

# Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

Annual Report



# 2024



Governor's Office  
of Youth, Faith  
and Family



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

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



KATIE HOBBS  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ARIZONA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

TONYA HAMILTON  
CABINET EXECUTIVE OFFICER

July 31, 2024

Governor Katie Hobbs  
1700 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Hobbs,

It is an honor to serve as chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging (GACA). I am proud of the council members' dedicated service and unwavering support, as well as their tireless efforts to address pressing issues faced by Arizona's older adult population, furthering the GACA's mission of enhancing the lives of older Arizonans. The following report contains an overview of the goals, activities, outcomes, and future work carried out by the members of the GACA and our community-based collaborations/partnerships over the past year.

Undoubtedly, the overall well-being of the 55+ population has become essential to cities and towns across Arizona. Social connectedness, health, and overall quality of life have become pivotal factors for older adults considering Arizona as their home. To support the vision of an Arizona for Everyone, the GACA has focused on critical areas closely aligned with your priorities, such as Alzheimer's and other dementia, caregiving, and housing.

Given that Alzheimer's disease is a critical health issue for Arizona's aging population, the GACA members have played a vital role in ensuring that our state supports those affected by this disease and their caregivers through a comprehensive approach involving education, advocacy, and proactive legislative efforts. To address the increasingly prevalent issue of homelessness among older adults in Arizona, the GACA has been actively disseminating vital information and facilitating the provision of helpful resources during GACA meetings.

It is crucial to ensure that the Governor's Office, the state legislature, and other state departments are well-informed about the evolving needs of Arizona's diverse and often vulnerable older adult population. Thank you for the opportunity to hear their challenges and lift their voices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terri Spitz".

Terri Spitz  
Chair, Governor's Advisory Council on Aging

cc: Speaker of the House Ben Toma  
Senate President Warren Petersen

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## **PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE**

The [Governor's Advisory Council on Aging \(GACA\)](#), established under [ARS § 46-182](#), [ARS § 46-183](#), and [ARS § 46-184](#), advises the Governor, Legislature, and all State Departments on aging-related matters and issues. Administered by the [Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family \(GOYFF\)](#) to improve the quality of life for older Arizonans, the GACA achieves its purpose by collaborating with policymakers, state agencies, local communities, non-profit organizations, private enterprises, and older adults across Arizona. Additionally, the GACA collects and assesses information on the needs of older adults and aging trends, raises awareness about programs and policies that affect older adults, and offers training programs on critical aging issues.

The GACA further facilitates the mission outlined in the body's governing through its active workgroup and subcommittee:

### **[Aging in Community Workgroup](#)**

The Aging in Community (AIC) Workgroup, in collaboration with the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), has mandated that Arizona Adult Protective Services (APS) Investigators complete comprehensive Dementia Education Training provided by the Alzheimer's Association. This training is essential because APS Investigators engage with individuals with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia daily, and they must understand the signs and impact of brain disease on vulnerability to conduct effective investigations. Additionally, the training offers valuable resources for family members and caregivers, helping them understand what to expect as symptoms worsen and begin to interfere with daily activities.

### **[Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Subcommittee](#)**

The Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Subcommittee met this past year to support GACA's priorities and collaborate with other state agencies. The subcommittee partnered with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to serve on the planning team to develop the Arizona State Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD).

## MEMBERSHIP

Outlined per legislation, the GACA comprises individuals appointed by the Governor who serve at her pleasure without compensation. The following members currently serve on GACA.

**Terri Spitz, Chair**

Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter

**Lisa O'Neill**

The University of Arizona Center on Aging

**Bert Ijams**

Meals on Wheels Prescott

**Belinda Akes**

Pinal/Gila Senior Citizen Council

**Bonita Imus**

Educator

**Brenda Holt**

AARP®

**Lela Alston**

Arizona Senate

**Teresa Manygoats**

Arizona Department of Health Services

**Teri Kennedy**

University of Kansas

**Carol Brown, Vice-Chair**

Western Arizona Council of Governments

**Tim Dunn**

Arizona House of Representatives

**Virginia Rountree**

Arizona Department of Economic Security

**Steve Wagner**

RightCare

**New members as of May 30, 2024**

**Brendon Blake**

AARP®

**Dr. Nelly Clotter-Woods**

Arizona Caregiver Coalition

**Gwendolyn Relf**

Rehoboth Community Development Corporation

**Leslie Moore**

HonorHealth, Desert Mission

**Rebecca Clayton**

Arizona Department of Economic Security,  
Ex-Officio Member

## 2023-2024 GOALS

Over the last two fiscal years (FY) spanning July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024, the GACA worked with community leaders, organizations, and state agencies to support Arizona's aging population by reviewing current information on aging and participating in joint initiatives. The objectives are as follows:

