit and whenever you think your hands may have become contaminated.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Remind guests to wash or sanitize their hands before serving or eating food.
- Use single-use hand towels or paper towels for drying hands so visitors do not share towels.

### **CLEAN AND DISINFECT**

- Use a household disinfectant to clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces. This includes tables, door-knobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

## Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with the following symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

### FEVER SYMPTOMS

In older adults (aged 65 and older), normal body temperature can be lower than in younger adults. For this reason, fever temperatures can also be lower in older adults. If you are caring for a patient age 65 or older, be aware that a single reading higher than 100°F (37.8°C), multiple readings above 99°F (37.2°C), or a rise in temperature greater than 2°F (1.1°C) above the patient's normal (baseline) temperature may be a sign of infection.

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## Testing

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If you are an older adult experiencing fever or other symptoms and want to get tested, call your healthcare provider first. If you do not have health insurance, you can still get tested for COVID19 if your doctor or healthcare provider recommends it. **If you need help finding a testing site, call 2-1-1** and they can direct you to one in your area. People can get tested for COVID19 at public testing sites or drivethru locations in certain parts of Texas. To see all locations, visit: [www.covidtest.tdem.texas.gov](http://www.covidtest.tdem.texas.gov).

Call the Austin Public Health medical hotline at (512) 972-5560 to find all locations that provide testing options. Free in-home COVID-19 testing is also available for people with mobility issues and disabilities.

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## What To Do If You're Sick

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If you think you may have COVID-19 or were exposed to COVID-19:

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get in touch with your healthcare provider within 24 hours. You can use CDC's self-checker to help you make decisions.
- If you or someone you know has COVID-19 emergency warning signs (trouble breathing, persistent chest pain, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face), **seek emergency care immediately.**

**Call 911.**

- If you think you might have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider. If you don't have a healthcare provider, contact your nearest community health center: [www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov).

- Stay home. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care. Do not leave your home, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas. Persons with mild to moderate COVID-19 remain infectious no longer than 10 days after symptom onset. Persons with more severe to critical illness or severe immunocompromise likely remain infectious no longer than 20 days after symptom onset.
- Tell your close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive. By letting your close contacts know they may have been exposed to COVID-19, you are helping to protect everyone.
- Get rest and stay hydrated. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better.
- Stay in touch with your doctor.
- Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

You can end quarantined isolation after

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication **and**
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.

## **When to Seek Emergency Medical Attention**

Look for emergency warning signs for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of the following signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately:**

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest

- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

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## Caregiving Protocol

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Caregivers of someone who has COVID-19 should stay home and adhere to the following protocols:

- Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with the infected person's blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine. Throw out gloves into a lined trash can and wash hands right away.
- The caregiver should ask the infected person to put on a mask before entering the room.
- The caregiver may also wear a mask when caring for a person who is sick.
- Practice everyday preventive actions: clean hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.
- Caregivers should monitor their health for COVID-19 symptoms while caring for the person who is sick.
- Caregivers should continue to stay home after care is complete. Caregivers can leave their home 14 days after their last close contact with the person who is sick (based on the time it takes to develop illness), or 14 days after the person who is sick meets the criteria to end home isolation.
- **If you are having trouble breathing, call 911.**

# Culturally Specific Services

The following organizations may be able to give information on culture-specific needs for senior citizens based on the inner dimensions of race, ethnicity, physical abilities, sexual orientation, and gender.

## BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- African American Quality of Life  
[www.austintexas.gov/department/african-american-quality-life](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/african-american-quality-life)
- Asian-American Quality of Life Advisory Commission  
[www.austintexas.gov/content/asian-american-quality-life-advisory-commission](http://www.austintexas.gov/content/asian-american-quality-life-advisory-commission)
- Austin Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities  
[www.austintexas.gov/content/mayors-committee-people-disabilities](http://www.austintexas.gov/content/mayors-committee-people-disabilities)
- Commission on Immigrant Affairs  
[www.austintexas.gov/content/commission-immigrant-affairs](http://www.austintexas.gov/content/commission-immigrant-affairs)
- Commission on Seniors  
[www.austintexas.gov/content/commission-seniors](http://www.austintexas.gov/content/commission-seniors)
- Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission  
[www.austintexas.gov/content/hispanic-latino-quality-life-resource-advisory-commission-0](http://www.austintexas.gov/content/hispanic-latino-quality-life-resource-advisory-commission-0)
- Mexican-American Cultural Center Advisory Board  
[www.austintexas.gov/content/mexican-american-cultural-center-advisory-board](http://www.austintexas.gov/content/mexican-american-cultural-center-advisory-board)

## CITY OF AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

- Asian American Resource Center  
(512) 974-1700  
[www.austintexas.gov/aarc](http://www.austintexas.gov/aarc)



- Celtic Cultural Center of Texas  
(512) 431-6290  
info@celticcenter.org
- Jewish Community Center of Austin  
(512) 735-8000  
[shalomaustin.org/jcc](http://shalomaustin.org/jcc)
- Mexican American Cultural Center  
(512) 974-3772  
[www.austintexas.gov/department/emma-s-barrientos-mexican-american-cultural-center](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/emma-s-barrientos-mexican-american-cultural-center)

## **AFRICAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS**

- Austin Area African-American Behavioral Health Network  
(512) 471-5041  
<https://hogg.utexas.edu/eventsnetworks/4abh>
- Community Coalition for Health  
(512) 763-LIVE (5483)  
[www.c2h.us](http://www.c2h.us)
- Austin Urban League  
(512) 478-7176  
[aaul.org](http://aaul.org)
- Soul to Soul Gardening Intergenerational Program  
(512) 495- 5155  
[dellmed.utexas.edu/units/department-of-population-health/community-driven-initiatives](http://dellmed.utexas.edu/units/department-of-population-health/community-driven-initiatives)  
CDI@dellmed.utexas.edu
- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas  
(512) 619-4280  
[aaahct.org](http://aaahct.org)
- George Washington Carver Museum  
(512) 974-4926  
[www.austintexas.gov/department/george-washington-carver-museum-cultural-and-genealogy-center](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/george-washington-carver-museum-cultural-and-genealogy-center)

- Black Women in Business  
[blackwomeninbusiness.org](http://blackwomeninbusiness.org)
- Zami Nobla  
[zaminobla.org](http://zaminobla.org)
- National Organization of Black Lesbians on Aging

## ASIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS

- Asian Behavioral Health Network  
(512) 974-1700  
[abhn.org](http://abhn.org)
- Aspire to Age, PBC  
(512) 347-7722  
[aspiretoage.com](http://aspiretoage.com)
- SAIVA (South Asians' International Volunteer Association)  
[saiva.org](http://saiva.org)
- AFSSA (Asian Family Support Services)  
(512) 651- 3743  
[www.afssaustin.org](http://www.afssaustin.org)
- Austin Chapter of Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce (ACTCC)  
[actcc.wordpress.com/home](http://actcc.wordpress.com/home)
- Bangladesh Association of Greater Austin  
<http://bagatx.org>
- Chinese Society of Austin  
[csaustin.org](http://csaustin.org)  
contact@csaustin.org
- Japan-America Society of Greater Austin  
<https://www.jasga.org>
- Korean American Association of Austin  
(512) 453-2552  
<http://austinkaaa.tripod.com>
- Vietnamese American Community of Austin, Texas (VACAT)  
(512) 481-2548  
[www.vacat.org](http://www.vacat.org)

## HISPANIC AMERICANS ORGANIZATIONS

- Greater Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce  
(512) 476.7502  
[www.gahcc.org/home](http://www.gahcc.org/home)

## WELLNESS AND SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Yoga  
TEXT: (512) 940 1510  
[www.satyanandayogacenter.com/seniors.html](http://www.satyanandayogacenter.com/seniors.html)
- Hindu Temples  
(512) 986-7269  
[www.austinbalajitemple.org](http://www.austinbalajitemple.org)

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## LGBTQ+

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- Austin LGBT Coalition on Aging  
<https://algbtcoa.org>  
contact@algbtcoa.org  
The Austin LGBT Coalition on Aging is made up of representatives of LGBT community organizations, senior services providers, and interested individuals who have come together to “improve the condition of the LGBT aging community through advocacy, research, education and programs/services
- Austin LGBT Elder Task Force  
[www.austintlgbteldertaskforce.org](http://www.austintlgbteldertaskforce.org)  
austintlgbteldertaskforce@gmail.com  
Creating a community to socialize and address LGBTQIA-specific aging issues.
- Austin Grief & Loss – Aging LGBTQ Support Group and Mental Health Services  
(512) 472-7878  
[www.austingrief.org](http://www.austingrief.org)  
info@austingrief.org

- Austin Prime Timers

[austintptww.org](http://austintptww.org)

A social organization that provides mature gay and bisexual men and others who enjoy their company opportunities to enrich their lives by building friendships in a safe and supportive environment. Also provides an avenue into the gay community for older men who have recently “come out.”

- Family Eldercare – Austin Gay & Lesbian Senior Services (AGLSS)

(512) 615-0040

[www.familyeldercare.org/programs/aglss-resources](http://www.familyeldercare.org/programs/aglss-resources)

Established in 2012, AGLSS has provided aging services and resources for our LGBTQ+ community, ensuring that no one has to age alone. Services are extended to the economically challenged as well.

- Golden Generation- LGBTQ Senior Social Program

(by Meals On Wheels)

(512) 628.8185

[fgersh@mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](mailto:fgersh@mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org)

The free program provides a nutritious lunch, fun activities, and a welcoming sense of community for the LGBTQ population and its allies, and is open to individuals who are 60+ years of age and their spouses/partners.

- SAGE

[www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)

Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders.

## **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

- Health and Human Services (Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services)

[hhs.texas.gov](http://hhs.texas.gov)

- American Community Living

<https://acl.gov>

## Dental Services

Adequate dental hygiene and treatment are important health considerations. Loss of teeth or ill-fitting dentures can aggravate speech and eating as well as cause discomfort and embarrassment.

Medicare does not pay for dental care except for surgery on the jaw or facial bones. Because 97% of all dental expenses are paid by the consumer, it is important to look for ways to save costs. Some health maintenance organizations (HMO) include a dental division. There are prepaid dental plans with annual premiums that usually include examinations, x-rays, cleanings, routine fillings, and extractions at little or no cost to the insured. Other services under these plans may be available at a reduced rate. Retired state employees might explore dental plans available through state employee unions or associations.

A general dentist may refer patients to an oral surgeon for difficult tooth removals or surgery on the jaw, to an endodontist for root canal surgery, or to a periodontist for treatment of gum disease.

The Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department's Medical Assistance Program (MAP) provides low-cost dental services to eligible low-income persons.

The centers in the following list provide dental care for low-income Austin residents who are not eligible for other programs, such as MAP, and who are not eligible for Medicare or Medicaid. You will need to complete an application form and have a personal interview to determine your eligibility for free services.

## **CommUnityCare**

CommUnityCare provides dental coverage to people who are MAP (Medical Assistance Program) card holders, a Medicaid patient under the age of 18, or a Medicare beneficiary who is a patient at one of our CommUnityCare health centers. Emergency and some other services are also available for self-pay patients of our CommUnityCare health center system who meet established income guidelines and have no other dental insurance benefits.

Service include dental exams, teeth cleaning, fillings, extractions, dentures, dental sealants, and emergency treatment. To find locations, visit: [communitycaretx.org/locations](https://communitycaretx.org/locations)

## **Ben White Dental**

1221 W. Ben White, Suite 112B  
Austin, TX 78704  
(512) 978-9700

## **North Central Clinic/Dental**

1210 W. Braker Ln  
Austin, TX 78758  
(512) 978-9880

## **South Austin Clinic/Dental**

2529 South First Street  
Austin, TX 78704  
(512) 978-9865

## **Manos de Cristo Dental Clinic**

4911 Harmon Ave.  
Austin, TX 78751  
(512) 477-2319  
[manosdecristo.org/dental](https://manosdecristo.org/dental)

# Disability Services

Older adults may face learning to live with a disability. Many disabilities are caused by disease or accident rather than by the aging process; they may be temporary or long-term. Frequently, disabilities can be managed with a mix of medical treatment, therapy, education, training, counseling, and the use of assistive devices. In any event, steps can be taken to maximize the independence and quality of life of those with a loss of vision, hearing, speech, or physical mobility.

## Blindness/Visual Impairment

Although a change in vision is common in our later years, loss of visual acuity and diseases of the eye are not synonymous with growing old. People of all ages should have their eyes checked regularly by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist. Some diseases, such as glaucoma, can be controlled if diagnosed early. Cataract surgery is now performed safely on an outpatient basis. Sight loss does not have to mean the loss of independence. Resources for individuals with visual impairment include the following.

### **Austin Lighthouse for the Blind**

Travis Association for the Blind  
(512) 442-2329

[www.austinlighthouse.org](http://www.austinlighthouse.org)

Offers Braille and computer classes, vocational training, and sells vision aids.

### **American Foundation for the Blind**

[afb.org](http://afb.org)

AFB provides information and referral services for the blind and visually impaired. They also maintain a special e-mail site for seniors with interviews and special information that can be accessed from the AFB web page.

### **Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center**

**[www.twc.state.tx.us/jobseekers/criss-cole-rehabilitation-center](http://www.twc.state.tx.us/jobseekers/criss-cole-rehabilitation-center)**

This center provides residential, pre-vocational training for legally blind adults. It offers career guidance and independent living skills training that lasts from four to six weeks. All Clients must be able to care for themselves independently.

### **Texas Workforce Commission- Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

(800) 628-5115

**[www.twc.state.tx.us/jobseekers/vocational-rehabilitation-services](http://www.twc.state.tx.us/jobseekers/vocational-rehabilitation-services)**

Services provided may include: eye examinations, information and referral, orientation and mobility training, counseling, recreation and socialization, and independent living skills training. Training can be done in groups or one-on-one in the home.

### **Learning Ally**

**[www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org)**

Learning Ally, formerly Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic, is the world's largest producer of audio textbooks and literature. Audio CDs are available to patrons for their use through their audio catalog. Seniors may participate in the program through an annual membership fee.

### **Texas State Library Talking Book Program**

(800) 252-9605

**[www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp](http://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp)**

The Talking Book Program provides library services to more



than 18,000 qualified patrons across the state. Patrons select books from more than 80,000 titles in categories ranging from mysteries to classics and from westerns to bestsellers. In addition, more than 70 magazines are available, including *Reader's Digest*, *Newsweek*, *Guideposts*, and *Texas Monthly*.

### **Eye Care America**

(877) 887-6327

[aao.org/eyecare-america](http://aao.org/eyecare-america)

This project provides U.S. citizens and residents age 65 and older with eye care information, including resources for low or no-cost eye care. Although there is no financial qualification for the program, the project is intended for those who have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years. Seniors can request brochures about eye diseases and aging if they are not interested in services.

## **Deafness/Hearing Impairment**

Hearing loss may be a natural process of aging or may be a specific disorder not necessarily related to age. It is important that older adults not be embarrassed or reluctant to seek medical advice when a hearing loss is noticed. Tact and support by a caregiver are often needed to encourage an elder to seek professional advice. Hearing tests should be carried out by licensed professionals, not hearing aid suppliers. The following resources are available.

### **Texas Health and Human Services-Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services**

(512) 407-3250

[hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing](http://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing)

The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) works in partnership with people who are deaf or hard of

hearing to eliminate societal and communication barriers to improve equal access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. DHHS advocates for people of all ages who are deaf or hard of hearing to enable them to express their freedoms; participate in society to their individual potential; and reduce their isolation regardless of location, socioeconomic status, or degree of disability.

### **Jesus Lutheran Church of the Deaf**

Voice: (512) 442-1715

Video phone: (512) 410-6667

[www.jesusdeafchurch.com](http://www.jesusdeafchurch.com)

The church has services that are both spoken and signed.

### **Travis County Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

(512) 410-1598

[traviscountytexas.gov/health-human-services/deaf-services](http://traviscountytexas.gov/health-human-services/deaf-services)

Serves the community by promoting and improving communication options; promoting self-sufficiency and non-institutionalized living; providing information and referral services; and providing individualized services in a caring and efficient manner.

### **University of Texas Speech and Hearing Center**

(512) 471-3841

<https://slhs.utexas.edu/centers/speech-hearing>

This center provides speech and hearing evaluations, aural rehabilitation therapy, speech therapy, hearing aid repair, and classes for coping with a hearing loss. A special program provides reconditioned hearing aids for low-income clients for a fee. Other services are provided on a sliding scale. The program is part of professional training for speech therapists and audiologists; therefore, services are provided only when students are attending class.

## **ARCIL: Austin Resource Center for Independent Living**

(512) 832-6349; (800) 414-6327

[www.arcil.com](http://www.arcil.com)

Independent living services for individuals with disabilities, including blindness and low vision.

## **ADDITIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES**

### **Texas Technology Access Program**

(512) 232-0740

TTY: (512) 232-0762

[ttap.disabilitystudies.utexas.edu](http://ttap.disabilitystudies.utexas.edu)

This program's mission is to increase access for people with disabilities to Assistive Technology that provides them more control over their immediate environments and an enhanced ability to function independently.

The Texas Technology Access Program leads the state's efforts to carry out the federal Assistive Technology Act of 2004. Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Simply stated, Assistive Technology is tools and resources used by individuals with disabilities to help improve their quality of life and increase their independence.

TTAP develops programs to improve access, advocacy, and awareness of Assistive Technology to meet the needs of Texans with disabilities. Programs include free device loans and demonstrations (including virtual) of assistive technology.

### **Texas Workforce Commission**

(512) 533-7100

[twc.texas.gov/partners/independent-living-services-older-individuals-who-are-blind](http://twc.texas.gov/partners/independent-living-services-older-individuals-who-are-blind)

IL-OIB Program (Independent Living, Office for Older Individ-

uals who are Blind) is designed for persons who are 55+ and not seeking employment.

### **Bookshare**

[www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org)

Downloadable audio books for people with print disabilities. \$50 per year.

### **STAP – Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program**

(214) 991-1962

Provides telephones and related equipment to Texans with visual, hearing, and physical disabilities. Landline and cell phones available. Through Health and Human Services

## Education

Older adults may want to learn about subjects that interest them or develop new skills. The variety of educational resources in the community can help older adults stay mentally and physically fit as well as provide opportunities for social interaction with others. Listed below are resources for lifelong learning.

### **Austin Community College**

(512) 223-4636

[www.austincc.edu](http://www.austincc.edu)

### **Caregiver U**

(512) 451-4611

[www.CaregiverUcentx.org](http://www.CaregiverUcentx.org)

CaregiverU is a collaboration of more than 30 Central Texas non-profit agencies and community organizations, joining together to bring support and resources to families that are caring for an older loved one. Classes are offered at no cost to participants. The courses are offered multiple times throughout the year at various locations in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop counties. Class days and times vary depending on which agency is hosting the course.

### **Lifetime Learning Institute**

(512) 206-4232

[www.lliaustin.org](http://www.lliaustin.org)

The Lifetime Learning Institute is a continuing education program of non-credit daytime classes for adults ages 50 and over. Courses meet for two hours once a week for about eight weeks. They are held at recreation centers and local churches. There are two semesters, beginning in February and September. Call for fee information.

## **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at UT Austin**

(512) 471-3124

<https://olli.utexas.edu>

Located in the Thompson Conference Center on the UT Campus, UT OLLI offers lifetime learning to adults who wish to focus on personal enrichment in a structured setting.

## **Road Scholar (Formerly Elderhostel) at University of Texas Austin Marine Science Institute**

(361) 749-6806

[www.utmsi.utexas.edu/visit/road-scholar](http://www.utmsi.utexas.edu/visit/road-scholar)

This international program provides education in residence for adults ages 55 and over and their companion of any age. They spend a week on a college campus or a special site, taking informal classes geared especially for them. There are also service programs and intergenerational programs. There are fees; scholarships may be available.

## **SeniorNet Computer Learning Institute**

(512) 524-8519

[www.agecomputer.org](http://www.agecomputer.org)

This volunteer-based program is designed to meet the computer learning needs of adults over the age of 50. It is sponsored by AGE of Central Texas.

## **Senior Planet (OATS- Older Adults Technology Services)**

(210) 504-4862

[www.seniorplanet.org](http://www.seniorplanet.org)

Senior Planet offers 60+ online group programs every week to keep learning, connecting, and exploring. The classes, made specifically for older adults, include health and wellness, creative arts, technology, and life-long learning.

## **Story Circle Network**

[www.storycircle.org](http://www.storycircle.org)

Story Circle Network, a national program with workshops and reading and writing circles and an Austin chapter, encourages women to write their stories. There is a special program OWL, Older Women's Legacy.

## **TEDTalks**

[www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)

Since 1984, the annual conference that goes by the acronym TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) has brought together some of the world's top thinkers and doers and challenged them to give the talk of their lives in 18 minutes or less.

