



# **Aging Texas Well Strategic Plan 2020-2021**

**As Required by  
Executive Order RP-42**

**Health and Human Services**

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**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
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## Introduction

In 1997, the State Unit on Aging created the Aging Texas Well initiative to help the state prepare for the rising number of older adults. As Texas' older adult population continues to grow, so do opportunities to enhance programs and services that impact them. As a group, Texans age 50+ will reach over 10 million by 2025, with the 75-84 years of age population segment growing the fastest.<sup>1</sup> It is crucial the state is equipped to provide services and supports to older adults, their families, caregivers, and the communities in which they live.

The Aging Texas Well (ATW) Strategic Plan is developed in accordance with Executive Order RP-42 and submitted biennially to the Texas Governor as a report on the implementation of this order. The executive order established key mandates to direct the ATW initiative and state leaders on policy planning for older Texans. The executive order also instructs the Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee (ATWAC) to guide and support state leadership on aging-related matters and requires Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop a biennial working plan to identify and discuss aging policy issues, guide state government readiness, and promote increased community preparedness for the aging Texas population.

Several years into state agency transformation, significant opportunities have arisen for HHSC aging services networks, including increasing collaboration, coordinating services, and streamlining processes and procedures. HHSC fulfills the ATW mandates by identifying issues, current initiatives, and future needs through collaboration across programs and services.

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<sup>1</sup> HHSC Center for Analytics and Decision Support (2018, October). Texas: Population projections, years 2015-2050 [data set].

## Growing Aging Texas Well

The state's vision for ATW is that it will be an important source of information and guidance on the issues that impact Texans' ability to age well and independently. To highlight the needs of older adults, ATW utilizes critical trends that affect older adults and are central to aging well. When created in 1997, sixteen categories were identified from Older Americans Act service areas as ATW focus areas (see appendix A). These categories continue to be relevant and critical areas of study and provide a strong foundation on which to broaden the scope of ATW.

Building on this strong foundation, HHSC continues to expand the focus of ATW to include other focus areas identified by federal initiatives, emerging research, local and national advocacy, and topics determined by the ATWAC (see appendix B). For example, scientific advances have made the impact of technology on the aging experience an important focus. Likewise, increased awareness of substance use has propelled this topic into the forefront of aging policy issues.

As the ATW initiative continues to expand, it is important to consider other key indicators and factors influencing the health and quality of life for older Texans. The World Health Organization identified several external, or social, determinants of health (SDOH) that can affect an

individual's health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> Healthy People 2020 has outlined Neighborhood and Built Environment; Health and Health Care; Social and Community Context; Education; and Economic Stability<sup>3</sup> as important SDOH for Americans. Each of these have significant overlap with the WHO



<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. (2018). Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/sdh\\_definition/en/](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)

<sup>3</sup> Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>

determinants and, more importantly, the original 16 ATW focus areas. These critical influencers on health and wellness will be used to enhance and grow ATW policy review, state readiness, and local community preparedness efforts.

Knowledge across aging topics and SDOH help older Texans continue to control their lives and empower them to prepare for future needs as they age. This awareness also enables the state and its partners to prepare for the needs of a growing older adult population. The ATW Strategic Plan is a guide for policymakers and service providers to develop comprehensive strategies, innovative solutions, and effective collaborations that will improve services and the quality of life for all older Texans for generations to come.

## Mandates and Planned Strategies

The Executive Order RP-42 mandates form the core elements of ATW and establish parameters for implementing the initiative. The mandates, listed below, include the development of a biennial plan required as a report on the implementation of the order.

### **Mandate 1: Advisory Committee**

The mandate instructs the Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee to advise HHSC and make recommendations to state leadership on the implementation of the ATW initiative. Planned strategies by HHSC to support the ATWAC in meeting this mandate include:

- seeking the committee's input in the development of future ATW Strategic Plans (ASC strategies);
- facilitating the committee's review of and comment on state policies and programs impacting older adults by gathering and providing information as requested (e.g. requesting department updates for committee quarterly meetings; obtaining program reports for committee review as needed) (ASC strategies);
- coordinating the committee's recommendations provided through the ATW Strategic Plan, issue briefs, and reports to the HHSC Executive Council, HHSC Executive Commissioner, and state legislature (ASC strategies);
- assisting with committee vacancies to ensure a diverse, qualified, and active committee (ASC strategies); and
- coordinating the committee's quarterly meetings and providing other technical assistance as needed (ASC strategies).