- Monitor the current Arizona State Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ARD) and make recommendations for the 2024-2029 Arizona State Plan.
- Educate and inform older Arizonans about the programs, resources, and information related to housing and aging in place.
- Advocate for care recipient/caregiver support and education.
- Collect new data on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and prepare new or revised recommendations based on this information through efforts led by liaison agencies or departments.

## COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

### Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter

The Alzheimer's Association works to end Alzheimer's and other dementias worldwide by advancing global research, promoting risk reduction and early detection, and ensuring high-quality care and support. Key highlights accomplished by the [Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter](#):

- Over 17,000 Arizonans of all ages and abilities attended the Walk to End Alzheimer's® to join the fight against the disease, raise funds to provide 24/7 care and support, and advance research for the prevention, treatment, and cure of Alzheimer's.
- In its eighth year, Alzheimer's Advocacy Day at the Arizona Capitol encourages lawmakers to support legislation affecting the health and well-being of older adults with Alzheimer's and other dementia-related illnesses and their caregivers. The 2024 event resulted in the passage of two critical bills:
  - [HB2587](#): Enhances state oversight of adult protective services, reporting, and records.
  - [HB2764](#): Establishes Memory Care standards to improve the quality of care for individuals with Alzheimer's in assisted living facilities.

### AARP® - Arizona Chapter

With a nationwide presence, the AARP strengthens communities and supports the essential needs of over 100 million Americans aged 50-plus and their families. As a GACA partner, an [AARP Arizona Chapter](#) representative actively engages in the council and provides valuable resources to support events and activities such as the GACA's Listening Sessions, the latest educational programs, caregiver support trends, and advocacy efforts benefiting older adults in Arizona.

### Arizona Caregiver Coalition

The [Arizona Caregiver Coalition](#) aims to enhance the quality of life for family caregivers in Arizona by providing advocacy, resources, and respite support while forming partnerships with organizations such as the DES, AZ Aging, and other community-based organizations. In 2024, the GACA provided financial support as an event sponsor at the [Family Caregiver Day at the Capitol](#), which approximately 80 people attended.

### Arizona Department of Health Services

The [ADHS](#) promotes and protects the health of Arizona's children and adults by setting health standards through direct care, science, public policy, and leadership. In addition to the GACA and ADHS partnering to develop the Arizona State Plan on ADRD, the ADHS collaborates to collect data to support efforts and strategies implemented by the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Subcommittee.

### Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Aging and Adult Services

The collaboration between APS Investigators and the AIC Workgroup has provided DES access to a national curriculum designed specifically for APS employees. The training is updated regularly with the latest research and best practices to ensure investigators effectively navigate and overcome challenges, ultimately leading to better outcomes for vulnerable adults. From FY23 to the end of FY24, 273 investigators, 38 supervisors and managers, and 16 support staff members received the training.

### Arizona Department of Veterans Services

The [Arizona Department of Veterans Services \(AZDVS\)](#) is a liaison partner of the GACA and directly assists Veterans in accessing their benefits through 50 professional benefit counselors located statewide. They also provide critical coordination and technical assistance to services and organizations across the state that serve Veterans. AZDVS operates two skilled nursing Veterans' Home facilities in Phoenix and Tucson, with new homes in Flagstaff and Yuma that offer short- and long-term care. Additionally, AZDVS manages three Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries in Sierra Vista and Marana.

### AZ Aging

Established in 1973, [AZ Aging](#) operates under the [Older Americans Act \(OAA\)](#) to serve the needs of Arizonans aged 60 and older, adults with disabilities, and caregivers. As a liaison partner, AZ Aging provides regular updates at the GACA meetings to facilitate ongoing communication between the seven regions and GACA members. Highlights include:

- **2023:** Governor Katie Hobbs signed a bill into law that included an additional \$10 million in funding, \$5 million for a housing assistance pilot program, and \$5 million for ongoing services and support to address inflation and the shortage of direct care workers.
- **2024:** Changes to OAA's federal regulations aim to better support the national aging network that delivers services and improve program implementation. All agencies are required to

implement the new rules by October 2025. The goal is to ensure that the growing population of older adults in the nation can continue to receive the services and support they need to live and thrive in their homes and communities.