## **University of Texas at Austin**

(512) 475-7540

[www.utexas.edu](http://www.utexas.edu)

Registrar/Certification for free auditing of classes (with consent of instructor).

## **University of Texas at Austin Informal Classes**

(512) 471-2900

[www.informal.utexas.edu](http://www.informal.utexas.edu)

## **Wonder How To**

[www.wonderhowto.com](http://www.wonderhowto.com)

Curators scour more than 1,700 websites and hand-pick instructional videos - from how to live longer to teaching your dog to roll over.

## Falls and Safety

Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls. Falls can cause moderate to severe injuries, such as hip fractures and head trauma, and can increase the risk of early death. Fortunately, falls are a public health problem that is largely preventable.

### How Can Older Adults Prevent Falls?

Older adults can stay independent and reduce their chances of falling. They can

- Exercise regularly. It is important that the exercises focus on increasing leg strength and improving balance, and that they get more challenging over time. Tai Chi programs are especially good.
- Ask their doctor or pharmacist to review their medicines—both prescription and over-the-counter—to identify medicines that may cause side effects or interactions such as dizziness or drowsiness.
- Have their eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year and update their eyeglasses to maximize their vision. Consider getting a pair with single vision distance lenses for some activities such as walking outside.
- Make their homes safer by reducing tripping hazards, adding grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower and next to the toilet, adding railings on both sides of stairways, and improving the lighting in their homes.

To lower their hip fracture risk, older adults can

- Get adequate calcium and vitamin D—from food and/or from supplements.



- Do weight-bearing exercise.
- Get screened and, if needed, treated for osteoporosis.

The following checklist asks about hazards found in each room of your home. For each hazard, the checklist tells you how to fix the problem. At the end of the checklist, you'll find other tips for preventing falls.

**FLOORS: Look at the floor in each room.**

**Q:** When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?

Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.

**Q:** Do you have throw rugs on the floor?

Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.

**Q:** Are there papers, books, towels, shoes, magazines, boxes, blankets, or other objects on the floor?

Pick up things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.

**Q:** Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords (like lamp, telephone, or extension cords)?

Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If needed, have an electrician put in another outlet.

**STAIRS AND STEPS: Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.**

**Q:** Are there papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the stairs?

Pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off stairs.

**Q:** Are some steps broken or uneven?

Fix loose or uneven steps.

**Q:** Are you missing a light over the stairway?

Have an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs.

**Q:** Do you have only one light switch for your stairs (only at the top or at the bottom of the stairs)?

Have an electrician put in a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.

**Q:** Has the stairway light bulb burned out?

Have a friend or family member change the light bulb.

**Q:** Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?

Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.

**Q:** Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on only one side of the stairs?

Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.

### **KITCHEN: Look at your kitchen and eating area.**

**Q:** Are the things you use often on high shelves?

Move items in your cabinets. Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist level).

**Q:** Is your step stool unsteady?

If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

### **BATHROOMS: Look at all your bathrooms.**

**Q:** Is the tub or shower floor slippery?

Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.

**Q:** Do you need some support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet?

Have a carpenter put grab bars inside the tub and next to the toilet.

## **BEDROOMS: Look at all your bedrooms.**

**Q:** Is the light near the bed hard to reach?

Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.

**Q:** Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?

Put in a night-light so you can see where you're walking.  
Some night-lights go on by themselves after dark.

## **FALL PREVENTION RESOURCES**

A Matter of Balance, coordinated by AGE of Central Texas, emphasizes practical strategies to manage falls and maintain an active, healthy lifestyle. Classes are led by certified class leaders and are free to the community. Participants will learn to

- Set goals for increasing activity,
- Make changes to reduce fall risks at home,
- Exercise to increase strength and balance
- View falls as controllable
- Decrease fear of falls

Matter of Balance Classes are free to the community and are offered by

### **AGE of Central Texas**

(512) 451-4611

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

### **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area.**

(512) 916-6062

[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)

[info@aaacap.org](mailto:info@aaacap.org)

### **Austin-Travis County EMS**

Elderly falls contribute to a significant amount of both dispatches and transports to the Emergency Room when com-

pared to other traumatic call types, and a large percentage of these falls occur in the home. Austin-Travis County EMS has a team of trained personnel who conduct FREE home safety assessments to identify potential risks and hazards for slips, trips and falls in the home environment. Any person who meets the following criteria is eligible for a home safety assessment:

- City of Austin resident
- Age 65 or older OR concerned about their home situation
- Lives independently (not in a nursing home or assisted living facility)
- No diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's

Home safety evaluations include the following:

- Home hazard mitigation to reduce fall risks
- Basic strengthening and balancing activities
- Medication review and Vial of Life program kit
- Information about FREE safety equipment (canes, lock-boxes, wheelchairs, smoke detectors)
- CarFit inspection - opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles "fit" them

For more information email [EMSFallPrevention@austintexas.gov](mailto:EMSFallPrevention@austintexas.gov) and an EMS Fall Prevention Home Technician will contact you as soon as possible. Call the EMS Safety Line at 512-972-SAFE (7233).

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## Medical Equipment

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Older adults may need assistive equipment to help with functioning and safety. Supplies such as wheelchairs, wheelchair ramps, walkers, canes, special beds, braces, and adaptive equipment for the bathroom and kitchen

may be obtained from Durable Medical Equipment or supply companies. Some equipment may be covered by Medicare or Private Insurance with a doctor's order.

*For those who need equipment on loan:*

**AGE of Central Texas-HELP  
(Health Equipment Lending Program)**

(512) 600-9288 to see if the equipment you need is in stock.

**[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)**

# Financial Resources

The financial situations of older persons range from immense wealth to abject poverty (one in five meets the federal definition of “poverty”). Of course, the great majority of persons find themselves somewhere between the two extremes. Regardless of their income, many older persons experience a sense of financial vulnerability related to the fixed nature of their incomes. One real fear is that a crisis (usually health-related) will deplete their savings, with little opportunity for replenishment. This is especially true for frail elders. For this reason, medical insurance options are included in this overview of financial resources.

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## Benefits Counseling

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### **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

(512) 916-6062

[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)

[info@aaacap.org](mailto:info@aaacap.org)

State-certified Benefits Counselors educate and advise older adults and caregivers about health insurance issues, benefits, and consumer problems related to Medicare and other public benefits in a 10-county area of Central Texas (Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, Williamson). A counselor helps people resolve problems in claiming the various kinds of benefits to which they are entitled. Activities may include assistance in completion of Medicare or other insurance claims forms, and assistance with Social Security, information on Medicare Extra Help programs such as the Low Income Subsidy (LIS), Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid, Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap),

Medicare Advantage Plans, and Supplemental Security Income. Should clients need legal advice, an appropriate referral will be made.

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## **Social Security Benefits**

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Retirement, survivor, and disability benefits are paid to persons who meet certain eligibility requirements and file an application for benefits. Retirement benefits go mostly to people age 62 or older and their families. Disability benefits go to people with disabilities and their families. Survivors benefits are paid to the families of workers who have died. The full retirement age for those born in 1938 or later is increased in gradual steps until it reaches age 67 for those born in 1960 or later. You can still take your retirement benefit at age 62 with a lesser monthly benefit.

The amount of monthly benefit is based on a person's date of birth and calculated on total earnings during a lifetime of work under Social Security. However, you can continue to work and still collect all of your Social Security benefits as long as your earnings are under certain limits. If you are between the ages of 62 and full retirement age and your earnings from wages and/or self-employment income go over the limit, some or all of your benefits will be withheld. Your earnings in (or after) the month you reach your full retirement age will not affect your Social Security benefits, no matter how much you earn. Non-work income, such as investment income, interest, pensions, annuities, capital gains, and other government benefits, is not counted toward Social Security's income limits.

Your Social Security check is deposited directly into your bank account or other financial institution you may designate. Direct deposit is a convenient and safe method of receiving your check.

If the beneficiary is incapable of managing his or her funds, benefits can be paid to a *representative payee*. A form must be completed and accompanied by a statement from a physician that the person currently is not capable of handling financial affairs. A *representative payee* also can be designated for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks.

It is important that certain changes be reported promptly to the Social Security Administration. These include the following: any change in your estimated earnings from work or self-employment, a change in address, a change in your direct deposit account, a change in your marital status, a change of your name, a change regarding a pension from non-covered work, the need for a *representative payee*, your conviction for a crime, travel abroad in certain countries, and your death.

### **Social Security Administration**

(800) 772-1213 or TTY (800) 325-0778

(512) 916-5404

Call between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

The lines are busiest early in the week and early in the month.

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## **Medicare**

Medicare is our country's federal health insurance program for people age 65 and older, people of any age with permanent kidney failure, and disabled people



under 65 who have been receiving Social Security disability checks for 24 months. Call (800) 633-4227.

Though Medicare is administered by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Social Security Administration provides information about the program and handles enrollment. To enroll, call (800) 772-1213 or TTY (800) 325-0778 at least 2 months before your 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Medicare coverage for retirees begins the first day of the month you are 65, even though your full retirement age is a later date. You can apply later during an open enrollment period, but premiums will be higher and there will be a waiting period for coverage.

Social Security also has an automated telephone system that you can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to report many of the changes that can affect your Social Security account, and to obtain information about Social Security Programs.

Medicare has three parts: Hospital Insurance (Part A), Medical Insurance (Part B), and Prescription Drug Coverage (Part D). These will be discussed separately below.

## **HOSPITAL INSURANCE – PART A**

Most people age 65 and over are eligible for Medicare Hospital Insurance based on their own or their spouse's employment. Hospital insurance helps pay for medically necessary inpatient care in a hospital and a Medicare-certified skilled nursing facility, home health care, and hospice care. Coverage for inpatient hospital benefits and benefits in a skilled nursing facility are based on a "benefit period." A "benefit period" begins the first day

you enter the hospital under Medicare and ends when you have spent 60 consecutive days out of the hospital or any other skilled nursing or rehabilitation center.

For Medicare coverage, you must have been hospitalized for a minimum of three days and be admitted to a Medicare-certified skilled nursing facility within 30 days after hospital discharge. For inpatient hospitalizations, the first 60 days in any benefit period are covered at 100% after you pay the deductible; for days 61-90, you must make a co-payment per day. Once a new benefit period begins, you again are eligible for 90 days of inpatient hospitalization coverage. (You must pay deductibles and co-payments for each benefit period.) There is no limit to the number of benefit periods you might have in any year. If you stay in the hospital more than 90 days in one period, you can draw from a nonrenewable "lifetime reserve" of 60 days or you can pay the hospital privately on a per diem basis. For skilled nursing care or rehabilitation services in a skilled nursing facility, the first 20 days are covered at 100%. Days 21-100 require a co-payment per day. Part A pays for no more than 190 days of inpatient care in a psychiatric hospital in your lifetime.

Home health care is covered at 100% (except for durable medical equipment) with no limits on the number of visits. To qualify for coverage, you have to need intermittent skilled nursing care, physical therapy, or speech therapy; be confined to your home; and be under a physician's care. Medicare pays for hospice care in the home for terminally ill beneficiaries if that care is provided by a Medicare-approved hospice. Part A does not cover physician's fees, private duty nursing, private

room fees, TV or phone charges, nonskilled or long-term nursing home care, homemaker services, or any nursing home care in a facility that is not certified to receive Medicare

## **MEDICAL INSURANCE – PART B**

Medicare Part B pays for a range of medical services but the most significant coverage is for doctors' bills. It also covers outpatient care (including limited psychiatric and rehabilitative services), physical and occupational therapy, labwork, x-rays, mammograms, durable medical equipment, ambulance (limited), and home health care for those without Part A. Physicians' fees covered under Part B include office, home, and skilled nursing home visits; surgery; and second opinions. Medical Insurance does not cover appliances for vision or hearing problems, orthopedic shoes, homemaker services, or custodial care.

If your Medicare Part B coverage begins on or after January 1, 2005, Medicare will cover the cost after deductibles of a one-time preventive physical examination within the first six months that you have Part B. Medicare also covers the following preventive services: bone mass measurement, cardiovascular screening, colorectal cancer screening, diabetic screening tests, and some diabetic supplies and self-management training, pap test and pelvic examination, prostate cancer screening, flu shots, glaucoma screening, and kidney dialysis service.

Part B coverage requires a monthly premium, which is automatically deducted from your Social Security

benefit. You pay an annual deductible. Medicare Part B covers 80% of approved expenses (called “reasonable charges”); you are responsible for the other 20% plus any non-approved expenses unless your physician or other service provider agrees to accept “assignment.”

## **MEDICARE PART D**

The Medicare Prescription Drug Plan effective January 1, 2006, helps pay for prescription drugs. All individuals with Medicare Part A and/or Part B are eligible to enroll in Medicare Part D regardless of age, income, or health conditions. Part D is a voluntary prescription drug program. Enrollment is not automatic. File for Part D when you file for Medicare. The Part D application is a separate application filed with a private company offering a formulary (prescription drug list). Delay in filing when first eligible for Part D may result in a higher monthly premium. The late enrollment fee is 1% per month and there is no limit to the percentage late fee.

All Part D prescription drug plans are run by private companies approved by Medicare. There are differences in the plans, including the list of drugs covered, pharmacies accepting Part D, monthly premiums, and co-payments. There are two plans. The simple plan that covers only drugs used with Medicare Parts A and B and/or a supplemental plan; or a Medicare Advantage Plan plus prescription drugs. You will be able to change plans once a year during the open enrollment period.

Before enrolling in a plan, compare the following: cost of monthly premium, yearly deductible, co-

payments, and drugs covered by the plans. Each Part D plan must meet formulary (Prescription Drug List) requirements set by Medicare. This formulary will include generic and brand name drugs. Select a plan and file an application with the private company. Monthly premiums can be deducted from your Social Security check.

People who have prescription drug coverage under their current health insurance policy should check that coverage before enrolling in Part D.

People on Medicaid beginning in 2006 will have drug coverage provided by a Part D plan. During the open enrollment period, Medicaid recipients will have the opportunity to switch to another plan. For information on how to apply for Medicaid prescription drug coverage, contact the Medicaid Office for Aged and Disabled at (800) 252-8263.

People who move to another location where their private company does not offer a prescription drug plan will have, under present law, 63 days to select a new plan offered by a company in that area without any penalty.

Help is available to pay some or all of the cost of Part D for people with lower incomes and few savings or other assets. Contact the Social Security office to file an application for assistance. This application is separate from the Part D application filed with the private company for drug coverage. For additional information about the Prescription Drug Program, call (800) Medicare [(800) 633-4227] or visit the Medicare web site at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

## MEDICARE ASSIGNMENT

For a medical service provider to “accept assignment” means that he or she will bill you based on the Medicare “reasonable charge” for that particular service.

If a physician agrees to participate

1. The physician bills Medicare and is reimbursed directly by Medicare.
2. You are responsible only for the 20% of the “reasonable fee” that Medicare does not cover and any unmet portion of the yearly deductible.
3. Medicare will send you a “description of services,” which is not a bill.

If a physician does not agree to participate

1. The physician who does not accept assignment of a Medicare claim is still limited as to the amount he or she can charge you for covered services – 115% of the Medicare fee schedule for nonparticipating physicians.
2. You must work out your own payment plan for the total bill with the physician.
3. Medicare will reimburse you for 80% of the “reasonable charge” for that particular service, minus any deductible that you may owe. You must then pay the remainder of the doctor’s fee yourself.
4. Doctors who do not accept assignment for elective surgery are now required to give you a written estimate of your costs before surgery if the total charge will be \$500 or more.

## **CLAIMS**

Medicare claims are filed through a variety of government contractors called Medicare Administrative Contractors (MAC).

Always review Medicare billing statements for accuracy – be sure you received the listed service on the indicated date and that services are not omitted or listed more often than received. Contact the specific service provider (physician, radiology clinic, hospital, etc.) about any questions, or call (800) 633-4227 and ask for Doctor's Services. There is a time limit for filing Medicare claims. If the claim is not filed within the time limit, Medicare cannot pay. Do not procrastinate. You do not want to run out of time if your claim is returned to you for more information.

## **APPEALS**

If you disagree with the way a claim is handled by Medicare, you have the right to appeal. Under Hospital Insurance-Part A, Medicare must send you written notice about denied services. In some cases, you may receive a denial letter while still in the hospital if the hospital's utilization review process determines you no longer need acute medical care. To appeal, contact the Social Security Administration office to request a review. If the review is unsatisfactory, you can take your appeal as far as the federal courts, depending on the amount of money involved. For Part B Medicare coverage, call (800) 442-2620 to appeal the decision on your claim.

In spite of the discouraging bureaucracy of the Medicare system, over half of all appeals result in some restitution for the insured. Many persons also have had

a very helpful response through contacting their congressional representatives about recurrent hassles with Medicare. An additional benefit to any appeal is that it sensitizes those who make policy to the realities of those who live with that policy.

### **HELP FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Medicaid Buy-In, authorized in 2005, covers working people who have Social Security-defined disabilities and earn less than 250% of the federal poverty level. The “buy-in” label comes from the monthly premiums that clients pay in amounts based upon their earned and unearned income.

The program creates options for those with disabilities who want to stay employed or return to work, but are concerned that their earnings may push them over the Medicaid eligibility limit. Premiums for the Medicaid Buy-In program can vary greatly depending on prospective clients’ countable levels of earned and unearned income.

You can get help applying for MBI by visiting a local HHSC office or by calling 2-1-1.

### **HELP FOR LOW-INCOME MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES**

If you have little income and few assets, and are entitled to Medicare Part A, you may be eligible for the “Qualified Medicare Beneficiary” or “QMB” program. If your household income is at or below the national poverty level and your savings and other resources are very limited, the state will pay your monthly Medicare premiums, deductibles, and co-payments. Your Medicare Part B premium will not be deducted from your Social



Security benefit. This program can save you hundreds of dollars.

The “Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary” or “SLMB” program is for persons entitled to Medicare Part A whose incomes are slightly higher than the national poverty level. (Your household income cannot exceed the national poverty level by more than 20%.) The state will pay your Medicare Part B premiums. You will be responsible for Medicare’s deductibles and co-payments.

Other Medicare Extra Help Programs include the following: Medicare Savings Programs, Low-Income Stability Assistance to help pay for Part D prescription drugs.

For information on these programs, contact:

- 2-1-1 Texas
- **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area Benefits Counseling**  
(512)916- 6178  
[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)  
info@aaacap.org

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## **Private Health Insurance**

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Medicare itself will pay for less than 50% of the average older person’s medical costs for any given year. This is not surprising, considering some of the services that Medicare does not cover – outpatient medications, dental care or dentures, routine exams for vision and hearing, as well as the major part of nursing home care. There are a variety of private insurance policies to help pay for the costs of those services not covered by Medicare. The basic types of coverage include

- Medigap policies that pay some of the amounts that

Medicare does not pay on covered services, and may cover other services that Medicare does not cover at all;

- Managed care plans such as health maintenance organizations (HMOs) for which you pay a fixed monthly premium;
- Continuation or conversion of an employer-provided or other policy you have in force when you reach 65;
- Hospital indemnity policies, which pay cash amounts for each day of inpatient hospital care;
- Specified disease policies, which pay only when you need treatment for the insured disease; and
- Nursing home or long-term care policies, which pay cash amounts for each day of covered nursing home or in-home care.

Before rushing out to buy additional insurance, however, it is important to remember what Medicare covers so you can identify gaps or potential overlaps in the various policies you consider.

## **MEDIGAP INSURANCE**

Medicare Supplemental Insurance, known as Medigap insurance, is specifically designed to help fill the gaps in Medicare coverage. It is regulated by federal and state law and must be clearly identified as Medicare Supplemental Insurance. State law requires all so-called “Medigap” policies to meet minimum standards of coverage, which include

- 100% coverage of hospital co-payments for days 61 to 90 in any benefit period;
- 100% coverage of hospital co-payments for “life-time reserve days” used;
- 100% coverage of hospital expenses after all Medicare

- benefits are depleted (lifetime maximum of 365 days);
- 100% coverage of Part B co-payment (20% of “reasonable charges”). The insurance company can add their own deductible for Part B and set an annual maximum for benefits covered; and
  - 100% of the reasonable cost of the first three pints of blood or equivalent quantities of packed red blood cells per calendar year.

Government also regulates the seven other standard policies that may be offered. These policies must include the basic benefits package listed above plus a standard set of additional coverages. It may be well worth the effort to shop around for a Medigap policy that also

- covers any deductibles required by Medicare,
- covers the co-payments charged by skilled Medicare nursing homes after the 21<sup>st</sup> day, or
- provides for medication or private nursing coverage.

In general, the more coverage you get, the higher the premium will be. Try not to let fear dictate your choice of policy. By law, Medigap insurers must use the same format, language, and definitions in describing each of their plans. Keep in mind that each company’s products are alike, so they are competing on service, reliability, and price.