### **Mandate 2: Aging Texas Well Plan**

With the advice of the ATWAC, HHSC creates and disseminates a comprehensive and effective working plan, identifies aging policy issues to guide state government readiness, and promotes increased community preparedness for an aging Texas. HHSC biennially updates the plan and evaluates and reports on its implementation. Planned strategies by HHSC to meet this mandate include:

- coordinating with appropriate HHSC program areas, other state agencies, and the ATWAC to create the ATW Strategic Plan (ASC strategies);
- assessing the progress of the plan annually (ASC strategies); and
- presenting progress reports of the plan to ATWAC members, HHSC program areas, other state agencies, and HHSC Executive Commissioner (ASC strategies).

### **Mandate 3: Review of State Policy**

RP-42 directs HHSC to review state policies affecting the lives of older Texans, with special concentration on critical trends. Over the years, these have included:

- improving services for informal caregivers;
- promoting methods to increase evidence-based prevention activities;
- increasing the recruitment and retention of health care providers trained in gerontology;
- improving the provision of services and supports to older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- reviewing options to expand the mobility of older adults through affordable, accessible, and integrated transportation services;
- improving the provision of behavioral health services and supports to older adults; and
- reviewing federal changes in health care policy.

These continue to be important focus areas and as new trends appear more areas will be added to the ATW initiative’s scope. Planned strategies by HHSC to meet this mandate include:

- gathering and analyzing data to better understand the needs of older Texans, including on special topics such as housing, aging diversity and cultural humility, opioid and substance use, social isolation, and medical-social service collaboration (ASC strategies);
- collecting and providing information on policies impacting older adults to facilitate the ATWACs review and/or comment (ASC strategies);
- coordinating aging services to expand the knowledge base, understanding, and involvement in aging issues through educational outreach (e.g., issue briefs, presentations, targeted training), and by serving on statewide aging initiatives, workgroups, and coalitions (ASC strategies);
- focusing on the continuum of care for mental health services and ensuring that older adults get care at the right time, in the right place (BHS strategies);

- reviewing agency-wide policies and other current trends to improve services and supports for informal caregivers (CA-AES strategies);
- reviewing current service planning processes and requirements to guide future improvements in consistency and use and person-centered planning (MCS strategies);
- continuing engagement with stakeholders around long-term services and supports regarding individuals' rights, dignity, autonomy, and community access (MCS strategies);
- reviewing current programs and data availability related to strengthening the community attendant workforce (MCS strategies);
- providing independent policy reviews regarding trends and issues related to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents of nursing facilities and assisted living facilities, including the quality of services provided by long-term care facilities (OSLTCO strategies); and
- reviewing policies in long term services and supports related to support for adults aging with developmental disabilities and their caregivers (TCDD strategies).

#### **Mandate 4: State Agency Readiness**

Another critical aspect of ATW is a focus on state agency readiness and capacity to serve the needs of a growing older adult population. The executive order instructs HHSC to lead a planning effort to ensure the readiness of all Texas state agencies by identifying issues and current initiatives, future needs, action steps, and methods of performance evaluation. Planned strategies by HHSC to meet this mandate include:

- connecting with state and local agencies regarding their policies and programs that affect older adults to determine if ATW collaboration is appropriate (ASC strategies);
- developing and sharing resources, providing expertise and technical assistance, and collaborating with other agencies upon request (ASC strategies);
- developing a clearinghouse of state aging programs as a resource for state agencies to easily locate programs that serve older Texans (ASC strategies);
- building capacity of state aging service professionals, community aging service-delivery network, and underserved populations through resource sharing and coalition-building (ASC strategies);
- strengthening the framework of volunteer management systems in long-term care facilities (ASC strategies);



- increasing community-based mental health services and collaborating to expand opioid misuse prevention services (BHS strategies);
- sharing training and education resources with state employees, including resources on aging and long-term care topics, to support workforce enhancement and service delivery (DSHS-LIS, AV Library strategies);
- developing value-based payment models around community attendant workforce issues and community integration for individuals receiving home and community-based services in managed care (MCS strategies);
- advancing home and community-based settings compliance policy work to increase individuals' rights, dignity, autonomy, and community access (MCS strategies);
- improving current practices to ensure a comprehensive continuum of care that reflects person-centered thinking, planning, and practice across HHSC (MCS strategies);
- providing briefings on current initiatives and future needs of the state long-term care ombudsman program (OSLTCO strategies);
- assembling stakeholders and promoting exchange of information and best practices related to workforce training to support adults aging with developmental disabilities and their caregivers (TCDD strategies); and
- providing services to adults 55 and older with significant visual impairments that need assistance with independent living skills, technology, and support services (TWC-ILS OIB strategies).