## SUCSESSES AND HIGHLIGHTS



Parker Community Senior Center | La Paz County

### Community Listening Sessions

With support from the GOYFF, the GACA hosted five Community Listening Sessions focusing on the needs of Arizona’s aging adults residing in rural and historically underserved communities. With this in mind, sessions occurred in areas such as Parker, Oro Valley, the City of Tucson El Pueblo Activity and Senior Center in South Tucson (conducted in English and Spanish), and the Dunbar Pavilion.



AARP Tucson Information Center | Pima County

Approximately 75 older adults, along with their caregivers, attended the listening sessions and received a GOYFF/GACA canvas bag filled with community resources from the following agencies: the University of Arizona Center on Aging, the Alzheimer’s Association Desert Southwest Chapter, AARP, Contexture, ADHS, Blue Cross Blue Shield, DES - DAAS, and the Western Arizona Council of Governments.



El Pueblo Activity and Senior Center | Pima County

The community input from these sessions has informed the focus of future GACA initiatives. Areas of greatest concern to communities included affordable housing, social engagement for those living at home, support for caregivers, and assistance navigating public health services.



Dunbar Pavilion | Pima County

Due to the overwhelmingly positive response to listening sessions, the GACA plans to hold additional sessions and community engagement events in the upcoming fiscal year. By hearing the needs of older adults across Arizona, the GACA is better prepared to serve a greater diversity of aging adults in Arizona.

## 2023 Arizona Caregiver Summit: Caring for the Caregiver - Taking Care of You



GACA Chair Terri Spitz and the GOYFF Executive Director of Aging Latrisha Centers

Hosted by the ADHS Office of Chronic Disease and Health Promotion, the Arizona Caregiver Summit featured statewide resources, workshops, readily available onsite respite and referral options, and messaging explicitly tailored for caregivers. Approximately 81 attendees received resources and information from ten exhibitors, including, but not limited to, the GOYFF, Arizona Caregiver Coalition, ARCH Respite Locator, ALZConnected (Alzheimer's support group offered through the Alzheimer's Association), 211 Arizona, and DAAS at DES.

### Annual Council Planning Meeting

As required by statute, the GACA plans priorities for the upcoming fiscal year based on current trends, the latest data about the aging community, and feedback from activities held throughout the year, such as the FY2024 Community Listening Sessions. The FY2025 priorities include caregiver support and resources, access to quality and affordable housing, and Alzheimer's and dementia support.

### MEETING PRESENTATIONS

During FY2023 and FY2024, the GACA received presentations from issue-area experts on services and support for older Arizonans provided by state agency partners, liaisons, and community partners. Presentation materials are available on the GACA's [website](#). The following are summaries of presentations heard over the last two years.

#### State Plan on Service

**Emily Litchfield, Director of AmeriCorps/Service and Volunteerism**

*February 2023*

The State Plan on Service is a three-year, comprehensive national and community service plan that the Governor approves. The plan establishes a state's priorities and outlines strategies for engaging diverse populations to promote service at a local level. It must also include a supplemental piece for adults aged 55 and older. Key highlights include recommendations for policies to increase service for older adults, civic engagement, and multigenerational activities.

#### Medicaid Estate Recovery Program

**Jakenna Lebsock, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System**

*April 2023*

The [Medicaid Estate Recovery Program](#) is a federally mandated initiative that seeks to recover payments from members enrolled in the [Arizona Long Term Care System \(ALTCS\)](#) through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). When enrolled in ALTCS, AHCCCS may place claims and liens on the member's estate or property for the cost of care services. However, if

the member or their heir can demonstrate a reasonable statutory exemption or verified undue hardship, they may be able to delay or waive the collection process.

### **Alzheimer's Association 2023 Facts and Figures Report**

**Katie Skvarce, Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter**

**April 2023**

The [Alzheimer's Association's 2023 Facts and Figures Report](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the statistics related to Alzheimer's disease in the United States, state by state. Significant findings for Arizona include:

- The fastest growth rate in the nation for Alzheimer's disease.
- The second-highest average number of hours per unpaid dementia caregiver.
- Approximately 150,000 Arizonans live with Alzheimer's disease, and 261,000 Arizonans are caring for a friend or family member with dementia.
- Caregivers provide 511 million hours of unpaid care annually, valued at \$10.81 billion.
- Arizona must increase its geriatricians by 294.6% by 2050 to meet the growing demand.
- Nearly 10% of Arizona caregivers are in poor health, with 53% of Arizona dementia caregivers living with chronic conditions.