## **MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS**

Medicare Advantage Plans are health plan options that are part of the Medicare program. If you join one of these plans, you generally get all your Medicare-covered health care through that plan. This coverage can

include prescription drug coverage. Medicare Advantage Plans include

- Medicare Health Maintenance Organization (HMOs)
- Preferred Provider Organizations (PPO)
- Private Fee-for-Service Plans
- Medicare Special Needs Plans

When you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you use the health insurance card that you get from the plan for your health care. In most of these plans, generally there are extra benefits and lower co-payments than in the Original Medicare Plan. However, you may have to see doctors that belong to the plan or go to certain hospitals to get services.

To join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you must have Medicare Part A and Part B and pay your monthly Medicare Part B premium to Medicare. In addition, you might have to pay a monthly premium to your Medicare Advantage Plan for the extra benefits that they offer.

If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, your Medigap policy will not work. This means it will not pay any deductibles, co-payments, or other cost-sharing under your Medicare Health Plan. Therefore, you may want to drop your Medigap policy if you join a Medicare Advantage Plan. However, you have a legal right to keep the Medigap policy. <https://www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/02110.pdf>

Medicare now pays the private plans more than the same services through traditional Medicare. The subsidies have fueled explosive growth in the least-efficient plans, fee-for-service plans. In addition, some of the

Advantage plans have opted out of Medicare, leaving participants looking for other plans.

You can find out which plans serve your area and obtain a copy of the leaflet entitled *The Facts about Medicare Advantage Plans* by contacting any Social Security office, or by phoning Medicare at (800) 633-4227. TTY users should call (877) 486-2048. You can also secure information about choosing a health plan, buying a Medigap policy, or help with other questions from the Texas Department of Insurance at (800) 599-7467.

### **LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE**

Long-term care insurance typically is designed to pay some or all of the costs of a nursing home stay when you can no longer perform daily living tasks independently. Some policies *may* cover care in more than one setting, including nursing homes and adult day care facilities, and home health care.

These policies must meet all of the standards set by the State Board of Insurance. Policies advertised or marketed as long-term care and nursing home policies must offer benefits for at least 12 months.

Each policy is different. Some policies pay for all types of care, from home health care to nursing care. Others pay only when a certain type of facility delivers the care. Each policy must include in its definitions of care the level of skill required, the nature of the care, and the setting in which the care must be delivered.

Long-term care insurance is costly and might not cover all of your expenses. It is a bad idea to pay premiums from your savings. If your only income is Social Security, it is unwise to buy a long-term care policy.

People buy long-term care insurance to protect their assets. Medicaid pays long-term care expenses for people who qualify. (See “Housing Alternatives,” the Nursing Homes” section for information on Medicaid coverage of nursing home care.) Some financial advisers and consumer publications say buying long-term care insurance is a bad choice for a couple with assets (excluding their home) below \$100,000.

Whether to transfer your assets ahead of time, spend them down to qualify for Medicaid, or buy long-term care insurance is a matter of personal choice. Your decision depends on your income, family situation, and family preferences.

#### **OTHER INSURANCE PLANS**

If you have continued group insurance for retirees or are part of any other private health insurance plan, check the benefits carefully to determine if you still need a Medigap insurance plan. Duplication of benefits can be tricky; it is best to consult the state department of insurance before purchasing a Medigap policy if you are covered by other private insurance.

Hospital indemnity policies pay a fixed cash amount for each day you are hospitalized up to a designated number of days. Specified disease insurance provides benefits for only a single disease or a group of diseases. Benefits are usually limited to payment of a fixed amount for each type of treatment. Remember, Medicare and Medigap policies will very likely cover the costs of these illnesses. The relative benefits and costs of buying more insurance should be carefully weighed.

## **General Shopping Tips**

- Talk to several agents and companies.
- Buy locally from an agent you know and trust.
- Never buy a policy or sign something you do not understand. Ask questions. Discuss with friends and family.
- Never buy a policy on an agent's first visit.
- Never sign a blank application; answer all questions truthfully.
- Make checks payable to the insurance company, never to the agent.
- Pay premiums for only one year at a time.

## **INFORMATION RESOURCES**

For information, counseling, or to file a complaint about private insurance providers, you may contact

### **Consumer Protection Division**

Office of the Attorney General

(512) 463-6169; (800) 578-4677

[texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection)

### **The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services**

701 West 51<sup>st</sup>, #W253, Austin, TX 78751

(855) YES-ADRC (855-937-2372)

Health and Human Services (512) 438-3011

[hhs.texas.gov](https://www.hhs.texas.gov)

### **Texas Department of Insurance**

Consumer Claims/Complaints

PO Box 149091

Austin, TX 78714

(512) 463-6169; (800) 578-4677

[tdi.texas.gov](https://www.tdi.texas.gov)

## **Elder Law and Public Health Division**

Office of the Attorney General  
(512) 463-2100; (800)252-8011  
[texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://texasattorneygeneral.gov)

### == **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** ==

This program provides a minimum monthly income to persons age 65 or older and those blind or disabled persons who have very limited incomes and resources. In Texas, persons eligible for SSI automatically are eligible to receive Medicaid, a medical assistance program. You usually are eligible for food stamps as well. You must provide documentation that your household's income and resources are below levels set by the Social Security Administration. For information, call the Social Security Administration: (800) 772-1213 or TTY (800) 325-0778, 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM, M-F.

### ==== **Medicaid** =====

Medicaid is a medical assistance program that helps states provide health care services for needy and low-income individuals. Though the federal government partially funds Medicaid, programs differ greatly from state to state because they are administered at the state level. In Texas, Medicaid coverage is only available to recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and to eligible nursing-home residents (see "Housing Alternatives," "Nursing Homes" section).

In Texas, Medicaid covers the cost of comprehensive medical services, including prescriptions, personal care services, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and medical trans-



portation. Check beforehand with any medical service provider to be sure that they are licensed for or accept Medicaid reimbursement.

For information or to apply contact

### **Medicaid for Aged and Disabled**

(512) 919-7360; (800) 252-8263

## **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP**

(formerly known as “Food Stamps”)

SNAP provides funding to individuals and families that that can be used like money to buy nutritious foods like meat and fish, vegetables and fruit, dairy products, and bread. SNAP funds may not be used to buy alcohol, tobacco, paper products, or pet food. U.S. citizens and some categories of legal residents may get SNAP if they

- a. Meet the SNAP guidelines and any other requirements that apply to their household, *and*
- b. Provide or apply for a social security number for all household members.

To qualify for SNAP, your assets must not exceed specified limits for your type of household. (Slightly more assets are allowed for household with one or more persons over 60 years of age.) Your home and the land that it is on, most personal belongings, and farm or business property are NOT counted toward the asset limit. In some cases, part of the value of your car will count toward the asset limit. Again, depending on the type of your household (whether it contains a disabled person or a person age 60 or older), you will also have

to meet gross and/or net income tests. Benefit levels for all households depend on the number of people in a household and the household's net income. The more people in the household, the larger the benefit; the lower that household's net income, the larger the benefit.

To apply for SNAP, you can apply in several ways:

- On-line at [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com)
- By calling 2-1-1, Option 2

Most households must have an in-person interview with a SNAP worker to review the application and the needed documentation. If you can't get to the office in person, you may appoint any responsible adult to act as your authorized representative and appear for you. A home visit or telephone interview can be arranged in case of disability or other hardship.

- You will need to furnish the following items when you apply for SNAP:
  - I.D. showing your name and address;
  - Proof of social security number or proof that you have applied for all household members. You can apply for one at the SNAP office if necessary;
  - Proof of your monthly earning, such as recent pay stubs;
  - Copy of check or benefit statement from social security, pension, SSI, or other unearned income;
  - If not a U.S. citizen, proof of legal resident status;
  - Bankbook or current bank statement;
  - Receipts for childcare costs;
  - Utility and rent bills or proof of mortgage and property tax payments, if you own your home.

You may also be required to verify other informa-

tion about your household status. If you cannot get all these things immediately, apply anyway. Your benefits will be figured from the day you apply and you can bring the remaining items in later.

If you qualify, you should receive your SNAP within 30 days of the date your application was received. If you are in an emergency situation, for example, with less than \$150 in income and \$100 in assets, you may qualify for expedited service and get the funds within 5 calendar days.

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## Medical Access Program

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### WHAT IS MAP?

The Medical Access Program is a local program provided by Central Health that covers primary care, prescriptions, specialty care, and hospital care.

Travis County residents with family incomes at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Index Guidelines (FPIG), who meet asset guidelines, and have no other health care coverage (such as Medicaid or Medicare) may be eligible.

Travis County residents who are disabled or elderly with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Index Guidelines, who meet asset guidelines, and have no other health care coverage (such as Medicaid or Medicare).

**Note:** Even if you do not qualify for MAP, you may be enrolled in other programs that can help you get health care at a reduced rate.

You can apply for a MAP card at the following locations. Hours of operation vary per site. Please call (512) 978-8130 for more information.

## **AUSTIN LOCATIONS**

### **Northeast Austin Eligibility Office**

6633 US 290 East, Suite 101  
Austin  
(512) 978-8130

### **South Austin Eligibility Office**

2028 East Ben White Boulevard, Suite 115  
Austin  
(512) 978-8130

### **Southeast Health and Wellness Center/Eligibility Office**

2901 Montopolis Dr.  
Austin  
(512) 978-8130

## **RURAL LOCATIONS**

### **North Rural Community Center (Pflugerville)**

15822 Foothill Farms Loop, Building D  
Pflugerville  
(512) 978-8130

For MAP or CHC sliding-fee scale certification, bring the following documents to your interview (the eligibility offices can advise acceptable alternate documents to determine eligibility, if you do not have the listed documents):

- Birth certificate or U.S. passport
- Texas driver's license/photo ID
- Current utility bill (except homeless)
- Proof of income for past four weeks
- Medicare, Medicaid, or other insurance card/letter (if applicable)
- Social Security card

- Lease agreement/rent receipt
- Bank statement (if applicable)
- Tax receipt or property appraisal (if applicable)
- Proof of alien sponsor's income (if applicable)

Remember: Even if you do not qualify for MAP, you may be enrolled in other programs that can help you get health care at a reduced rate.

Home-bound citizens can request that an eligibility worker come to their home.

## **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) helps veterans and their families apply for benefits, file claims, and clarify services.

### **Austin Veteran's Satellite Outpatient Clinic**

7901 Metropolis Dr.

Austin, TX 78744

(512) 823-4000

[www.centraltexas.va.gov](http://www.centraltexas.va.gov)

### **Veterans' Benefits Hotline**

Information and referral for Texas veterans. Same number for Veteran's Land Board. Information and assistance with housing, loans, etc.

(800) 827-1000

[www.centraltexas.va.gov](http://www.centraltexas.va.gov)

### **Veterans Outpatient Clinic - Cedar Park**

1401 Medical Parkway Suite 400, Building C

Cedar Park, TX 78613

(800) 423-2111

## **Veterans' Service Office Travis County**

100 North IH 35, Ste 2400

Austin, TX 78701

(512) 854-9340

**[traviscountytexas.gov/veterans-services](http://traviscountytexas.gov/veterans-services)**

## **Texas Veterans Commission**

P.O. Box 12277

Austin TX 78711

(88) 252-8387

**[www.tvc.texas.gov](http://www.tvc.texas.gov)**

[info@tvc.texas.gov](mailto:info@tvc.texas.gov)

**Veterans Crisis Line: (800) 273-8255**

## Food and Nutrition

The phrase “you are what you eat” applies to all of us. For the older adult, obtaining an adequate and well-balanced diet can have special difficulties. These problems may be a result of

- Physical impairments that impede shopping, cooking, and eating;
- Reduced social contacts and disinterest in eating alone;
- Missing or loose teeth, unhealthy gums, or ill-fitting dentures;
- Sensory losses or changes in taste, sight, or smell;
- Mental or emotional changes such as sadness or depression, anxiety, or confusion;
- Medications that produce side effects such as increased or decreased appetite, nausea, constipation, changes in taste; or
- Economic hardship that makes it difficult to purchase healthy foods.

Your physician can give you information about your specific needs. He or she can recommend a dietitian or nutritionist to help plan the diet best for you. There is an abundance of nutritional information available.

### Guidelines for Nutrition

Consultation with your physician, a nutritionist, or dietitian can help you design a well-balanced diet that meets your particular needs. It is important to follow the six guidelines listed here as you design a healthy diet.

1. Eat a variety of foods.
2. Maintain a healthy weight.
3. Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
4. Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grains.
5. Use sugar, salt, and sodium in moderation.
6. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

People need more than 40 different nutrients to stay healthy. This includes protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and water. Grouping foods into major groups according to the nutrients they contain provides a convenient way to ensure a healthy, well-balanced diet. The major food groups with recommended numbers of servings are listed below.

### **BREADS, CEREALS, AND OTHER GRAIN PRODUCTS (6-11 SERVINGS DAILY)**

1 Serving = 1 slice of bread ~ 1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal ~ ½ cup noodles, pasta, rice, grits ~ 1 small muffin, roll, biscuit ~ 5 small saltines or 2 graham crackers ~ ½ cup cooked cereal, such as oatmeal or cream of wheat.

### **FRUITS (2-4 SERVINGS DAILY)**

1 Serving = 1 whole apple, banana, orange ~ ½ grapefruit, melon wedge ~ ¾ cup juice ~ ½ to ¾ cup berries ~ ½ cup canned or cooked fruit ~ ¼ cup dried fruit.

### **VEGETABLES (3-5 SERVINGS DAILY)**

1 Serving = ½ cup cooked or chopped raw vegetables ~ 1 cup leafy raw vegetables such lettuce or spinach.



## **MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, EGGS, DRY BEANS AND PEAS, SEEDS AND NUTS (2-3 SERVINGS DAILY)**

1 Serving = 3 oz. (about the size of a deck of cards)  
cooked lean meat, fish, or poultry ~ ½ cup cooked dry  
beans or peas ~ 2 tablespoons peanut butter ~ 1 egg.

## **MILK, YOGURT, AND CHEESE (2-3 SERVINGS DAILY)**

1 Serving = 1 cup milk ~ 1 cup yogurt ~ 1 ½ ounces nat-  
ural cheeses ~ ½ cup cottage cheese ~ 2 ounces pro-  
cessed cheese.

The amount and kinds of food you should eat de-  
pend on your age, sex, physical condition, and activ-  
ity level. Older adults may not need as many calories as  
they did in their younger years, but the nutrient quality  
should remain high. Your doctor may have suggested  
that you be careful not to eat foods containing too  
much fat, cholesterol, sodium, or sugar. Some foods do  
not belong in any of the basic five food groups. Foods  
like cake, jelly, cookies, butter, oil, alcohol, and others  
are high in calories and low in nutrients. These should  
be used in moderation. Persons with a lactose intoler-  
ance may need to substitute soy-based products for tra-  
ditional dairy products or buy dairy products designed  
for lactose-intolerant people. Individuals with an elimi-  
nation problem may need to eat even more fiber than  
the above suggestions provide.

Drinking plenty of fluids may be one of the most  
important dietary tips to follow. Water, juices, soups,  
and other beverages are essential to transport neces-  
sary nutrition to all body cells and to help the kidneys  
remove wastes. Adequate fluid intake will also ease

the process of elimination. Six to eight glasses of liquid daily are essential and, in hot weather, you will probably need more to keep your body functioning well.

Several cookbooks are available for older adults who desire more nutritional food. Among the books, which can be found at the library, are *The Older Americans Cookbook* by Marilyn McFarland; *The Over Fifty Cookbook: Eating Well When You Just Can't Eat The Way You Used To* by Jane Weston Wilson; and *The Good Age Cookbook* by The Institute for Creative Aging.

## **Eating Habits Checklist**

If you are an older American, this checklist, taken from a report in the *Chicago Tribune*, lets you see whether you are at nutritional risk. The list was developed by the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Dietetic Association, and the National Council on Aging. Add the points after each statement that rings true.

1. I have an illness or condition that made me change the amount or kind of food I eat. (2)
2. I eat fewer than two meals a day. (3)
3. I eat few fruits, vegetables, or milk products. (2)
4. I have three or more drinks of beer, liquor, or wine every day. (2)
5. I have tooth or mouth problems that make it hard for me to eat. (2)
6. I don't always have enough money to buy the food I need. (4)
7. I eat alone most of the time. (1)
8. Without wanting to, I have lost or gained 10 pounds in the last 6 months. (2)

9. I am not always physically able to shop, cook, or feed myself. (2)

## SCORING

- 0 to 2 points: Good. Check again in 6 months.
- 3 to 5: You may be at moderate nutritional risk. See what can be done to improve your eating habits and lifestyle. Recheck in 6 months.
- 6 or more: High nutritional risk. Take this checklist to your doctor, dietitian, or other health professional the next time you visit. Ask for help to improve your nutrition.

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## Meal Planning Tips

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Mealtime and food can be made more appealing by following a few simple guidelines. A variety of strategies are listed below.

- Provide eye appeal in color, texture, and arrangement of food on the serving plate.
- Food temperatures should be appropriate -- hot foods should be served hot, cold foods should be served cold. Insulated mugs help keep beverages hot for slower eaters.
- Prepare bite-size pieces. Peel and cut up fresh fruits such as apples, oranges, and melons as needed.
- Serving portions should be adequate and appropriate for the individual.
- Fully light the dining area so food can be easily seen and identified.
- Emphasize breakfast time, when appetites are frequently best.

- Try eating or serving several meals rather than the traditional three meals a day.
- Eat or provide nutritional snacks between meals for those with small appetites or in need of supplemental food.
- Foods should be moist, tender, and easy to chew.
- Allow for rest before meals.
- If possible, choose a comfortable, interesting place to eat, such as by a window or on the patio.
- Some persons prefer listening to relaxing music or watching television while eating.
- Have a mealtime companion if possible.
- Attend a group-meal program for company or support.
- Select tableware suitable for older adults. Forks or spoons with loop handles may be easier to grasp.
- Beverage tumblers should have a firm base and not tip easily. Cups or mugs with firm bases and easy-to-grasp handles should be used.
- Plates may need a higher outer rim to push food against or to secure it easily on a fork.
- If nausea is a problem, offer cold, less odoriferous foods. Eating slowly and having small, frequent meals may help.

## **Shopping Tips**

Most everyone is concerned about food costs and getting the most for the money spent. With a few tips on proper food selection, you can obtain healthy and affordable foods.

### **BEFORE SHOPPING**

- Prepare a list and plan ahead to avoid “impulse buying.”
- Shop on days when the foods are freshest and more plentiful, usually toward the end of the week.

- Check ads for special prices and discounts and use coupons for only those items you need and will use.
- Don't go to the store hungry or you may buy more than you need!

## **AT THE STORE**

- Stick to your shopping list.
- Buy dated products only if the "sell by" or "use by" date has not expired.
- Buy frozen products only if they are frozen solid.
- Buy packaged precooked foods only if the package is not torn or damaged.
- Do not buy cans that are dented, bulging, or damaged in any way.
- Buy only fresh produce. Do not buy produce that is wilted or shows any sign of mold.
- Shop for perishables last. Keep frozen and refrigerated items together in your basket and in the grocery sack.
- Compare prices among forms of the same foods, such as fresh, canned, or frozen, and get the best buy.
- Remember that buying in quantity saves money only if you serve the food often and can store it properly.

## **SELECTING FOOD**

- Make your own casseroles and soups with dried peas, beans, or lentils and either fresh or leftover meats and vegetables. This is much more economical than buying prepared products.
- Buy only lean cuts of meat.
- Use fruit juices rather than fruit drinks or "soda."
- Substitute plain yogurt for sour cream in recipes.
- Hot cereals are usually less expensive than ready-to-eat varieties.

- Buy pink or chum canned salmon, which is less expensive than king or sockeye. The bones can be used too and are an excellent source of calcium.
- Chicken and turkey often cost less than red meat and have fewer calories and less fat.
- Individually frozen vegetables in large plastic bags usually cost less per serving than small packages, and you can cook only what you need.

## Food Safety at Home

Avoiding food-borne illnesses is the main objective of safety and hygiene practices regarding food. The following are some simple but critical guidelines.

### MEATS:

- Defrost meat, poultry, or fish in the refrigerator or microwave, following manufacturer's instruction.
- Whole cuts of beef and lamb can be cooked medium or from barely pink to brown.
- Chicken, pork, hamburger, and fish should be cooked well done.
- Avoid eating all raw or undercooked meats, fish, poultry, or shellfish.
- Be sure that the food preparation area and utensils are kept clean. Wash cutting boards, utensils, countertops, sink, and hands with hot, soapy water.

### EGGS:

- Do not use any eggs with cracked shells.
- Boil eggs for at least seven minutes.
- Fry eggs at least 3 minutes on each side. Avoid runny, liquid yolks.

- Scramble eggs to dry, not runny, consistency.
- Avoid foods made with raw or partially cooked eggs, such as homemade mayonnaise, homemade ice cream using eggs, homemade egg nog.

#### **DAIRY:**

- Use only pasteurized milk products.
- Use only pasteurized processed cheeses and avoid soft-ripened cheeses such as Brie and Camembert.

#### **FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:**

- Wash all fruits and vegetables well.
- Use only fresh-looking produce without any signs of mold or wilt.
- Do not use canned goods if the can is dented, bulging, or damaged in other ways.

## **Nutrition Programs and Meal Assistance**

### **SNAP/FOOD STAMPS**

SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is a government assistance program to help low-income households pay for food. SNAP used to be called the Food Stamp program. The amount of SNAP a household gets depends on the household's size, income, and expenses.

To see if you qualify or to apply for SNAP, visit [www.yourtexasbenefits.org](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.org) or call 2-1-1, Option 2.

Or for more assistance, contact

#### **Central Texas Food Bank**

(512) 684-2550 or toll-free (855) 684-2550

or schedule an appointment online at [www.centraltexas-foodbank.org](http://www.centraltexas-foodbank.org)

## HOME DELIVERED MEALS

### **Community Action Partnership- Meals on Wheels (Hays County)**

The Combined Community Action Senior Nutrition Program, also known as “Meals on Wheels,” serves hot, noon meals to the homebound in a six-county area.

For eligibility and availability, please call (800) 333-6325 or (979) 540-2980.

[www.ccaction.com/community-action/meals-on-wheels](http://www.ccaction.com/community-action/meals-on-wheels)

### **Meals on Wheels**

Meals on Wheels Central Texas

3227 East 5th Street

Austin, TX 78702

(512) 476-6325

[www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org)

The Meal Delivery Program is a holistic nutrition program that provides home delivered prepared meals for seniors and other homebound clients throughout the Greater Austin area. This program provides case management services to individuals enrolled in the Meals on Wheels program. Each recipient receives one hot meal per day during the week and may have an option of receiving supplemental frozen meals for the weekend.

#### *ELIGIBILITY*

Individuals must be

- Primarily homebound
- Unable to easily prepare nutritious meals
- Without consistent daytime assistance from another person
- Able to accept meals during the delivery time frame
- A resident of the Greater Austin Area

### **Meals on Wheels of Williamson and Burnet Counties**

604 High Tech Drive

Georgetown, TX 78626

(512) 763-1400



[www.opportunitiesforwbc.org](http://www.opportunitiesforwbc.org)

Meals on Wheels of Williamson & Burnet Counties serves and delivers chef-prepared meals from local kitchens in five senior activity centers.

## FOOD BANKS

(512) 282-2111

[www.centraltexasfoodbank.org](http://www.centraltexasfoodbank.org)

The Central Texas Food Bank provides food and grocery products to partner agencies in Central Texas counties. To find a food bank close to you, call 211.

## CONGREGATE MEALS

Congregate meals are meals served in group settings. Costs vary but are usually at a significantly reduced rate.

### **Austin**

The Senior Congregate Meals Program is open to anyone 60 years of age or older. The meals are at the suggested Client Share donation of \$1.00 to \$3.00 but no contribution is required. In addition to lunch, participants share social and recreational activities and receive additional benefits such as nutrition education, health and welfare counseling and information and referral services.

#### *Locations*

- Alamo Recreation Center: 2100 Alamo St, TX 78722, (512) 974-5680
- Asian American Resource Center, 8401 Cameron Rd, Austin, TX 78754, (512) 974-1700
- Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center: 808 Nile St, TX 78702, (512) 978-2660
- Dove Springs Recreation Center: 5801 Ainez Dr., TX 78744, (512) 447-5875
- Gustavo "Gus" L. Garcia Recreation Center: 1201 East Rundberg, TX 78753, (512) 978-2525

- Metz Recreation Center: 2407 Canterbury St., TX 78702, (512) 978-2399
- South Austin Neighborhood Center-Durwood: 2508 Durwood St., TX 78704, (512) 972-6840
- South Austin Senior Activity Center: 3911 Manchaca Rd., TX 78704, (512) 448-0787
- Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center: 7500 Blessing Ave., TX 78752, (512) 974-7865

For more information regarding the Congregate Meal Program, call (512) 476-6325. Inquiries about senior adult recreation and social activities, please call (512) 974-3903.

### **Hays County**

**[www.ccaction.com/community-action/meals-on-wheels](http://www.ccaction.com/community-action/meals-on-wheels)**

Contact the Senior Nutrition Program Director at (800) 333-6325 or (979) 540-2980.

- San Marcos Housing Authority, 1201 Thorpe Ln, San Marcos
- Georgia Street Senior Center, 810 Arizona Street, San Marcos
- La Vista Apartments, 1615 Redwood Road, San Marcos
- Old City Hall Building, 101 S. Burleson, Kyle
- Buda United Methodist Church, 302 Elm, Buda
- Wimberley Civic Center, 14050 Ranch Road 12, Wimberley

### **Williamson and Burnet County**

- Allen R. Baca Center for Senior and Community Activities, 301 W Bagdad Road, Bldg #2, Round Rock (512) 255-4970
- Taylor Senior Center, 410 W 7th Street, Taylor (512) 352-5539
- Madella Hilliard Center, 803 W 8th Street, Georgetown (512) 863-5010
- Sheriff Center, 1701 Broadway, Marble Falls (512) 715-9717

The Area Agency on Aging, through funding from the federal Older Americans Act, supports a portion of the regional funding for home-delivered and congregate meals.

# Funerals and Final Arrangements

Thinking about our final days and our final arrangements is seldom an easy task. Even so, planning turns out to be a very special gift you give not only to yourself but to your loved ones so that they won't have to make important decisions under highly stressful circumstances. Visit [www.theconversationproject.org](http://www.theconversationproject.org) for free resources to help you decide, discuss and document your end-of-life wishes.

Once a death has occurred, there are several options for the **final disposition of remains**. Typically, the decedent's body is (1) interred in a burial plot or a mausoleum, (2) cremated, or (3) donated for medical research and education (and then cremated).

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## Ground Burial

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When burial is chosen, costs – in addition to funeral home expenses – typically include

- The plot
- A perpetual care or grounds maintenance fee (if not included in the price of the plot)
- The opening/closing of the plot prior to each interment
- A grave liner when the cemetery requires it
- A marker or monument
- Deeds and other administrative expenses

To see a sampling of cemetery costs in our area, go to [www.fcontext.org](http://www.fcontext.org) and click on the COSTS tab.

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## Cremation

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When cremation is chosen, costs – without a funeral or memorial service – include

- Transporting the deceased from the place of death to the funeral provider's facility
- Refrigeration of remains (rather than embalming)
- A combustible cremation container
- Cremation process
- Placement of cremated remains in a simple container, typically a plastic box
- Required paperwork

To see what funeral providers in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties charge for Direct Cremation (without a service), go to [www.fcactx.org](http://www.fcactx.org) and click on the COSTS tab.

Cremated remains may be scattered or placed in an urn or other suitable container. If the family wishes, the urn may be placed in a columbarium or a mausoleum or buried, either in its own plot or in a larger plot with a casket or other urns.

Final arrangements may or may not include a funeral service or a memorial service, sometimes referred to as a celebration of life.

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## Organ, Eye, and Tissue Donation

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Simply put, donation makes lifesaving transplants possible. Donated organs, eyes, and tissues save lives, restore vision, and improve mobility for people who receive these transplanted gifts.

The **Donate Life Texas Registry** at [www.donatelifetexas.org](http://www.donatelifetexas.org), is the official organ, eye, and tissue donor

registry for the state of Texas. By registering, you can record your legal consent for organ, eye and tissue donation after death. Adding your name to the registry is easy. You can do it when you apply for or renew your driver's license, ID, or vehicle registration. Or you can do it on their website.

If you would like an open viewing of your body at a visitation or funeral service, be assured that donation does not prevent a viewing.

When you register, keep in mind that you are documenting your willingness to be a donor. Due to many variables, there is no guarantee that your organs, eyes, or tissue will be accepted at the time of your death.

Be sure to let your loved ones know that you wish to be an organ, eye and tissue donor.

## **Whole Body Donation**

Donating a body for scientific, medical, or forensic research (sometimes known as "donating a body to science") is typically done through what is called a whole or willed body donation program. These programs vary widely. Some programs accept bodies from which organs, eyes and/or tissue have been donated for transplantation. Some cover body transport expenses. Some return cremated remains to donor families at no charge. Be sure to inquire and compare programs before registering with any of them.

Just keep in mind that the condition of the body at the time of death may render it ineligible for donation. For this reason, it is wise to have an alternate plan for body disposition.

The following organizations are currently accepting donor bodies from the Greater Austin area:

## **BODY PROCUREMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Anatomy Gifts Registry (nonprofit)**

(800) 300-5433

[www.anatomygifts.org](http://www.anatomygifts.org)

### **BioGift (nonprofit)**

(866) 670-1799

[www.biogift.org](http://www.biogift.org)

### **Genesis Legacy**

(877) 288-4483

[www.genesislegacy.org](http://www.genesislegacy.org)

### **Science Care**

(800) 417-3747

[www.sciencecare.com](http://www.sciencecare.com)

### **United Tissue Network (nonprofit)**

(877) 738-6111

<https://unitedtissue.org>

## **WILLED BODY PROGRAMS**

### **Texas A&M Health Science Center (Bryan)**

(979) 436-0318

[medicine.tamhsc.edu/departments/next/willed-body.html](http://medicine.tamhsc.edu/departments/next/willed-body.html)

Texas State University Forensic Anthropology Center (San Marcos)

(512) 245-1900

**Note:** No cremated remains are returned.

[www.txstate.edu/anthropology/facts/donations.html](http://www.txstate.edu/anthropology/facts/donations.html)

### **The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio**

(210) 567-3900

[uthscsa.edu/csa/bodydonation/](http://uthscsa.edu/csa/bodydonation/)

## **UT Southwestern Medical Center (Dallas)**

(Provides willed bodies to Dell Medical School in Austin)

(214) 648-2221 or (888) 905-9991

[www.utsouthwestern.edu/research/programs/willed-body](http://www.utsouthwestern.edu/research/programs/willed-body)

## **Your Consumer Rights**

The Funeral Rule, developed by the Federal Trade Commission in 1984, was created to define and protect your rights when dealing with funeral homes. Following are some facts that are helpful to know:

- You can walk into any funeral home in the United States, request a General Price List, and walk out.
- You can request prices by phone.
- Embalming is not required by law.
  - Refrigeration is an effective alternative. Unlike embalming, it is not invasive. Plus, refrigeration is usually included in funeral home charges for Immediate Burial and Direct Cremation.
- You don't have to buy a casket or an urn from a funeral home.
  - You can purchase a casket or an urn – usually for a lot less than what a funeral home charges – and the funeral home is required to receive the casket without charge.
  - In Austin, Collier's Affordable Caskets ([512] 821-2755; [www.colliercasket.com](http://www.colliercasket.com)) offers caskets. Online, you'll find competitive prices at [costco.com](http://costco.com), [walmart.com](http://walmart.com), [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), and websites of online casket/urn vendors.
  - You can also use competitors' lower prices to negotiate at the funeral home.
  - Families also have the option to make caskets and urns themselves. Diagrams and YouTube videos are available online.

## **Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas (FCACTX)**

(512) 480-0555

[www.fcactx.org](http://www.fcactx.org)

Locally, consumer information is available at no charge from a nonprofit group committed to helping people make educated, practical choices that will meet their needs at the end of life. FCACTX provides information about end-of-life topics, advance directives, and funeral costs in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties. Their annual Funeral Home Price Survey, has helped many families significantly reduce funeral expenses by comparing prices.

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## **Prepaid Funeral Contracts**

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Preplanning your final arrangements is always a wise idea. However, once you've decided what you want, keep in mind that no consumer organizations recommend **purchasing** prepaid funeral contracts.

Pre-Planning and Pre-Paying are not the same. If, however, you decide to purchase a prepaid funeral contract, be aware that not everything is taken care of. Third-party, at-need expenses not covered include death certificates and obituaries as well as optional funeral service expenses such as honoraria for clergy and musicians, flowers, and police escort to the cemetery.

### **OTHER FUNDING OPTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- Opening a **Payable-Upon-Death account** at your credit union or bank enables you to set funds aside for final arrangements while maintaining control of your money. Select a trusted family member, friend, or agent to be co-owner of the account.
- If you are receiving benefits based on your assets/income, purchasing a prepaid funeral contract may be an



option to consider. Before you buy, decide exactly what you want. Then contact at least three funeral providers to compare prices for the goods and services you want, monthly payments, and contract terms.

For **important** information about prepaid funeral contracts and questions to ask a funeral provider that sells them, visit [www.prepaidfunerals.texas.gov](http://www.prepaidfunerals.texas.gov).

## After-Death Benefits for Veterans

Honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and dependent children typically qualify for burial benefits. You'll find complete information about burial benefits, scheduling, and more at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov), or call (844) 698-2311, Ext. 4.

### National Cemeteries nearest Austin

- (1) Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio
- (2) San Antonio National Cemetery (spaces for cremated remains only).

For information about these two cemeteries, call (210) 820-3891.

### State Veterans Cemetery nearest Austin

Central Texas Veterans Cemetery in Killeen.

For information about this cemetery, call (254) 616-1770.

## Social Security Lump Sum Benefit

(800) 772-1213; (800) 325-0778 TTY

[www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/ifyou.html](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/ifyou.html)

A one-time lump-sum *death* payment of \$255 can be paid to the surviving spouse if he or she was living with the deceased; or, if living apart, was receiving certain

*Social Security benefits* on the deceased's record. The website provides detailed information about survivor eligibility and how to apply.

## **County Assistance for Eligible Applicants**

Eligibility guidelines are based on numerous criteria, including but not limited to residency of deceased, financial status of deceased and/or applicants. For details, contact the county office.

### **Bastrop County (office in Bastrop)**

(512) 581-7100

Body Burial: No

Cremation: Yes

### **Caldwell County (office in Lockhart)**

(512) 398-1808

Body Burial: No

Cremation: Yes

### **Hays County (office in San Marcos)**

(512) 393-5520

Body Burial: Yes

Cremation: Yes

### **Travis County (office in Austin)**

(512) 854-4120

[www.traviscountytexas.gov/health-human-services/burial](http://www.traviscountytexas.gov/health-human-services/burial)

Body Burial: Yes

Cremation: Yes

### **Williamson County (County Judge's office, Georgetown)**

(512) 943-1550

Body Burial: No

Cremation: Yes, but only for indigents without family

# Health Care

## Visiting the Doctor

No physician is a mind reader, not even a psychiatrist. To give proper care, the doctor needs information that only you can provide. To get the most from visiting a physician, do some advance planning.

### **LIST ALL MEDICATIONS YOU ARE CURRENTLY TAKING.**

If possible, bring the drugs along. The doctor needs to know what drugs you are taking to prevent dangerous drug interactions, avoid duplicating prescriptions, and possibly save you money.

### **WRITE A LIST OF QUESTIONS.**

You might even give the doctor a copy of the list. Be as specific as possible; include your symptoms and when they occurred.

### **BRING A RECORD OF PREVIOUS X-RAYS, TESTS, AND EXAMINATIONS.**

If a procedure was done recently, the doctor may be able to obtain and use the results.

### **ASK QUESTIONS WHEN YOU MAKE THE APPOINTMENT.**

Does the doctor have special instructions that must be followed before an examination? For example, some tests are ineffective if the patient has eaten even several hours before the exam. Is there a charge for missed appointments? How much notice does the office require if you must change your appointment? If you have several concerns, be sure to inform the person scheduling

your appointment. You may need to schedule an appointment that is longer than usual.

### **ASK ABOUT FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS.**

Can you pay the bill in installments? Does the doctor accept credit cards or your insurance plan? Is he or she a member of your health maintenance organization (HMO), or a preferred provider of your insurance plan? Does the doctor accept Medicare assignment? (For an explanation of this term, see the “Medicare Assignment” section in “Financial Resources” section.)

### **LEARN THE NAME OF THE NURSE WHO WORKS IN THE OFFICE WITH YOUR DOCTOR.**

In most cases, he or she will be the link between you and your doctor.

### **TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR.**

At the doctor’s office, effective communication is critical. If the doctor or staff person does not ask about your personal health history, be sure to mention long-term diseases or problems such as glaucoma, high blood pressure, or diabetes. While the doctor is talking, jot down the answers to your questions. Or you might ask the doctor to clearly print the information that you need.

Important questions you might ask include

- What is the cause of your problem?
- What can you expect to happen because of this problem?
- What are the treatment options?
- Will the treatment affect planned activities?
- Does the doctor use a specific hospital?
- How do you contact the doctor after office hours?
- Does the doctor or insurance company offer 24-hour nursing support?

If the doctor is not clear or does not answer one of your questions, ask again. If the answer is still not clear, ask a nurse or another staff member.

Do not be afraid to discuss your fears with the doctor.

## Using Medicines Wisely

It is easy for anyone to abuse drugs accidentally. Many factors complicate the seemingly simple task of taking medications. Elderly persons can face even more potential problems because they frequently take several different drugs. Metabolic processes change with age. This can cause complications and require careful monitoring of medication dosage and side effects. (See the “Alcohol and Drug Abuse” section.) To avoid these problems, be sure to ask the doctor the following questions.

- What side effects may occur and should they be reported?
- Does the drug react adversely with other drugs (including over-the-counter medications), alcohol, or certain foods?
- Will the drug affect your activities?
- What are the instructions for taking the medication?
- Can a less expensive generic form of the drug be substituted?
- Can a different form of the drug (e.g., liquid vs. tablet) be substituted?
- Can the medication dosage and timing be adjusted to fit your lifestyle? (For example, can you take 300 mg. once a day rather than 100 mg. three times a day?)
- When should you stop the medication?

If you do not feel satisfied with the answers from the doctor, talk to the pharmacist. The pharmacist may also

be able to offer assistance such as easy-to-read labels and easy-to-open containers; be sure to keep these out of the reach of children.

You should *never* take another person's prescription, even if it is the same medication; the strength may be different from what you require. Drugs can also deteriorate and become dangerous or ineffective. Throw out all drugs not currently in use. Respect the expiration date shown on all medication bottles. When in doubt, throw the drug out.

Taking the correct amount of the proper drug at the right time can also be complicated, particularly if one is taking several medications. The following suggestions may facilitate this procedure.

- Use a segmented pillbox available at most drug stores. Ask the pharmacist if the device will provide adequate storage for your prescriptions.
- Make a chart noting which drugs to take, when, and how much. Mark the chart when you take them.
- Be sure you can tell the medicines apart and do not transfer pills from one container to another.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not keep medicines by the bed. Groping around in the dark can cause mistakes.
- Do not double up for missed doses; this can be dangerous or useless with some medications.

Remember, to be on the safe side, if you have any question about medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

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## Telehealth

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, many health care providers are offering remote, virtual options for health

care consultations and health care monitoring, so that medical professionals can still provide their care services to their patients, while maintaining safe physical distance. Technology tools and web applications are now being used to help track and monitor health, and provide a variety of digital health care services.

Telehealth helps seniors maintain their independence and enjoy living at home longer. It offers a range of options to make healthcare easier and more accessible. From tracking vital signs with remote monitoring devices, to communicating easily with a nurse through a web portal, to receiving on-the-spot care from a doctor via video chat, telehealth aims to make life easier.

Telehealth services are currently covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurances. It is not known if telehealth services will continue to be covered by Medicare and/or other insurance once the pandemic is over. Telehealth covers a wide range of telecommunication health services such as telemedicine and telecare, and it's important to understand the differences between them.

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TELEHEALTH, TELEMEDICINE, AND TELECARE?**

### *Telehealth*

Telehealth is a broad term that refers to any electronic and telecommunications technologies and services that are used to provide patient care and improve the healthcare delivery system as a whole. Telehealth can refer to both remote clinical services (e.g., doctor visits, medication management, medical consultations) and non-clinical services (e.g., provider training, adminis-

trative meetings, and continuing medical education). Telehealth is the umbrella term that encompasses both *telemedicine* and *telecare*.

### *Telemedicine*

Telemedicine is the practice of medicine using technology to deliver **clinical** care at a distance. Telemedicine is the term most commonly used to describe two-way, real-time conferencing between the doctor and patient, or between two providers. It can be used by a physician seeking a remote consult from a specialist in another location, or by a patient seeking a virtual “visit” with their doctor or nurse. A physician in one location can use secure video or audio calling to deliver care to a patient at a distant site (e.g., a patient’s home). Telemedicine can be a convenient option for follow up appointments, consultations, or medication management if the patient is unable to drive to the medical facility and attend in person, or if there are physical distancing restrictions in place. If you have a phone or a digital device with internet connection, you already have everything you need to use telemedicine.