### **Aging in Arizona: Leading Causes and Risk Factors of Death Among Arizona Residents 65 Years and Older**

**Amanda Swanson, Arizona Department of Health Services**

**June 2023**

The ADHS' [Aging in Arizona: Leading and Risk Factors of Death Among Arizona Residents 65 and Older-2021](#) report offers valuable information to guide matters concerning the older adult population in Arizona. It serves as a resource for raising awareness, aiding in program planning, and informing training on critical aging issues. From 2017 to 2021, Arizonans aged 65 and older experienced:

- A population growth of 17% with an increase in the number of deaths of 37%
- Highest mortality rates among individuals aged 85 and older, American Indians or Alaska Natives, males, and those living in rural areas of Arizona
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death

### **St. Mary's Food Bank Commodity Senior Food Program**

**Isaac Orona and Keicha Copeland, St. Mary's Food Bank**

**June 2023**

[St. Mary's Food Bank \(SMFB\)](#) addresses hunger by gathering and distributing food while promoting self-sufficiency, collaboration, advocacy, and education. SMFB contracts with the DES on the federally funded, USDA-regulated [Commodity Senior Food Program \(CSFP\)](#) to provide nutritionally balanced monthly packages to low-income seniors. Through partnerships with third-party Home Delivery and Older Adult Living Facilities vendors, SMFB serves an average of 4,800 Arizona households monthly.

## Legacy Corps for Veterans and Military Families

Sandi Gorley, Legacy Corps for Veterans and Military Families

*October 2023*

[Legacy Corps for Veterans and Military Families](#), funded by AmeriCorps, helps caregivers of veterans and military families in five states. In Arizona, Legacy Corps operates at the Arizona State University (ASU) Downtown Phoenix campus in the Center for Urban Innovation to provide in-home respite, information on medical conditions, transportation in specific situations, caregiver transitional services, and emergency response programs.

## Speak Up AZ! Campaign

Ron Merritt, ON Advertising

*December 2023*

[Speak Up AZ!](#) is a public awareness and education campaign addressing concerns about adult protective services in Arizona. It aims to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults by raising public awareness and providing education. Since the campaign's launch, the DES has seen an increase in reports of abuse and neglect, which correlates to its success.

## Choose Your Person Campaign

Carla Sutter, Contexture

*December 2023*

The [Choose Your Person](#) statewide campaign raises awareness about the [Arizona Healthcare Directives Registry \(AzHDR\)](#), which stores and allows access to advance directive documents such as living wills, healthcare power of attorney forms, mental healthcare power of attorney forms, and pre-hospital medical care directives. The campaign aims to help Arizonans ensure healthcare decisions are heard, respect their faith and culture, train Community Assistants to support using the registry, and encourage conversations about healthcare in trusted community settings.

## Justa Center

Dean Scheinert, Justa Center

*February 2024*

[Justa Center](#) provides life-sustaining resources, services, and support to assist people aged 55 and older who are experiencing homelessness. The center serves approximately 100 individuals daily, offering help with medications, obtaining reading glasses, wound care, and more. They also provide Digital Skills Training to ensure individuals have the necessary skills to seek employment once ready.

## GACA Budget Update

Travis Price, Arizona Office of the Governor

*May 2024*

The GACA budget was transferred from the DES to the GOYFF in 2020 and has since managed a \$237,000 budget to support the GACA, ensure monies reach citizens, and support Governor Hobbs' vision of an Arizona for everyone.

## Guardianship/Conservatorship

Vinay Singh and Jessica Gonzalez, Maricopa County Public Fiduciary Office

*May 2024*

The [Maricopa County Public Fiduciary Office](#) provides professional and compassionate guardianship, conservatorship, and decedent services for incapacitated adults when no one else is able or willing to assist. Fiduciaries seek community-based alternatives to guardianship or conservatorship to preserve the individual's independence, meet their needs, and make the most of community resources. Although not caregivers, they can help in specific situations by coordinating personal care services such as bathing, dressing, personal hygiene, household chores, and shopping.