### *Telecare*

Telecare is the term that relates to technology that enables patients to maintain their independence, health, and safety while remaining in their own homes. This technology includes mobile monitoring health devices, medical alert systems, and telecommunications technology like computers and telephones that can be used to keep track of health and wellbeing. Continuous remote monitoring of patients enables telecare to track



lifestyle changes over time as well as receiving alerts relating to real-time emergencies.

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## Hospice Care

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Hospice care is a special kind of care that focuses on the quality of life for people who are experiencing an advanced, life-limiting illness, and their caregivers. Hospice care provides compassionate care for people in the last phases of incurable disease so that they may live as fully and comfortably as possible.

The word “hospice” comes from the Latin “hospitium,” meaning guesthouse. It originally described a place of shelter for weary and sick travelers returning from religious pilgrimages. During the 1960’s, Dr. Cicely Saunders began the modern hospice movement by establishing St. Christopher’s Hospice near London. St. Christopher’s organized a team approach to professional caregiving, and was the first program to use modern pain management techniques to compassionately care for the dying. The first hospice in the United States was established in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974.

The focus of hospice services is care, not cure. The hospice team of professionals, volunteers, and family works together with the patient to help manage the physical and psychological symptoms of the illness. Hospice helps the dying remain at home by providing such services as nurses’ visits; home health aides who provide personal care, light housekeeping, and shopping; respite care (relief to caregivers); therapy; spiritual bereavement services; volunteers; and 24-hour crisis staffing.

To be eligible for hospice care, persons must be certified by a physician to be terminally ill, with a life expectancy of approximately six months or less. While they no longer receive treatment toward a cure, they require the close medical and supportive care that hospice can provide. However, anyone - you, a family member or friend - can make a referral for an evaluation.

The emphasis of hospice care is on helping the person to make the most of each hour and each day of remaining life by providing comfort and relief from pain. Hospice uses a team approach that includes the family, nurses, social workers, physicians, clergy, and volunteers, all working together. Family or friends providing care in the home can call for help from a hospice team member 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

Hospice care under Medicare includes both home care and inpatient care, when needed, and a variety of services not otherwise covered by Medicare. Medicare covers physicians' services; nursing care; medical appliances and supplies; outpatient drugs for symptom management and pain relief; short-term inpatient care, including respite care, home health aides, and homemaker services; physical therapy; occupational therapy and speech/language pathology services; medical social services; and counseling, including dietary counseling.

When a patient receives these services from a Medicare-approved hospice, Medicare Hospital Insurance - Part A pays almost the entire cost. The only expense to the patient is limited to cost-sharing for out-patient drugs and biologicals and inpatient respite care.

Counseling or *grief support* for the patient and loved ones are an important part of hospice care. After the

person's death, bereavement support is offered to families for at least one year. These services can take a variety of forms, including telephone calls, visits, written materials about grieving, and support groups. Individual counseling may be offered by the hospice or the hospice may make a referral to a community resource.

## **NON-PROFIT HOSPICE RESOURCES**

### **Texas Non-Profit Hospice Alliance**

(800) 276-1387

[www.tnpha.org](http://www.tnpha.org)

### **Hospice Austin**

(512) 342-4700

[www.hospiceaustin.org](http://www.hospiceaustin.org)

### **Wesleyan Hospice- Georgetown**

(512) 863-8848

[www.thewesleyan.org/hospice](http://www.thewesleyan.org/hospice)

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## **Palliative Care**

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Palliative care is not hospice care and does not replace the patient's primary treatment. Palliative care modalities work together with the primary treatment being received to provide an extra layer of support to treat the symptoms that accompany a serious illness. The purpose of palliative medicine is to lessen the pain and other physical symptoms of the disease and ease the patient's associated emotional and social stresses.

It is not time limited, allowing individuals who are "upstream" of a 6-month or less terminal prognosis to receive services aligned with palliative care principles.

In addition, individuals who qualify for hospice service, and who are not emotionally ready to elect hospice care, could benefit from these services. Any individual with a serious illness, regardless of life expectancy or prognosis, can receive palliative care.

Palliative care is not limited to the hospice benefit. How long an individual can receive care will depend on their care needs, and the coverage they have through Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance.

- **Medicare Part B and Medicaid**

Palliative care is covered. However, some treatments and medications may not be covered and may be subject to a co-pay according to the plan.

- **Private Insurance**

Most private insurers include palliative care as a covered service. Each payer is different, and their palliative care will be outlined through the insurer's member benefits.

## **SERVICES PROVIDED**

Pain and symptoms management, in-person and telephonic visits, help navigating treatment options, advance care planning, and referrals to community resources. Palliative care may be provided in any care setting; studies have shown that palliative care can improve quality of life, while extending life expectancy.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Austin Palliative Care**

(512) 397-3360

[www.austinpalliativecare.org](http://www.austinpalliativecare.org)

## **National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization**

(703) 837-1500

**[www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org)**

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) is the largest nonprofit membership organization representing hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. The organization is committed to improving end of life care and expanding access to hospice care with the goal of profoundly enhancing quality of life for people dying in America and their loved ones.

## Home Repair and Modification

This section of our handbook will discuss dwelling-related assistance for those older adults living in their own or their families' homes. There are many reasons why problems with current housing may arise. Housing concerns for frail elders are complicated by factors such as location; repair needs; utility costs; rental or mortgage prices; accommodation of disabilities ("accessibility"); and the need for support services, companionship, supervision, and/or health care. (See the "In-Home Care and Support Services" section for information on getting help and support in the home.)

Remember when contracting for home repair, consult with friends, family, or a website for a referral to a reputable "handy man." Many private home repair businesses offer discounts to older adults. If you use a home repair person who is not recommended by someone you know, ask for references. It is preferred that the repair person be bonded and insured. Use a program like Angie's List for online references: [www.angieslist.com](http://www.angieslist.com)

If you need to make your home safer, more navigable, more comfortable, or less expensive to maintain, the resources listed below can be useful. Please contact one of the following services to determine if you are eligible for the program.

### Home Repair Providers in the City of Austin

Austin Area Urban League

(512) 478-7176

[aaul.org/housing](http://aaul.org/housing)

This program provides emergency and critical repairs to owner occupied homes located in the City of Austin. The homeowners assisted by this program must reside in the City of Austin and their incomes may not exceed 80% of the Median Family Income (MFI) as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### **American Youth Works**

(512) 744-1900

[www.americanyouthworks.org](http://www.americanyouthworks.org)

Provides home repair and accessibility modifications

### **Hands on Housing (Interfaith Action Central Texas)**

(512) 386-9145

[www.interfaithtexas.org/hands-on-housing/](http://www.interfaithtexas.org/hands-on-housing/)

Provides home repair and accessibility modifications.

### **Easter Seals Central Texas**

(512) 478-2581

[www.easterseals.com/centraltx](http://www.easterseals.com/centraltx)

Provides home repair and accessibility modifications.

### **Austin Habitat for Humanity**

(512) 472-8788

[www.austinhabitat.org](http://www.austinhabitat.org)

Provides home repair and accessibility modifications, Brush with Kindness house painting, and veterans home repair.

### **Meals on Wheels Central Texas**

(512) 628-8171

[www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org)

Provides home repair, accessibility modifications and veterans home repair.

### **Rebuilding Together Austin**

(512) 993-8230

[www.rebuildingtogetheraustin.org](http://www.rebuildingtogetheraustin.org)

Provides home repair and accessibility modifications.

## **City of Austin, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development**

(512) 974-3100

Provides accessibility modifications, whole home reconstruction, lead paint removal, and sewer lateral replacement.

## **City of Austin, Weatherization and Air Conditioning System Replacement**

**Austin Energy**

(512) 482-5346

[www.austinenergy.com](http://www.austinenergy.com)

Provides free audit of homes for energy loss and an estimate of the cost for complete weatherization of a home. Audits are done by private contractors. Low-interest loans are available for energy-saving repairs for total home efficiency improvement; rebates are available. Free repairs and weatherization services are available for those who are low income, elderly, or disabled. The audit and loan programs are available to any City of Austin utility customer.

## **Travis County Home Repair Resources**

### **Travis County CDBG Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program**

#### **Home Repair grants**

The program is currently administered by Meals on Wheels Central Texas.

#### **Meals on Wheels Central Texas**

(512) 628-8171

[www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org)

To be eligible for home repairs and/or modifications, the client must meet the following criteria:

- Submit an application and proof of income.
- Total household income is at or below 80% of the Median



Family Income (MFI) for Travis County, Texas (less than \$42,500/year for one person).

- Agree to the program requirements.
- Have no outstanding debts or judgments owed to any government agencies.
- Property must be located within the unincorporated areas of Travis County with the exception of the Village of Webberville.
- The home must be owner-occupied and in the owner's name.
- Property taxes are current or property owner is on a payment plan.

### **Travis County Department of Human Resources Home Repair/Weatherization Program**

The Travis County Home Repair Program provides materials and labor to correct immediate threats to health and safety. These threats must be corrected before one or more of the energy efficiency programs can be completed. Services are only available to Travis County low-income homeowners once every 5-year period. Travis County Housing Services also provides free weatherization improvements to make homes more energy efficient for eligible county residents.

#### Services provided

- Emergency dwelling repairs
- Emergency electrical and plumbing repairs
- Handicap access measures
- Materials for "self-help"

Provides free weatherization and minor home repair for low-income residents of Travis County. Applicants' eligibility is based on income and family size. Weatherization includes installing insulation, servicing heating and air conditioning units, caulking, replacing exterior windows and doors, patching exterior siding, installing roof vents, and more. This is a one-time per dwelling program.

The Home Repair program provides emergency home repair (includes electrical and plumbing), home repair -- self-help (materials only), accessibility enhancements for physically impaired (excluding City of Austin residents), septic tank installation and repair, and roof repair. Septic tank applicants must live outside the city limits but within the county. The program will install a septic tank to eliminate environmental hazards.

**Austin Resource Center for Independent Living (ARCIL)**

(512) 832-6349; Outside (800) 414-6327

[www.arcil.com](http://www.arcil.com)

Provides opportunities for people with disabilities to gain the skills that empower them to live independently.

# Housing Alternatives

Many sections of this book have described community services that allow an older adult to remain in his or her home or in the home of a relative or caring friend. In-home services of all kinds, organized recreation programs, and community-sponsored meals can make it possible for an older adult to maintain this level of independent living. However, older adults may require more intensive assistance and supervision to ensure their health, safety, and quality of life. Fortunately, there exists a continuum of living alternatives for those who need to leave their homes: retirement communities, assisted-living facilities, personal care homes, and nursing homes.

Older adults may need to change their residence to save money. For those with financial hardship, subsidized housing is available in apartment complexes designated for older adults. Others may want to move to reduce their sense of isolation from others in their age group; they might consider moving into an apartment complex with a large population of elders.

## Subsidized Housing

Subsidized housing is available for low-income persons and elderly or disabled persons who cannot afford private housing. Subsidized housing limits the house payment to no more than 30% of the individual's or household's adjusted income.

### SECTION 8

This federally funded program pays part of the rent

directly to the property owner; tenants pay the balance, not to exceed 30% of their income. Section 8 vouchers can be used in apartment complexes, in single-family dwellings, or in duplexes. It is up to the voucher recipient to locate his or her own housing. The landlords must be willing to accept payments from HUD and meet the guidelines regarding upkeep, electrical fixtures, plumbing, etc. Sometimes a landlord may agree to participate in the program and, if so, the tenant can remain in place with reduced rent. The Section 8 program is operated through the Housing Authority of the City of Austin, with headquarters at 1124 S IH 35 or by contacting (512) 477-4488. Depending upon funding, the Housing Authority may or may not be accepting applications, and the waiting period can be lengthy. It is best to plan ahead.

## **PUBLIC HOUSING**

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) administers the Public Housing program. It manages 18 project based rental assistance apartment complexes in Austin. This housing is for low-income families, seniors, and disabled people. Rent is based on 30% of a family's income. You must apply at the HACA office at 1124 S IH 35 or (512) 477-4488. The application is simple. If you are receiving Social Security Disability, bring a copy of your award letter and attach it to the application to be assigned a federal preference. Applicants are assigned their units; they must accept whatever unit is offered or wait a year to reapply. Although people over 62 do get a federal preference and move more quickly through the waiting list, there is no guarantee that

they will get assigned a unit in one of the senior complexes. The waiting list can be three to eight months for someone with a federal preference: over 62, disabled, or homeless due to natural disaster. The waiting list can be 10 to 18 months for someone without a federal preference. In some cases, depending on funding and available units, the wait could be 3 to 5 years.

The Travis County Housing Authority, 502 East Highland Mall Blvd, operates subsidized apartment complexes as well. Call (512) 480-8245 to determine if applications are being accepted. The wait could be 2 to 3 years.

#### **PRIVATE COMPLEXES PARTICIPATING IN SUBSIDIZED/ HUD PROGRAMS/TAX CREDIT PROGRAMS**

In recognition of the difficulty an older adult may face keeping up with costs of housing on a fixed income, there are several programs that fund reduced rents for older adults. Most typically, housing is provided through HUD 202 program and tax credit developments. The age limit to qualify varies, it is usually age 62+ or age 55+ (one household member meets this requirement). Income requirements vary by program; HUD 202s provide the most affordable rent and Tax Credit Properties provide a range of reduced rent to those earning less than 60% of Median Family Income (MFI). To apply, call the individual complex. Most have waiting lists; call to inquire if the waiting list is open. Consider getting on multiple waiting lists.

**The Austin Tenants Council** is a non-profit community agency that assists people who are experiencing housing problems, particularly in rental situations. Please call (512) 474-7006 to arrange for an individual

appointment; 1640 East Cesar Chavez, Austin, TX 78702. Affordable housing information can be found on the website at [www.housing-rights.org](http://www.housing-rights.org). This list will identify the type of housing program, for example HUD 202.

To Search for vacancies, go to the Texas Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs vacancy clearinghouse:

[hrc-ic.tdhca.state.tx.us/hrc/VacancyClearinghouseSearch.m](http://hrc-ic.tdhca.state.tx.us/hrc/VacancyClearinghouseSearch.m)

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## **Retirement Apartments**

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If you need or want some support services and your finances are adequate, you may want to consider renting or buying an apartment in an apartment complex or retirement community that is designed for older persons. These facilities generally offer services like congregate meals, housekeeping, transportation, laundry, shopping, and organized social programs. Staff is present 24 hours a day in case of an emergency. Nursing care usually is not available. Some retirement communities also offer assisted-living services, which consist of assistance with routine hygiene, mobility, and medications.

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## **Personal Care Homes**

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A personal care home is smaller and more homelike than the larger assisted-living facilities. It usually is located in a residential neighborhood. Personal care homes provide the following: food; shelter; help with dressing, movement, bathing, and other routine hygiene; and administration of medications. Rooms may be shared and meals are served in congregate dining areas. Facilities that provide services to four or more in-

dividuals must be licensed by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services, Long-Term Care as “assisted living facilities, small.”

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## **Assisted Living**

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Assisted living is often viewed as the best of both worlds. Residents have as much independence as they want with the knowledge that personal care and support services are available if they need them. Assisted living communities are designed to provide residents with assistance with basic ADLs (activities of daily living) such as bathing, grooming, dressing, and more. Some states also allow assisted living to offer medication assistance and/or reminders. Assisted living communities differ from nursing homes in that they don't offer complex medical services. Assisted living communities range from a stand-alone residence to being one level of care in a CCRC (continuing care retirement community)

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## **Nursing Homes**

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Nursing homes provide 24-hour-a-day supervision under the direction of a registered nurse or physician in addition to room, board, and personal care services. Nursing facilities provide intermediate care and skilled nursing care on a short- or long-term basis. The average cost for a nursing home stay in Texas is over \$4,500 for one month; costs can vary, depending on the facility and type of care required.

If you can afford to pay privately, you need not be concerned with Medicaid/Medicare certification when

you select a nursing facility. If extended nursing home care is unaffordable, it will be necessary to investigate requirements for Medicaid assistance. In order to receive Medicaid services for long-term care, an individual must qualify both financially and medically.

Financial eligibility is complex and must be determined by a medical eligibility worker with the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services. In general, the amount of monthly income and resources of an individual and spouse must not exceed a designated dollar amount. Income includes Social Security benefits, Veterans benefits, private pension benefits, interest or dividends, earnings or wages, civil service annuities, railroad retirement benefits, state/local retirement benefits, gifts or contributions, and royalty and rental payments. Countable resources include bank accounts and certificates of deposit, real property, life insurance, stocks and bonds, oil/gas/mineral rights, jewelry and antiques, and cars and other vehicles. The following resources are excluded: homestead where the individual intends to return or the spouse lives, life insurance if the face value is \$1,500 or less, burial funds of \$1,500 (less any excluded life insurance), car worth less than \$4,500 (or more, if needed for medical transportation), and burial spaces for the individual, spouse, and close relatives.

In addition, the law now protects a designated dollar amount or other resources for a spouse in the community (excluding the value of homestead, household goods, personal goods, one car, and burial funds). A designated amount of monthly income for a spouse and dependent children is also protected. Couples and



individuals whose resources are higher than the criteria allow must “spend down” their resources to the protected level before financial eligibility is established.

Functional eligibility, called a “level of care,” is determined by the Texas Department of Human Services based on information supplied by your physician. Listed below are the criteria for medical eligibility for both Medicaid and Medicare.

### **CRITERIA FOR A LEVEL OF CARE DETERMINATION**

In general, an individual must have a disease or medical disorder or both, with a related impairment that

- Impairs judgment and recognition of physical condition, need, and side effects of medication;
- Is serious enough to require a level of routine care that exceeds what might be given by an untrained person; and
- Requires nurse’s (RN or LVN) supervision, assessment, planning, and intervention that are usually available only in an institution.

The individual must require medical/nursing services that

- Are ordered and supervised by a physician;
- Are dependent on the individual’s adequately documented medical condition;
- Requires the skills of registered or licensed vocational nurses;
- Are provided either directly by or under the supervision of licensed nurses in an institutional setting; and
- Are required on a regular basis.

#### ***Skilled Nursing Care – Medicare***

For a patient to qualify for skilled nursing care, his or her

condition must be such that he or she requires the continued supervision of a physician and complex nursing services provided on a daily basis, for example

- Frequent monitoring of unstable conditions;
- Monitoring of medications requiring skilled observation in unstable, critical, or terminal conditions;
- Insertion of naso-gastric tube and around-the-clock feedings;
- Tracheostomy care, catheter care, and intramuscular or intravenous therapy that requires close monitoring;
- Decubitis care of infected or severe lesions.

Skilled nursing care is reimbursed by Medicare. Medicare limitations apply, that is, maximum 100 days eligibility. Medicare also will pay for other treatments in some circumstances in a post hospital care facility certified by Medicare.

## How to Choose a Nursing Home

Resources available include

- *Texas Health and Human Services, Long Term Care*  
<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/aging/long-term-care>  
This site includes a locator and additional help in choosing a long term care facility.
- *Hospital and rehabilitation center discharge planners/ social workers* are a good resource for information on choosing a nursing home if your loved one is going to transition from one of these medical care providers.
- *Professional companies and consultants.* There are a number of for-profit companies and geriatric case managers that provide assistance in researching and choos-

ing a nursing home. They may or may not charge a fee – often the fees are covered by the facilities they work with – but they usually do not accept persons planning to use Medicaid to cover nursing home costs. Information can be found on-line, usually at “senior care locator services” or “senior living referral services”

You can telephone nursing facilities and ask the admissions coordinators the following questions.

- What level of care is offered?
- Do they have any openings? Is there a waiting list?
- Do they accept Medicaid or Medicare patients?
- Are there restrictions on the types of patients accepted?
- What is the daily rate and what does it include?
- What services cost extra?
- Will they send you a copy of the admission agreement?
- Nursing staff requirements, RN on duty 7 days a week?
- Is transportation available to and from medical appointments?
- What is the bed-hold policy?
- Is there a volunteer program?
- Are there full- or part-time social workers and an activities director?
- Do they offer security or special programs for wandering residents?

### **MAKING A VISIT**

Make several visits at different times of the day to the homes you are considering. Remember the importance of location; visits from family and friends can make the nursing home stay much more pleasant. Frequent visitors can monitor the quality of care being provided.

Talk to family members of current residents. When visiting the home, be sure to look for the following.

### *Cleanliness*

Does the home appear to be clean, pleasant, and comfortable? Is it reasonably free from unpleasant odors? Does it appear well-maintained inside and out? Are the employees clean and well groomed?

### *Safety*

Ask a staff member the procedure to be followed in the event of fire. Is there an evacuation plan posted? When was the last fire drill? Are the hallways free of obstructions and wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass with ease? Are there handrails in the hallways, bathing areas, and toilets? Are there call buttons to the nurse's station located at each bed, toilet, bath, and shower room?

### *Food*

Try to visit during lunchtime so that you can see the food and possibly sample it. Does the food look appetizing and taste good? Is it served hot? Are provisions made for individual dietary needs or preferences? Are snacks served? Are patients helped with eating if necessary? Ask to see a typical menu and if menus are posted.

### *Staffing*

Do the nurse call lights stay on a long time? Do the patients look clean? Do the linens and towels look clean? Is there a physician on call in case of emergency? Is the Validation Method part of staff training?

### *Atmosphere*

The residents should be treated with dignity. Observe

the attitude of staff toward disoriented residents. Try to speak to a few of the residents during your visit. They should speak well of the conditions and the staff. Are there provisions for privacy in the bedrooms? What provisions are made to safeguard possessions? Ask for a copy of the Bill of Rights of nursing home residents.

*Activities*

Is there an activity director on staff? Is there a list of activities posted? Are activities provided for bedfast patients? Is there a bookmobile service? Do residents have a say in formulating activities? Is there a community television set in the facility? Are volunteers available to assist with resident activity programs?

*Residents' Council*

Is there a Residents' Council? Is the administrator readily available? Is there a complaint policy? Is there a telephone number posted to report complaints? Does the facility allow residents to see their records when not contraindicated by their condition?

*Family Support*

Is there a Family Council or Family Support Group?

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Office will send you a pamphlet entitled "Selecting a Nursing Home, Know Your Rights," which contains an excellent checklist to be used during nursing home visits. To obtain this pamphlet, please call or write

**Texas Attorney General – Consumer Protection Office**

**Consumer Protection Hotline: (800) 621-0508**

PO Box 12548

Austin, TX 78711

(512) 463-2185

**[www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov)**

*Other useful pamphlets include*

**“Nursing Home Life: A Guide for Residents and Families”**

AARP

1905 Aldrich St., Ste 210

Austin, TX 78723

(866) 227-7443

[www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

**“What You Should Know About Housing and Services for Older Adults”**

LeadingAge Texas (Formerly TAHSA)

2205 Hancock Drive

Austin, TX 78756

(512) 467-2242

[www.leadingagetexas.org](http://www.leadingagetexas.org)

*Useful websites with nursing home information and checklists:*

- [hhs.texas.gov/services/aging/long-term-care](http://hhs.texas.gov/services/aging/long-term-care)
- [hhs.texas.gov](http://hhs.texas.gov)
- [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov)
- [www.medicare.gov/nhcompare/home.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/nhcompare/home.asp)
- [www.capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging](http://www.capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging)

## **What a Resident Needs to Know**

### **GETTING THERE**

#### *Pre-Arrival*

Before you arrive make sure that

- The home knows when you will arrive and has the room ready.
- Your physician has completed a history and a physical and provided current doctor’s orders.

- You know which of your belongings you may bring with you.
- You understand your financial responsibility.
- You know what not to bring (items not allowed in resident rooms).
- You obtain a copy of the home's complaint procedure.

### *Arrival*

The admission agreement is your contract with the facility. It specifies the facility's obligations to you and your obligations to the facility. The admission agreement should include

- The cost to hold your bed if you are away from the home.
- The home's responsibility for lost or stolen belongings.
- Extra charges for services.
- When payment is due.
- How refunds are determined and how long it takes for one to be processed.
- How much prior notice of price increases.
- How the facility will assist in and account for managing the resident's funds.
- What freedom the resident has in selecting and changing pharmacies.

## **RESIDENTS' RIGHTS**

All nursing home residents are protected by federal and state laws. Under Medicaid and Medicare law, residents are entitled to receive information about their rights as residents, services offered and charges for those services, and their medical conditions and treatment plans.

### *Residents have the right to*

- Be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and consideration without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, or source of payment.
- Receive all care necessary to have the highest possible level of health.
- Be free from physical or chemical restraints that are not required for medical symptoms.
- Communicate in their native language.
- Complain about care of treatment and receive prompt response without fear of reprisal or discrimination.
- Receive visitors.
- Privacy.
- Participate in social, religious, or community activities.
- Manage their own financial affairs in the least restrictive method.
- Have access to and have an accounting of their money and property deposited with the facility.
- Have access to personal and clinical records.
- Be fully informed about their medical condition.
- Retain the services of a physician of their choice and be fully informed in advance about treatment or care that may affect their well-being.
- Participate in developing a plan of care.
- Refuse medical treatment and refuse to participate in experimental research.
- Keep and use personal possessions.
- Receive a written statement of admission agreement describing the services provided by the facility and the related charges.
- Be informed with 30 days of admission of entitlement to



- benefits under Medicare or Medicaid.
- Discharge themselves from the facility unless they have been judged mentally incompetent.
  - Not be transferred or discharged without 30 days notice, except in an emergency, and only under certain designated conditions.
  - Not be relocated within the facility except in accordance with nursing facility regulations.
  - Refuse to perform services for the person or facility providing services.
  - Use advance legal directives.
  - Receive a copy of the Statement of Resident Rights and Responsibilities before receiving services or as soon as possible after receiving services and to be informed of changes or revisions by the person providing services.

## HOW TO RESOLVE ISSUES AND/OR FILE A COMPLAINT

If you or your elder have problems in the nursing home, you may want to take the following steps. **Note:** Any issues that are life-threatening should be addressed by immediately calling 9-1-1 – don't wait to file a complaint!

### 1. The Nursing Home Administrator

The first step should always to address the issue with the administration of the facility. Often the administrator may not be aware of the issue or concern. Government regulations require that a nursing home administrator may not discharge a resident simply for complaining. Most homes have a written procedure for residents and their families to submit problems or complaints. It is a good idea to address it both in person and in writing, such as an e-mail. At the minimum, document when and to whom the issue was raised/complaint filed and keep this documentation.

## **2. Contact the Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area, Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program**

(800) 252-2413 or (877) 787-8999

**[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)**

The Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area has Long-Term Care Ombudsman who are advocates for resident rights. They help protect the quality of life and the care of anybody that lives in a nursing homes or assisted living facility. Some of the ways the LTC ombudsman helps residents and families include

- Listening to residents and family members when they have concerns or issues.
- Telling residents about their rights.
- Protecting resident health, safety, welfare, and rights.
- Helping families learn about nursing homes and how to pay for them.
- Ombudsman work to solve problems and make sure state regulations and laws protect residents.
- Ombudsman can be volunteers or paid employees of agencies that are independent of any long-term care facility. Services are free, confidential, and available nation-wide.

## **3. Contact Texas Health and Human Services Complaint line for facilities licensed by the State of Texas**

(800) 458-9858

**[ciicomplaints@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:ciicomplaints@hhsc.state.tx.us)**

**<https://txhhs.force.com/complaint/s>**

## Information and Referral

Many services exist to help older people and their families. However, finding the one that provides what you need may be quite a challenge. Information and referral agencies specialize in gathering and categorizing information about the services and resources that are available in a given community. As you begin your search for information or help, you can save time by calling an information and referral agency. It is important to be prepared when you make your inquiries. Listed below are some guidelines to remember when phoning for information.

- Have a clear idea of the problem. Be specific about your needs. This minimizes getting the “run-around” between various offices.
- Have a pen and paper ready to take notes. Include the date and names of persons who give you significant information.
- Briefly explain your reason for calling. Ask to speak to the appropriate person. If they are unavailable or are not helpful, contact their immediate supervisor and explain the situation.
- Expect to be asked some questions. These might include your full name, address, age, social security number, income, doctor’s name, etc. Having this information ready before calling can save time. Many agencies require this information for any telephone inquiries.
- Be patient but persistent. Phone numbers and financial guidelines change frequently, and even experienced personnel may have to do some research.

- Be prepared for any subsequent interviews. Gather all documentation that you will be required to provide (birth certificate, bank statement, etc.). Most agencies can provide in-home assessment; request this service if an office visit would be a hardship for you.

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## Resources

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### **2-1-1 Texas**

**[www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org)**

Currently available in almost all states and counties, 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember number that helps people cut through what can be a confusing and overwhelming maze of information and resources. 2-1-1 helps people assess their needs and links them directly to the resources that will help.

### **AGE of Central Texas Caregiver Resource Center**

3710 Cedar Street

Austin, TX 78705

(512) 451-4611

**[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)**

Provides equipment, information, education, and consultation to caregivers and their families.

### **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

6800 Burluson Rd Building 310, Suite 165

Austin, TX 78744

(888) 622-9111

(512) 916-6062

**[www.capcog.org](http://www.capcog.org)**

[info@aaacap.org](mailto:info@aaacap.org)

Information and Referral: Helps older adults and their caregivers find and access community resources, programs and services.

## **Aging and Disabilities Resource Center**

6800 Burleson Rd Building 310, Suite 165

Austin, TX 78744

(888) 937-2372; (512) 916-6060 Caregivers Resource/Program  
Manager

[www.capcog.org](http://www.capcog.org)

Assists persons with disabilities, older adults, and caregivers.

## **Aunt Bertha**

[www.auntbertha.com](http://www.auntbertha.com)

A free online tool to connect you to resources in the  
community.

## **Austin Resource Center for Independent Living (ARCIL)**

*Austin Location*

8200 Cameron Rd., Suite C154

Austin, Texas 78754

(512) 832-6349

[www.arcil.com](http://www.arcil.com)

# In-Home Care and Support Services

One of the most common needs of older adults is some type of in-home assistance. The need may be minimal or major, medical or functional, short-term or long-term. The types of in-home care and supportive services that are available include home health care, personal care, light housekeeping, telephone reassurance, transportation, and shopping and running errands. This section will discuss a variety of resources that provide these services.

## Home Health Care Services

Persons who need home-based medical services have a growing number of options depending, of course, on their financial and insurance resources. More complex medical services are available to patients at home than ever before; many treatments patients previously received in the hospital are now provided primarily on an out-patient basis.

### MEDICARE/MEDICAID-REIMBURSED SERVICES

Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and/or Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) covers eligible home health services like intermittent skilled nursing care, physical therapy, speech-language pathology services, continued occupational services, and more. Usually, a home health care agency coordinates the services your doctor orders for you.

## Medicare doesn't pay for

- 24-hour-a-day care at home
- Meals delivered to your home
- Homemaker services
- Personal care

All people with Medicare who meet all of the following conditions are covered:

- You must be under the care of a doctor, and you must be getting services under a plan of care established and reviewed regularly by a doctor.
- You must need, and a doctor must certify that you need, one or more of the following: (a) Intermittent skilled nursing care (other than just drawing blood) or (b) physical therapy, speech-language pathology, or continued occupational therapy services. These services are covered only when the services are specific, safe, and an effective treatment for your condition. The amount, frequency, and time period of the services needs to be reasonable, and they need to be complex or only qualified therapists can do them safely and effectively. To be eligible, either: (a) your condition must be expected to improve in a reasonable and generally-predictable period of time, or (b) you need a skilled therapist to safely and effectively make a maintenance program for your condition, or (c) you need a skilled therapist to safely and effectively do maintenance therapy for your condition.
- The home health agency caring for you must be Medicare-certified.
- You must be homebound, and a doctor must certify that you're homebound.

You're not eligible for the home health benefit if you need more than part-time or "intermittent" skilled nursing care.

You may leave home for medical treatment or short, infrequent absences for non-medical reasons, like attending religious services. You can still get home health care if you attend adult day care.

**Note:** Home health services may also include medical social services, part-time or intermittent home health aide services, medical supplies for use at home, durable medical equipment, or injectable osteoporosis drugs.

### **Your Costs in Original Medicare**

- \$0 for home health care services.
- 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for durable medical equipment.

Before you start getting your home health care, the home health agency should tell you how much Medicare will pay. The agency should also tell you if any items or services they give you aren't covered by Medicare, and how much you'll have to pay for them. This should be explained by both talking with you and in writing. The home health agency should give you a notice called the "Home Health Advance Beneficiary Notice" (HHABN) before giving you services and supplies that Medicare doesn't cover.

### **PERSONAL ATTENDANT SERVICES/ CARE ON A DAILY BASIS**

Sometimes referred to as *custodial care*, this is the type of assistance with routine activities of daily living that



many older people need. This type of care can include assistance with light housekeeping, meal preparation, errands and shopping, laundry, and personal care like bathing, dressing, and toileting. There are many agencies that provide in-home care.

If you qualify financially and functionally, and have limited resources to cover the cost of this type of care, it may be supported through the Texas Health and Human Services Division, which is a program within the Community Care Eligibility Services department. Assistance in applying for long term care support from Texas Health and Human Services can be found through:

- **2-1-1, Option 2**

2-1-1 Texas is a contractor in providing services for applying for long-term care services.

- **<https://yourtexasbenefits.com>**

This is a Texas HHS website that allows you to apply directly for state benefits on-line.

- **Texas Health and Human Services, Long Term Care**  
**[hhs.texas.gov/services/aging/long-term-care](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/aging/long-term-care)**

- **Aging and Disability Resource Center of the Capital Area**

Assistance in applying for long-term care supportive services for persons with limited ability to privately pay for care'  
[adrccap@capcog.org](mailto:adrccap@capcog.org)

(855) 937-2324

**[www.adrccap.org](http://www.adrccap.org)**

- Hospital and rehabilitation center discharge planners/ social workers are a good resource for information on choosing a nursing home if your loved one is going to transition from one of these medical care providers.

- Professional companies and consultants. There are a

number of for-profit companies and geriatric case managers that provide assistance in researching and choosing options for long-term care. They may or may not charge a fee – often the fees are covered by the companies they work with – but they usually do not accept persons planning to use Medicaid to cover costs. Information can be found on-line usually at “senior care locator services” or “senior living referral services”

*Sliding Scale and Charitable Care*

**In-Home Care** (a service of Meals on Wheels Central Texas)

(512) 477-CARE (2273)

[www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org/programs/in-home-care](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org/programs/in-home-care)

Provides in-home personal attendant services on a sliding scale based on income. Personalized services may include any combination of the following services:

*Personal Care Services—for those needing assistance with personal tasks*

- Personal hygiene - bathing, grooming, and skin and hair care
- Meal preparation
- Medication reminders
- Assistance with walking and/or exercise
- Prescription pick-up
- Accompany to/from medical appointments

*Homemaker Services—for those needing assistance with chores, shopping and travel*

- Laundry
- Shopping
- Light housekeeping
- Prescription pick-up
- Accompany to/from medical appointments

*Supportive Services—for those undergoing treatment, recovering from surgery, or under Hospice care*

- Respite care for caregivers
- Prescription pick-up
- Accompany to/from medical appointments
- Any service combination above

*Hiring Your Own Help*

Purchasing services directly from agencies can save paperwork, supervision, and time. Agencies generally assure coverage in case of employee illness, provide bonded personnel, provide licensed home health aides, and can coordinate care with a Medicare skilled home health team. The cost for in-home help may, however, be lower if you hire your own help. The relative importance of cost, convenience, legal responsibilities, and overall risk factors should be carefully weighed. If you decide to hire your own worker, the following information may be helpful.

To determine what help is needed, you may want to list necessary routines and ask yourself what you can do alone, what your family or support system is able and willing to do, and what is not being done. Once you have examined the needs, you can develop a job description for your worker. The purpose of a job description or contract is to clarify the duties and responsibilities of both the employer and the worker. Having a formalized agreement is essential if there is a dispute about salary, hours of work, tasks, etc. A contract-job description always can be revised or updated as needed. It is important to be as specific as you can in a contract to lessen the chances for confusion or disagreement.

If the job involves special skills such as lifting into the bathtub or giving medications, the worker should be trained and experienced in those skills.

Probably the best way to find a worker is through a recommendation from a family member, friend, or someone you trust. Let them know you are looking. Your church or synagogue, a senior center, a hospital social worker or discharge planner, or community agencies may be important resources.

If none of these methods proves fruitful, try advertising in the "Help Wanted" classified sections of newspapers, college newspapers, or organizations' newsletters. Try starting with the least expensive ad rate. At a minimum, your ad should include hours needed, a brief description of duties, telephone number, and time to call. You could also mention preferences such as non-smoker or male/female, and wage offered. (For example: Grocery shopping, light housekeeping. 6 hrs every Friday. Non-smoker. 555-5555 after 5:00 PM.)

You do not need to interview every person who calls in response to your ad. When applicants call, describe the job in some detail as well as your expectations and the general wage range you are offering. Ask if they have done this kind of work before or why they are interested in this job. Also restate important requirements like no smoking or driving requirements. Set a specific appointment time for an interview. It is recommended that you invite a family member or friend to be present for the interview. This can be very helpful both for moral support and in sorting out the information you obtain.

For the interview, have your sample contract ready for the applicant to read. Record name, address, and telephone number of the applicant. Have a list of important questions ready. Some suggested interview questions include

- Where have you worked before?
- What kinds of things did you do?
- Is there anything in the job description that you would not do?
- Ask for two work-related references and one personal reference.
- Ask if they have ever been arrested and convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, and if so, what were the circumstances?

If the applicant is obviously unsuited, be noncommittal about future contact. Remind a suitable applicant that you will need to check references before making a decision. Never hire someone without checking references. Take time after your interview to jot down notes and impressions. Next, ask the references how long they have known the applicant and how and whether he or she was reliable. Describe the job situation and ask references if the applicant would be a good match for your position. Finally, select the candidate who best fits your needs.

## Recreation and Exercise

Structured recreation and exercise activities can be an important way to stay active and to interact with peers. Older adults can access a variety of resources in the community to pursue their recreational and exercise needs. The facilities listed here offer classes in exercise, dance, games, arts and crafts, etc. They also schedule special events and trips that are tailored to older adults. Various social clubs in the area serve those with special interests such as quilting, gardening, sewing, bridge, dogs, and others.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many in-person activities have been transitioned to virtual and online. There are many ways to still participate in creative and wellness experiences through local activity centers. Contact the centers to see how you can access their on-line/virtual classes and content.

### Activity Centers

Traditional recreation activities are offered specifically for seniors at Austin Parks and Recreation senior activity centers. For detailed information, see [www.austintexas.gov/department/seniors-programs-and-services](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/seniors-programs-and-services)

#### **Asian American Resource Center**

8401 Cameron Rd., Austin, 78754

(512) 974-1700

[www.austintexas.gov/aarc](http://www.austintexas.gov/aarc)

#### **Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center**

808 Nile St., 78702

(512) 978-2660

### **Senior Activity Center – Lamar**

2874 Shoal Crest Ave., Austin, 78705  
(512) 978-2480

### **South Austin Senior Activity Center**

3911 Menchaca  
Austin, TX 78704  
(512) 978-2406

Additional activities for seniors may be found at other Parks and Recreation Centers. For more information go to: [www.austintexas.gov/recreation](http://www.austintexas.gov/recreation)

## **PRIVATE SENIOR CENTERS**

### **Jewish Community Association of Austin**

Senior Services of the Jewish Community Association  
7300 Hart Lane  
Austin, TX 78731  
(512) 735-8000

[www.shalomaustin.org](http://www.shalomaustin.org)

Jewish Family Service senior programs include exercise and fitness, education, and entertainment.

## **SURROUNDING AREAS**

### **Del Valle, South Rural Community Center**

3518 FM 973 South  
Del Valle, TX 78617  
(512) 854-1520

### **Travis County Community Center at Oak Hill**

8656-A Hwy. 71 West  
Austin, TX 78735  
(512) 854-2130

### **Onion Creek Senior Center**

420 Barton Crossing  
Buda, TX 78610  
(512) 295-3413  
[www.ocscbuda.org](http://www.ocscbuda.org)

## **OTHER SITES FOR EXERCISE/RECREATION**

**Senior Planet** (a program of OATS-Older Adults Technology Service)

[www.seniorplanet.org](http://www.seniorplanet.org)

Free online and virtual wellness and recreation classes for seniors.

### **WellMed Charitable Foundation Senior Community Center**

706 W Ben White Blvd., Suite 125 A

Austin, TX 78704

(512) 383- 9626

[www.wellmedcharitablefoundation.org/senior-activity-centers](http://www.wellmedcharitablefoundation.org/senior-activity-centers)

### **YMCA**

multiple locations around town

(512) 322-9622

[www.Austinyymca.org](http://www.Austinyymca.org)

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Coming of Age**

100 N. IH-35, Suite 3800

Austin, TX 78767

(512) 854-7787; Fax (512) 854-4131

[www.ComingofAgeAustin.org](http://www.ComingofAgeAustin.org)

Coming of Age provides pathways to aging well for people 50+, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through volunteering, education, advocacy, and partnerships with public agencies and community organizations. Programs include RSVP, Learning Lab training for nonprofits, Independent Living (Caregiver Program) and Volunteers for Childhood Immunization.



# Respite Care

Respite care is short-term, temporary care designed to help a caregiver who is responsible for the primary care of a loved one. Respite care allows caregivers to take a little time away from their responsibilities so that they can rest, recharge, and come back refreshed.

## Types of Respite Care

Respite care is available to caregivers of people who are unable to care for themselves because of their physical or medical condition or age. Respite care comes in many forms and can often fit an individual need. It can last from a few hours to a few days, depending on the caregiver's needs. The service descriptions below do not cover all forms of respite care, but they do offer an overview of the most common types.

### IN-HOME RESPITE CARE

A person comes to your home to stay with your loved one. The care provider may sit with your loved one and talk or do activities while you run errands or go out to a movie. In-home respite care can be offered by a variety of organizations including home health agencies, religious organizations, community groups, or governmental agencies. The care provider may also offer other services, such as those described below.

### HOMEMAKER SERVICES

The care provider may do light work and chores around the house so that you do not have so much to do later on.

## **PERSONAL CARE**

The care provider may help your loved one with grooming activities like brushing teeth, getting dressed, bathing, or shaving.

## **MEDICAL CARE**

If your loved one requires daily medical attention, such as help with an IV, feeding tube or other medical equipment, certain respite care providers can cater to those specific needs and leave you knowing that your loved one is in capable hands.

## **OUT-OF-HOME RESPITE CARE**

Care is provided in an outside facility where you drop off your loved one and pick them up after the respite period has ended. This type of respite care can be offered through organizations that offer camps for people with functional needs, nursing homes, and senior activity centers. Some out-of-home care providers will also offer overnight care.

## **DAY CENTER — MEDICAL**

Day centers that provide medical care have specially-trained staff on hand to help take care of your loved one's medical needs. He or she can be left at this type of facility for several hours at a time. Often, meals are provided. Specialized day camps for children and adults with special needs fall into this category.

## **DAY CENTER — NON-MEDICAL**

Some day centers do not accommodate special medical needs but can still provide valuable socialization for your loved one and free time for you. Usually, these

types of centers will serve meals or snacks and provide activities throughout the day.

### **ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY**

Assisted living facilities offer comprehensive services for respite, including overnight stays. They usually have trained staff who closely supervise your loved one; however, they do not always provide medical care. Not all assisted living facilities offer respite, but those that do can be a valuable resource for times when a longer respite stay is necessary.

### **NURSING FACILITY**

Nursing facilities offer many of the same respite benefits as assisted living facilities, including caring for your loved one for a longer period. In addition, there are multiple staff members who can provide supervision. Nursing facilities also can provide specialized medical care for those who require it.

### **CRISIS/EMERGENCY CARE**

This type of care provider can quickly assist when you have a family emergency or other situation that prevents you from being able to care for your loved one with either in-home or out-of-home respite care.

For more information on Respite Care Resources, see the following:

**Take Time Texas: Texas Health and Human Services**

**<https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/taketimetexas>**

**Caregiver Respite Coordination Center**

**[www.dads.state.tx.us/taketimetexas](http://www.dads.state.tx.us/taketimetexas)**

The central point of contact for respite programs across the state. It was created to offer caregivers and respite care pro-

viders services, resources, and educational materials. The site includes a zip code locator to access a variety of non-profit, government, and for-profit respite providers for caregivers of persons of all ages (children as well as person with disabilities and older adults).

### **Ageing and Disability Resource Center of the Capital Area**

(855) 937-2372

[www.capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging#aging](http://www.capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging#aging)  
[adrccap@capcog.org](mailto:adrccap@capcog.org)

### **ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center** [archrespite.org](http://archrespite.org)

## **DEMENTIA SPECIFIC RESPITE SERVICES**

These community-based programs serve both memory-impaired individuals and their caregivers. Respite participants enjoy socially enriching and fun activities while their caregivers take a break from caregiving responsibilities. Program activities can include music, exercise, games, dancing, arts and crafts, and a meal. Some sites offer concurrent caregiver support groups. There are multiple dementia respite services provided throughout the region.

Contact **AGE of Central Texas** for a full listing of respite programs.

(512) 451-4611

[www.ageofcentraltexas.org](http://www.ageofcentraltexas.org)

Contact **Alzheimer's Texas** for a full listing of respite programs.

(512) 241-0420

[www.txalz.org/how-we-can-help-programs-services](http://www.txalz.org/how-we-can-help-programs-services)

## Social Connection

Social connection and participation are frequently seen as indicators of productive and healthy aging, and it is widely accepted that social support has a strong protective affect on health. Seniors with a strong social network who stay engaged with their community and other activities have a better quality of life and experience superior overall health and wellness. Research has also shown that social interaction can even help prevent or slow the onset of dementia. However, older adults are at higher risk of being socially isolated, especially when connecting with friends and family in person is not possible. Fortunately, there are many activities and opportunities for social connection, life-long learning, entertainment, and community engagement that are available virtually and by phone.

**Note:** Resources are free unless indicated otherwise.

### Senior Companionship/ Connection Programs

#### **Big & Mini**

(817) 755-0775

[www.bigandmini.org](http://www.bigandmini.org)

Seniors who would like companionship are paired with younger adults for conversation and friendship. Chats can take place by phone or video-calling.

#### **Social Call (Covia)**

(877) 797-7299

[covia.org/services/social-call](http://covia.org/services/social-call)

Seniors who would like companionship are paired with a volunteer. Chats can take place by phone or video-calling.

## **AARP Community Connections Friendly Voices**

(888) 281-0145

[aarppcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices](http://aarppcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices)

Trained AARP Friendly Voice volunteers providing phone calls to say hello.

## **Social and Wellness Programs**

### **AGE Virtual Connections Program**

(512) 451-4611

[ageofcentraltx.org/index.php/virtual-connections](http://ageofcentraltx.org/index.php/virtual-connections)

A program of innovative virtual services for older adults and care partners offering group and virtual activities designed for different cognitive levels.

### **Aging Is Cool**

(512) 790-COOL (2665)

[www.agingiscool.com](http://www.agingiscool.com)

A program for older adults that provides fitness, brain training, art, music, games, and social experiences for older adults. Make friends, improve health, and have fun! Classes are offered virtually and in-person.

### **Senior Planet**

(210) 504-4862- Online classes/programs

[www.seniorplanet.org/get-involved/online](http://www.seniorplanet.org/get-involved/online)

Senior Planet provides programs every week to help older adults learn, stay healthy, connect, and explore new things. Topics include technology training, life-long learning, wellness and creative classes. Classes are offered virtually, or by phone.

## **Telephone Discussion Groups for Seniors**

### **DOROT University Without Walls**

(877) 819-9147 (toll free)

[www.dorotusa.org/our-programs/at-home/university-without-walls](http://www.dorotusa.org/our-programs/at-home/university-without-walls)

Cost: Small fee / donation

*Current topics:*

- Museum discussions
- Literature
- Music & performing arts
- Know your rights
- Health /Wellness
- Jewish interests
- News and Current events

*Support groups:*

- Bereavement
- Caring for a loved one with memory loss
- Insight program for the visually impaired
- Daily tips for vision loss
- LGBT for seniors

## **Lifetime Connections Without Walls**

(888) 500-6472 (toll free)

**[www.familyeldercare.org/programs/lifetime-connections-without-walls](http://www.familyeldercare.org/programs/lifetime-connections-without-walls)**

Cost: Free in Travis County; \$10/quarter if you live outside Travis County

*Current topics:*

- Conversation
- Fun and games
- Travel & culture
- Special interest
- Arts & culture
- Creative arts
- Special presentations
- Special series

*Support groups:*

- Grief and loss
- Vision loss

## **Mather Lifeways Telephone Topics**

(847) 492-7500

[www.mather.com/neighborhood-programs/telephone-topics](http://www.mather.com/neighborhood-programs/telephone-topics)

*Topics include*

- Wellness
- Education
- Discussion topics
- Music reviews
- Live performances

## **Well Connected**

(877) 797-7299 (toll free)

[www.covia.org/services/well-connected](http://www.covia.org/services/well-connected)

*Topics include*

- Bible reading
- Bird talk
- Book club
- Garden talk
- Gratitude
- Languages
- Living with chronic pain
- Living with vision loss
- Low vision support
- Museums at home
- Pet tales
- Support/discussion for the blind
- Technology and culture
- Trivia

## **Alzheimer's Association**

(800) 272-3900 – for information on dial-in numbers to virtual events.

Offers educational, social, and wellness webinars and support groups.



## **Hadley**

(800) 323-4238

[www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu)

Free classes and discussions by phone, internet, or correspondence for anyone with a vision impairment. Some classes are vision-related, some are not. Provides online, large print, braille, and audio media.

*Sample topics:*

- Learning Braille
- Adjusting to vision loss
- Technology
- Cooking
- Gardening
- Travel

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## **Radio Reading Services**

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### **Midland Radio Reading Service**

(432) 682-2731 – To order a radio receiver

(432) 617-5555 – Telephone program

Must live within a 90-mile radius of Midland to use this service.

Audio versions of newspapers, including local news from the *Midland Reporter-Telegram* and the *Odessa American*.

Five national newspapers plus Texas coverage from the *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle* and *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*. More than 50 magazines.

Weekly grocery ads from local stores.

Weekly programs on health, aging, accessibility issues and more.

### **OWL Radio**

(210) 287-9039

The service provides daily radio broadcasts of newspapers, magazines and other information for persons who are unable to read regular print due to a visual, physical, or reading

impairment. It transmits its programming to special radio receivers provided to qualified applicants. Must live within a 90-mile radius of San Antonio.

## **CHRISTIAN RADIO**

### **Austin Disaster Relief Network Prayer Line**

(512) 537-7100

[adrn.org/prayer-hotline](http://adrn.org/prayer-hotline)

An Austin citywide Prayer Hotline to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of greater Austin citizens. Contact them to request a prayer or a listening ear.

### **Christian Radio by Phone**

(774) 337-6078

[www.vcyamerica.org/radio/listen-by-phone](http://www.vcyamerica.org/radio/listen-by-phone)

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## **Magazines/Newspapers**

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### **Newsline**

Contact the Talking Book Program ([800] 252-9605) to sign up.

[www.nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-newsline](http://www.nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-newsline)

A free audio news service for anyone who is blind, low-vision, deafblind, or otherwise print-disabled that offers access to more than 500 publications, emergency weather alerts, job listings, and more.

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## **Mental Health Support Lines**

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Social isolation can lead to feelings of severe emotional distress. There are many resources dedicated to providing mental health support for those experiencing effects of loneliness and social disconnection.

### **Disaster Distress Hotline**

(800) 985-5990 (toll free) or text TalkWithUs to 66746  
Support for coping during COVID-19.

### **Eye2Eye Peer Support Helpline**

(833) 932-3931

Phone based, emotional support services for persons losing their vision.

### **Friendship Line**

(800) 971-0016 (toll free)

24-hour national support and suicide hotline for older adults.

### **International Low Vision Support Group**

(888) 866-6148 (toll free)

[www.mdssupport.org/support/telesupport/](http://www.mdssupport.org/support/telesupport/)

Social support sessions held over the telephone designed for low vision seniors who have no internet access or who cannot attend a live support group.

### **National Disability COVID-19 Healthcare Support and Advocacy Hotline**

(800) 626-4959 (toll free)

This organization is run by a group of disabled advocates. They also provide COVID-19-related medical information, support, and advocacy for people with disabilities.

### **Texas Health and Human Services Mental Support Hotline**

(833) 986-1919 (toll free)

COVID-19-related mental health support for all Texans.

# Spirituality

Individuals of any age may feel the need to nurture their spiritual lives. This is particularly true of older adults. We are meant to grow not only in age but also in wisdom and grace. This is a long process – a journey we are called upon to walk. We journey seeking wholeness. Those who pursue their spirituality have the ability to experience the fullness of life. This pursuit is a process of personal integration and self-acceptance. As we navigate through the later phases of life, we are required to learn to let go of control, depending more on others to do what we once did. This can make some older adults angry and disillusioned, or it can be an opportunity for growth that teaches us to rely on our faith. Longevity offers this opportunity to reflect on our life and put it in order. Frail older adults who live in a congregate setting, such as a nursing facility, must also be invited to take pleasure in participating in the rituals and traditions of the faith in which they are most familiar and comfortable. Music is one of the best tools to accomplish nurturing the spirit. Music may be especially important to make the connection for those persons experiencing memory impairment or dementia. It's never too late to develop our spirituality.

As we age, we might consider reflecting on the following points.

1. Living in the present moment;
2. Occasionally doing life review -- turning over loose ends to a higher power;
3. Working to resolve any unresolved issues -- reaching out to make peace;

4. Remembering everyone has potential for growth -- always;
5. Becoming a role model or mentor, filling others with hope by living your spiritual principles;
6. Being passionate about something -- follow your heart.

There are some resources to assist in spiritual avenues, and they are described here.

### **The Seton Cove - A Spirituality Center**

3708 Crawford Street  
Austin, TX 78731  
(512) 324-1000

**[www.setoncove.net](http://www.setoncove.net)**

Rooted in Judeo-Christian values, The Seton Cove is an inter-faith organization created to help people find new relationships with themselves, with others, and with their God. The "Cove" comes from the hope that this center will provide safe haven, a place where people from all walks of life can come to find healing and a source of spiritual renewal.

The Seton Cove offers *spiritual direction*, a time-honored ministry that helps people discover how God is being revealed in each circumstance of their everyday life. A Spiritual Director works with individuals to help them listen to God or to become aware of how God is acting in their lives. It is *not* therapy and does not seek to solve problems. Those who offer spiritual direction at Seton Cove have had formal training and preparation for this ministry.

The Seton Cove also offers prayer groups, retreats, workshops and seminars, speakers, and support groups.

### **The Stephen Ministry**

The Stephen Ministry exists within some established Christian congregations. It is a caring ministry by trained lay people. Stephen ministers are not counselors or therapists; they

are caring Christian friends who can offer a listening ear to help others through the tough times in life. Stephen ministers are trained to listen and help others sort through their feelings. Confidentiality is the cornerstone of Stephen Ministry, and ministers are supervised within their congregations. They serve members of the congregation to which they belong, and, in some cases, they serve members of any congregation. Not all churches have Stephen ministers, but begin your search with the church to which you belong.

[www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org)

### **Parish Nurses**

Many congregations have begun using parish nurses as a means of outreach for families who need home visits, health care, and referrals. For more information inquire with your congregation.

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## **Spirituality in Dementia**

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Regardless of the kind of faith or unfaith that a person with dementia had before the illness, all persons have spiritual needs—a connection with the larger other, be it a God named by Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, or the beauty of the creative arts or the experience of nature or the glory of love that transcends the usual human capacities or the “Higher Power” of 12 step recovery.

Caregivers are prone to neglect their own as well as their loved ones’ spiritual needs, yet in a recent survey, prayer was named second only to talking with others as caregivers’ most common means of self-care. It is not unusual for some to be so upset with the existence of the disease and the personal impact of it, that they become bitter about the subject, angry and resentful, resisting any suggestion of faith, religion, or spirituality; while for some, faith is their only saving grace. Regard-

less of the caregiver's views, the care receiver's spiritual history should be respected and their need addressed. Even some who "left the faith" as adults, may sometimes, after dementia, revert to their childhood faith. Or, there may still be a generalized spiritual need that can be considered. Certain aspects of religion might well be beyond the current reality of one in late-stage dementia. Nevertheless, even these may often retain the benefit of the rote memory of prayers, hymns, even scripture.

Those who are able to see that a human being is more than brain and body, may be comforted to believe that a soul, an eternal spirit, continues until the heart stops beating; some might think of it as a person's essence—that which makes Mom, Mom—the accumulation of "body memories" of all her years. We are talking about the very definition of what it is to be human. One of the saddest manifestations of the grief that accompanies dementia caregiving is the loss of hope for there being anything more than a physical shell present.

Following are some suggestions to consider for caregivers:

- Caregiving often isolates one from community. Isolation is debilitating and impairs caregiving.
- Do not overlook expressing your spiritual needs to the leader of your faith community.
- Encourage continued attendance at communal worship as long as physically possible—the loving presence of others, music, rituals, are retained in body memories. Assisting a person with dementia to dress for worship may take twice as long as usual, but is in most cases worth it.

- Explain to the faith community that providing such things as respite, rituals of transition for different steps in the journey, home visitation, sending them greeting cards, etc., are ways that the group can live out their calling to be of service.
- Suggest simplified worship – a gathering in the sanctuary of family, caregivers and care receivers, and friends, who would go through the usual forms of worship but use a total of only 30 minutes, concentrating on music (from the care receiver's formative years), familiar passages from sacred texts, and a simple devotional message. Offer the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) for Christians, even anointing oil for healing. Consider similar rituals of other faiths.



## Support Groups

Support groups meet on a regular basis and provide mutual support for persons with similar concerns and situations. Older adults and their families may be dealing with a long-term or catastrophic illness, or with the death of a loved one. It can help to regularly meet with others to share feelings and ways of coping with the day-to-day changes that these events can bring about. Participation in a support group can provide opportunities for social interaction and recreation. You also can learn about the benefits of group advocacy.

Many of the support groups listed below are sponsored by organizations that serve persons with a particular illness or problem. Typically, these organizations also provide information, education, and referral services. Call for locations and times of meetings.

**Note:** For up-to-date lists of caregiver specific support groups, contact AGE of Central Texas, or the other groups listed below.

### **AGE of Central Texas**

(512) 451-4611

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

## Austin Area Support Groups

### **Alzheimer's Association – Capital of Texas**

5508 Highway 290 West, Suite 206

Austin, Texas 78735

(512) 592-0990

[www.alz.org/texascapital](http://www.alz.org/texascapital)

Virtual support groups: Yes

**Alzheimer's Texas**

7719 Wood Hollow Drive, Suite 157

Austin, TX 78731

(512) 241-0420

[www.txalz.org](http://www.txalz.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

**American Cancer Society**

11000 N Mopac Expressway, Ste 100

Austin, TX 78759

(512) 919-1800

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

**American Diabetes Association**

(512) 472-9838

(800) 342-2383

[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

Virtual support groups: No

**American Heart Association, Texas**

12345 N. Lamar Blvd., Suite 200

Austin, TX 78753

(512) 338-2400

[www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

Virtual support groups: No

**American Lung Association****Better Breathers Club**

Humana-North Hills Town Center

10710 Research Blvd, Ste. 120

Austin, TX 78759

(512) 808-2821

[www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

### **Arthritis Foundation**

13492 Research Blvd., #120

Austin, TX 78750

Austin/San Antonio Director: (210) 624-7373

National Hotline: (800) 283-7800 (Toll Free)

[www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

### **Capital Area Parkinson's Society**

1130 Camino la Costa

Austin, TX 78752

(512) 371-3373

[www.capitalareaparkinsons.org](http://www.capitalareaparkinsons.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

### **Georgetown Area Parkinson's Support Group**

126 Belfalls Dr.

Georgetown, TX 78633-4941

(512) 240-4167

(512) 658-3658

[www.georgetowntexasparkinsons.com](http://www.georgetowntexasparkinsons.com)

Virtual Support Groups: Informative webinars currently offered.

### **Vivent Health**

Main Campus

7215 Cameron Rd.

Austin, TX 78752

(512) 458-2437

[TX-HRP@viventhealth.org](mailto:TX-HRP@viventhealth.org)

### **AIDS Services of Austin (ASA).**

Provides direct care services to persons with AIDS and their caregivers.

7215 Cameron Road

Austin, TX 78752

(512) 458-2437

[www.asaustin.org](http://www.asaustin.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

## **GRIEF SUPPORT**

### **The Austin Center for Grief and Loss**

2413 Greenlawn Parkway

Austin, TX 78757

(512) 472-7878

[www.austingrief.org](http://www.austingrief.org)

Virtual support Groups: Yes

### **The Christi Center**

2306 Hancock Drive

Austin, TX 78756

(512) 467-2600

[www.christicenter.org](http://www.christicenter.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

### **Hospice Austin**

4107 Spicewood Springs Road, Ste 100

Austin, TX 78759

(512) 342-4700

[www.hospiceaustin.org](http://www.hospiceaustin.org)

Virtual support groups: Yes

# Technology

Technology has become an important tool in helping us stay connected to each other and to the goods, services, and support we need to stay healthy and thrive. Lack of access to technology can contribute to social isolation and reduced quality of life. Research has demonstrated a strong correlation between social isolation and the health and wellbeing of older adults. Technology can be a very effective tool in maintaining health and wellness, supporting social inclusion, increasing independence, and enhancing connectedness with friends and family. Advanced technology tools and programs can also help simplify many caregiving responsibilities.

While technology has become something that our culture is increasingly dependent upon, internet and devices can be costly. There are programs that help low-income older adults access internet connectivity, acquire technology devices, and receive training on how to use the devices (digital literacy training).

## Low-Cost Internet Providers

### **AT&T Low-Cost Internet**

(866) 861-6075

TTY (800) 651-5111

[att.com/shopmobile/internet/access](http://att.com/shopmobile/internet/access)

### **EveryoneOn**

(331) 234-6099

[www.everyoneon.org](http://www.everyoneon.org)

## **FreedomPop**

(888) 743-8107

[www.freedompop.com](http://www.freedompop.com)

## **Spectrum Internet Assist**

(855) 243-8892

[www.spectrum.com/browse/content/spectrum-internet-assist.html](http://www.spectrum.com/browse/content/spectrum-internet-assist.html)

# **Devices and Digital Literacy Training**

## **AGE Computer Lab**

(512) 524-8519

3710 Cedar St.

Room 131

Austin, TX 78705

[www.agecomputer.org](http://www.agecomputer.org)

AGE's Computer Lab can help with assistance acquiring technology devices and provides free digital literacy training.

## **Austin Free-Net**

(512) 236-8225

2209 Rosewood Ave

Austin, TX 78702

[www.austinfreenet.net](http://www.austinfreenet.net)

Austin Free-Net provides assistance with acquiring technology devices and offers free training by phone and on-site computer lab learning.

## **Aspire to Age, PBC**

(512) 347-7722

[care@aspiretoage.com](mailto:care@aspiretoage.com)

[www.aspiretoage.com](http://www.aspiretoage.com)

Aspire to Age, PBC offers assistance with digital literacy training and devices designed for older adults. Their services are also provided in several Asian originated languages.

## **iBug (I Blind User Group)**

(346) 248-7799

[www.ibugtoday.com](http://www.ibugtoday.com)

Empowering the Blind Through Accessible Technology Training. Provides tech training to anyone who wants to become proficient at using the iOS accessibility features.

## **Senior Planet** (a program of OATS- *Older Adult Technology Services*)

(920) 666-1959- Technology support

(210) 504-4862- Online classes/programs

[seniorplanet.org](http://seniorplanet.org)

[seniorplanet.org/get-involved/online](http://seniorplanet.org/get-involved/online) (for their online classes)

Senior Planet, a program of OATS, provides free digital literacy training both by phone and online. They also provide free online life-enrichment classes to older adults.

## **Texas Technology Access Program (TTAP)**

Toll-free (800) 828-7839

(512) 232-0740 (main)

TTY (512) 232-0762

[ttap.disabilitystudies.utexas.edu](http://ttap.disabilitystudies.utexas.edu)

Persons using a TTY/TDD may contact us through Relay Texas at (800) 735-2989 or 711 (voice). Individuals with speech disabilities may contact us through Speak-Up Texas at 1-8-SPEAK-UP-TX.

TTAP provides Assistive Technology (AT) tools and services to people with disabilities and those who are aging, as well as device loans, demonstration centers, recycle/reuse programs, and financing.

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## **Online Life-Enrichment Classes and Programs**

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### **Senior Planet**

(210) 504-4862- Online classes/programs

[www.seniorplanet.org/get-involved/online](http://www.seniorplanet.org/get-involved/online)

Senior Planet provides online programs every week to help older adults learn, stay healthy, connect, and explore.

### **AGE Virtual Connections Program**

(512) 451-4611

[ageofcentraltx.org/index.php/virtual-connections](http://ageofcentraltx.org/index.php/virtual-connections)

A program of innovative virtual services for older adults and care partners offering group and virtual activities designed for different cognitive levels.

### **Aging Is Cool**

(512) 790-COOL (2665)

[www.agingiscool.com](http://www.agingiscool.com)

A program for older adults that provides virtual fitness, brain training, art, music, games, and social experiences for older adults. Make friends, improve health, and have fun!

## **Technology Tools for Family Caregivers**

Advances in technology have transformed the way family caregivers, health care providers, and long-term care providers approach elder care. New technologies are constantly being developed to help make a caregiver's life easier and keep their loved one safe and healthy. Technology programs and devices can also help the elderly continue to live independently. Following are some examples of technology that can help simplify caregivers' many responsibilities:

### **1. Virtual Medicine and Health Tracking**

Telemedicine has provided a way to connect with a doctor through video-calling. There's less need to physically travel to a clinic or other traditional health care facility. Instead, the patient can communicate with the appropriate medical personnel right



from home. Health tracking apps also enable family caregivers to log important health information and then regularly transmit it to medical practitioners.

## 2. Home Automation

Home automation is the remote, automatic control of electronic devices in your home. This lets caregivers manage household elements like lighting, temperature, and security features, in a way that improves security, safety, independence, and lifestyle. Home automation can help to provide oversight without sacrificing the privacy and dignity of your family member. Here are some ways that home automation and home security features can assist you in simplifying your loved one's life and the caregiving role:

- **Motion Sensing Tech**

Wearable or external sensors can alert caregivers when their loved one has stopped moving for a long period of time, can keep track of unusual activity, and automate temperature and room lighting. In many cases, friends and family can review sensor logs directly online.

- **Automatic Timers**

When mobility is an issue, simple things like turning on lights or adjusting the temperature can be difficult. Automated features allow caregivers to turn lights or appliances on or off, remotely or put them on a scheduled timer.

- **Wireless Home Monitoring**

Video surveillance can allow caregivers to observe their loved ones from elsewhere, so that you know they are safe without having to call, and send alerts when there is unusual activity. Small monitoring cameras (Nanny Cams, for example) placed in rooms can also be used for a more simplified option.

### **3. Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS)**

People with limited mobility sometimes have trouble summoning assistance in the event of a fall or other injury. Medical alert devices can lend a helping hand in this department. They come in the form of lightweight pendants or wristbands that the user wears while going about his or her normal daily routine. In the event of any mishap, the simple press of a button suffices to contact emergency services. The most sophisticated of these units even possess the ability to automatically activate themselves when a fall is detected without the user having to take any action.

### **4. Medication Reminders and Pill Dispensers**

Prescription/Medication reminders notify patients and their caregivers when it's time to take each type of medication, notify caregivers when doses are missed, and carefully record all medication activity. Pill dispensers can be programmed to automatically alert a senior and dispense the proper medications in the correct dosages at the right times.

### **5. GPS Devices**

One of the most worrisome prospects for any family caregiver is not knowing where a loved one is at any given time. GPS trackers can attach to clothing, be worn on the wrist, or be connected to a mobile phone. They can tell the caregiver a senior's exact location and can alert a family caregiver, via email, phone or text, when a loved one goes outside of a certain geographical area.

### **6. Smart Phone Applications for Caregivers**

There are many applications that can be down-

loaded onto a mobile phone, or a smart device, that can help simplify the caregiving tasks. Here are a few examples:

- **WebMD** (Free): Caregivers can search for information on a senior's medications, set medication reminders, and research symptoms of medical conditions.
- **CareZone** (Free): This app essentially allows a caregiver to enter and access all of a senior's medical information in one place, including appointments, insurance information, and symptom tracker.
- **PainScale** (Free): Caregivers can use this app to track and manage an elderly loved one's pain. It features a pain diary that allows you to enter pain triggers and intensity, medication dosages, activity levels, mood, and sleep quality.
- **iPharmacy** (Free): This app is a comprehensive guide to understanding and managing prescription medications.
- **First Aid - American Red Cross** (Free): This app features instructions for administering basic first aid and CPR as well as safety tips and information for natural disasters and severe weather. It is fully integrated with 911; the entire app's contents are also available in Spanish.
- **GoodRX** (Free): This app provides discount coupons for medications, regardless of insurance status. It also allows you to compare prices of medications in the various pharmacies in your area. [www.goodrx.com](http://www.goodrx.com)

# Transportation

Transportation plays a critical role in the lives of older individuals as they age and can support their ability to age in place and live independently in their homes and in the community. Resources and services are in place that can assist seniors accessing the community for daily activities, social and recreational activities. Transportation is not a one-size-fits-all service and determining what transportation services are most appropriate is important.

## Public Transportation

**\*\*Please note:** Due to COVID-19, some of these services (*indicated with asterisks*) may be running on a reduced schedule, or temporarily suspended. Please contact them to learn more about their current status.

### **Capital Metro\*\***

512-474-1200

[www.capmetro.org](http://www.capmetro.org)

#### *LOCAL BUS AND RAIL*

Capital Metro is the regional transportation leader in Central Texas offering numerous bus routes and a commuter rail service, MetroRail. The agency provides bus and rail service in the Austin metropolitan area serving the City of Austin and the surrounding communities of Leander, Lago Vista, Jonestown, Manor, Round Rock, San Leanna, Volente, Point Venture, and portions of Travis County and Williamson County.

Reduced Fares are available to those with a Capital Metro Reduced Fare ID (formerly the Disability Fare Card), but you must apply for it. Those eligible include seniors 65 and over, Medicare card holders, and people with disabilities.

There are several ways to get an application for an RFID Card:

- Pick up an application at the Transit Store.
- Call (512) 389-7475 and request an application in the mail.
- Download the application from the following location:
  - [www.capmetro.org/rfid](http://www.capmetro.org/rfid)
  - Accessible application forms and Spanish version also available upon request. Call (512) 389-7475 or send an email to [requestformailouts@capmetro.org](mailto:requestformailouts@capmetro.org).
- A valid government-issued ID, Texas photo ID or Texas drivers' license is needed.

For additional bus and rail information, call the GO Line at (512) 474-1200 or visit [www.capmetro.org](http://www.capmetro.org).

### **MetroAccess ADA Paratransit\*\***

MetroAccess is a demand-response, shared-ride service offered by Capital Metro for people whose disabilities prevent them from riding regular bus and rail service. MetroAccess complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). This service is an advanced reservation system with the service area and the hours of operation dictated by the service area and the hours of the Capital Metro bus service. Reservations can be made up to three days in advance over the phone or up to six days in advance online.

As defined by the ADA, a disability is recognized, with respect to an individual, as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Seniors who, by reason of disability are unable to use Capital Metro's fully accessible bus or rail services, may be eligible for MetroAccess services. Individuals interested in becoming a MetroAccess rider must go through an eligibility process. For information about the eligibility process, to request a MetroAccess application (applications should be brought to eligibility appoint-

ments, not mailed), or to schedule an appointment, please call (512) 389-7501.

For more information about the MetroAccess program, please call:

**MetroAccess**

Eligibility: (512) 389-7501

For reservations, cancellations, open returns or for Where's my Ride: (512) 852-7272.

**CARTS- Capital Area Rural Transportation**

The CARTS District is a rural/urban transit district and is responsible for transit services in a 7200 square mile, nine-county area surrounding Austin. The District includes the non-urbanized areas of Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Travis and Williamson counties, and the San Marcos urbanized area.

CARTS delivers transportation to the 169 communities it serves and provides predictable connections between these communities to the national intercity bus network, to Capital Metro services, and to the metropolitan center of the region. The service frequency in or to the various locales range from many times a day to once a month.

CARTS buses operate from seven transit stations (which are also Greyhound stations) located strategically throughout the CARTS District. These stations are located in Austin, Bastrop, Round Rock, Georgetown, Taylor, San Marcos and Smithville.

CARTS also provides non-emergency medical transportation throughout its District and in Austin and the surrounding metropolitan area under an agreement with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

**CARTS- Capital Area Rural Transportation System**

(512) 478-7433

[www.ridecarts.com](http://www.ridecarts.com)

## **The Office of Mobility Management**

The Office of Mobility Management is a partnership between CARTS and Capital Metro with the purpose of increasing connectivity among all transportation providers in the region and creating a seamless transportation network. The office focuses on closing the gaps in service by working with transit providers, non-profit transportation providers, social service agencies, and local government agencies.

The office is also a resource for transportation information for Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, and Williamson counties. The Office of Mobility Management assists customers who cannot find transportation to serve their needs in these counties and employs a Trip Planning Specialist as the primary contact for transportation information and referral.

Office of Mobility Management Contacts:

### **Trip Planning Specialist**

(512) 369-6047

Annelese.jones@capmetro.org

### **Regional Coordination Planner**

(512) 369-7785

Michelle.meaux@capmetro.org

## **Volunteer-based and Free Ride Programs**

The following are volunteer-based transportation services that are free of charge.

### **American Cancer Society- Road to Recovery \*\***

(800) 227-2345

Transportation to and from treatment for people with cancer.

### **Drive A Senior – North Central Austin**

(512) 453-2273

nc@driveasenior.org

[www.driveasenioratx.org](http://www.driveasenioratx.org)

### **Drive A Senior Central Texas – Serving South, Southeast and Southwest Austin, Elgin, Lakeway, and Dripping Springs**

(512) 445-5552

ctx@driveasenior.org

[www.driveaseniorCTX.org](http://www.driveaseniorCTX.org)

### **Drive a Senior – West Austin**

(512) 472-6339

westaustin@driveasenior.org

[www.driveasenioratx.org](http://www.driveasenioratx.org)

### **Faith In Action Georgetown**

(512) 868-9544

[www.faithinactiongt.org](http://www.faithinactiongt.org)

### **Faith In Action – Drive a Senior Northwest**

Austin, Leander, Cedar Park

(512) 250-5021

rides@driveaseniornorthwest.org

[www.driveaseniornorthwest.org](http://www.driveaseniornorthwest.org)

### **Senior Access – Manor, Pflugerville, Round Rock, Hutto and Northeast Austin**

(512) 310-1060

admin@senioraccesstx.org

[www.senioraccesstx.org](http://www.senioraccesstx.org)

### **United for the People \*\***

Transportation for Veterans for a fee from their homes to VA appointments in Cedar Park, Austin, Georgetown, Hutto, Round Rock, Leander, Pflugerville.

(888) 298-3220

admin@unitedforthepeople.org



## **Your Ride is Here**

info@yourrideishere.org

P.O. Box 4149

Cedar Park, TX 78630

Provides transportation to and from treatment for those fighting cancer.

## **City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department**

### **SENIOR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM**

Senior Transportation is part of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Senior Programs Division. The goal is “to provide a special system of transportation to enhance the quality of life and promote independence for persons 60 years or older.”

(512) 974-1464 for reservations

[www.austintexas.gov/seniors](http://www.austintexas.gov/seniors)

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

- Services provided Monday through Friday, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm.
- Clients may make reservations 30 days in advance. Minimum 24-hour notice.
- Intake forms required.
- Drivers provide curb to curb service. Assistance provided when needed.

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE?**

- Older Adults 60+  
Riders with cognitive impairments are advised to have a caregiver accompany them.  
Riders in a wheelchair must let the dispatcher/senior

transportation staff know that they need a handicap accessible van/bus when scheduling a ride.

## **TYPES OF SERVICES**

- Regular Routes/Lunch Program: Provides reliable service from your door to congregate meal lunch locations and back home again. FREE/\$1.00 donation optional.
- Reserve-a-Ride: Choose when and where you want to go within Austin City limits. \$3.00 a destination.
- Errands (non-medical): Destinations include grocery store, shopping centers, bank, hair salon, etc.) \$3.00 each way/\$6.00 round trip.
- Medical Appointments: Destinations include doctor, dentist, etc. (non-emergency appointments). \$3.00 each way/\$6.00 round trip.
- Group Travel: Do you want to travel with friends? Whether touring the Texas Hill Country or cruising to San Antonio for the afternoon, Senior Transportation can be your chauffeur. We serve groups of 7 or more in the Austin area and 10 or more for out-of-town trips. Depending on your destination, fees start at a rate of \$6.00 per person per destination.

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## **Medical Transportation**

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Medical transportation services are available for Medicaid cardholders and these services are free and can be arranged through HHSC call centers. To inquire or schedule these services for people using Texas Health Steps and other Medicaid programs, call (877) 633-8747.

## Websites of Interest

### **2-1-1 Help In Texas**

(Texas Information and Referral Network of Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

[www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org)

A program of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, 2-1-1 helps to easily connect people with the health and social services they need, and resources in their local community.

### **AARP**

(Formerly known as American Association of Retired Persons)

[www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

A membership organization helping people 50 years and older navigate aging, financial well-being, health, how to contribute to society and local communities, and how to fully enjoy life.

### **Administration for Community Living**

[www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)

Improving the lives of older adults and people with disabilities through services, research and education.

### **AGE of Central Texas**

[www.ageofcentraltx.org](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org)

A nonprofit organization that provides education and support to people all along the spectrum of growing older.

### **Aging and Disability Resource Center of the Capital Area**

[www.adrccap.org](http://www.adrccap.org)

Referral source for long-term services and support programs for older adults, those with disabilities and their caregivers

## **Ageing Life Care Association**

**[www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org)**

Health and human services specialist who act as a guide and advocate for families who are caring for older relatives or disabled adults

## **Alzheimer's Association**

**[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)**

Resources and support for individuals with Alzheimer's, dementia and their caregivers.

## **Alzheimer's Texas**

**[www.txalz.org](http://www.txalz.org)**

Provides information, referrals, and a variety of support programs for those with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and their family members, caregivers and professionals.

## **Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area**

**[www.aaacap.org](http://www.aaacap.org)**

Serves older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers with a variety of services and supports, to ensure people can maintain their best quality of life.

## **Attorney General of Texas (Protecting Senior Texans)**

**<https://www2.texasattorneygeneral.gov/seniors>**

The Attorney General protects the rights and safety of seniors by investigating abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of seniors in long-term care facilities that receive federal Medicaid funds.

## **Austin Resource Center for Independent Living (ARCIL)**

**[www.arcil.com](http://www.arcil.com)**

A private non-profit corporation dedicated to the advancement and full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

### **Caregiving Cafe**

[www.caregivingcafe.com/blog/](http://www.caregivingcafe.com/blog/)

Providing caregivers with resources and a community support network.

### **Capital Metro**

[www.capmetro.org](http://www.capmetro.org)

Capital Metro is Austin's regional public transportation provider.

### **Drive a Senior**

[www.driveasenior.org](http://www.driveasenior.org)

Provides transportation support to seniors through rides to the grocery store, pharmacy, errands, and medical appointments.

### **ElderCare Online**

[www.ec-online.net](http://www.ec-online.net)

Provides senior resources, home health care advice and an online community for older adults and their caregivers.

### **Family Eldercare**

[www.familyeldercare.org](http://www.familyeldercare.org)

Provides essential services to seniors, adults with disabilities and their caregivers.

### **Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA)**

[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

Provides supportive services to family caregivers of adults with physical and cognitive impairments.

### **Latinos Against Alzheimer's**

[www.usagainstalzheimer.org/networks/latinos](http://www.usagainstalzheimer.org/networks/latinos)

Spearheads strategic convening and coalition building, legislative advocacy, and culturally tailored education and brain health promotion efforts across the country

## **LeadingAge Texas (Formerly TAHSA)**

[www.leadingagetexas.org](http://www.leadingagetexas.org)

Provides leadership, advocacy, and education for not-for-profit retirement housing and nursing home communities that serve the needs of Texas retirees.

## **Meals on Wheels Central Texas**

[www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org)

Provides meal-delivery programs to homebound older adults and people with disabilities as well as additional supportive life assistance services.

## **Medicare**

[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

Information Center: [www.medicare.org](http://www.medicare.org)

Medicare Rights Center: [www.medicarerights.org](http://www.medicarerights.org)

## **Mental Health America of Texas**

[www.mhatexas.org](http://www.mhatexas.org)

Resources for mental health information, education and advocacy.

## **National Alliance for Caregiving**

[www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org)

NAC conducts research, does policy analysis, develops national best-practice programs, and works to increase public awareness of family caregiving issues.

## **National Alliance on Mental Illness**

[www.namitexas.org](http://www.namitexas.org)

Helps improve the lives of people affected by mental illness through education, support, and advocacy.

## **National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys**

[www.naela.org](http://www.naela.org)

Attorneys specializing in working with legal problems of older adults and individuals with disabilities.

## **National Center on Elder Abuse**

[ncea.acl.gov](http://ncea.acl.gov)

## **National Council on Aging**

[www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)

A collaborative organization providing innovative community programs and services, online help, and advocacy for issues of aging.

## **Prescription Assistance**

[www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com)

[www.rxhope.com](http://www.rxhope.com)

[www.needymeds.org](http://www.needymeds.org)

[www.goodrx.com](http://www.goodrx.com)

## **Social Security Online**

[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

## **Texas Workforce Commission**

[www.twc.texas.gov](http://www.twc.texas.gov)

Texas state agency charged with overseeing and providing workforce development services to employers and job seekers.

## **Texas Legal Services Center**

[www.tlsc.org](http://www.tlsc.org)

A nonprofit organization that provides legal representation, advice, advocacy, and education at no cost to underserved people across Texas.

## **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**

[hhs.texas.gov/hhs-services](http://hhs.texas.gov/hhs-services)

## **Texas Health and Human Services Commission**

(HHSC – Formerly DADS)

<https://hhs.texas.gov/>

**Texas Workforce Commission, Services for Persons  
with Disabilities** (formerly Department of Assistive  
and Rehabilitative Services)

[www.twc.texas.gov/partners/programs-people-disabilities](http://www.twc.texas.gov/partners/programs-people-disabilities)

**Texas Housers**

[www.texashousers.org](http://www.texashousers.org)

Texas Low Income Housing Information Service develops model solutions to Texas' critical housing and community development problems.

**The ARC of Texas**

[www.thearcoftexas.org](http://www.thearcoftexas.org)

The Arc of Texas advocates for the human rights and self-determination of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all aspects of society.