### **Mandate 5: Texercise**

The maintenance, provision, and support of Texercise, a statewide health promotion initiative, is outlined in the executive order as a key ATW component. Texercise was developed by HHSC to educate and engage older Texans about nutrition and involve them in regular physical activity. HHSC, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and other key state and community organizations promote and expand the internationally-recognized promotions initiative to encourage healthy lifestyles in older Texans. Planned strategies by HHSC to continue expanding and promoting Texercise include:

- increasing outreach through the Malnutrition in Older Adults Campaign, quarterly webinars, and presentations at conferences and other events (ASC strategies);
- increasing promotion of Texercise to underserved communities (ASC strategies);

- growing access to Texercise resources through the development of an online ordering system for program materials (ASC strategies);
- identifying new partnership opportunities for program host sites, media awareness, and reinforcement items (e.g. t-shirts, stress balls, pedometers, etc) donations (ASC strategies);
- increasing awareness of professionals who do not work in the aging industry of the Texercise program and program materials (ASC strategies); and
- expanding access to best practices in health and fitness programming for older adults with developmental disabilities and their families (TCDD strategies).

### **Mandate 6: Local Community Preparedness**

RP-42 guides HHSC to work with public and private community partners, including local governments, councils, AAAs, and ADRCs to build their capacity to serve older Texans. HHSC uses partnership development, action planning, and community assessment resources to help communities develop policies, programs, and an infrastructure that supports older adults. Planned strategies by HHSC to meet this mandate include:

- increasing outreach to underserved communities through the Age Well Live Well (AWLW) campaign and Texercise initiative (ASC strategies);
- expanding the current array of AWLW resources (e.g. infographics, factsheets, toolkits etc.) (ASC strategies);
- assessing efficacy of current AWLW collaboratives and increasing the number of collaboratives across the state (ASC strategies);
- increasing public awareness about aging issues and services through the Texas Talks campaign (ASC strategies);
- increasing awareness of professionals not working within the aging industry (e.g police officers, pharmacists, municipal employees) about aging issues and services through specialized training and marketing materials (ASC strategies);
- supporting and enhancing agencies that serve older Texans through partnerships, marketing strategies, and the sharing of best practices (ASC strategies);
- growing local capacity by identifying partners to fund and support local organizations wishing to engage in aging services (ASC strategies);

- building long-term care facilities volunteer program capacity by developing no-cost resources like volunteer trainings, best practices guides, and educational webinars (ASC strategies);
- establishing community partnerships to support and sustain facility volunteerism and events (ASC strategies);
- collaborating with public and private community partners, including state and local governments, to build capacity to serve a growing aging population (CA-AES strategies);
- increasing capacity of communities to serve older adults at risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by developing local partnerships with service providers and providing community presentations (DFPS-APS strategies);
- increasing community awareness on a variety of topics, including aging and long-term care, by sharing state and other training and education resources to with residents of Texas (DSHS-LIS, AV Library strategies);
- increasing awareness of services and supports available for adults aging with developmental disabilities and their families (TCDD strategies);
- increasing awareness and best practices in person directed planning and support (TCDD strategies);
- supporting local ombudsman entities to build capacity to serve a growing aging population in long-term care facilities (OSLTCO strategies);
- conducting outreach and awareness activities to educate communities across Texas about the services available for adults 55 and older with significant visual impairment, including attending senior fairs and events (TWC-ILS OIB strategies); and
- conducting outreach to medical providers to increase referrals from Ophthalmologists/Optometrists offices to state services available for adults 55 and older with significant visual impairment (TWC-ILS OIB strategies).

### **Mandate 7: Report of Compliance**

In addition to defining and guiding the ATW initiative, the biennial strategic plan also serves as a report of compliance with Executive Order RP-42. Each

biennium, HHSC submits the ATW Strategic Plan to the Governor. Planned actions by HHSC to meet this mandate include:

- coordinating with the HHSC Chief Program and Services Office (CPSO) and Government and Stakeholder Relations (GSR) to support and assist with developing the report timeline (ASC strategies);
- collaborating with the appropriate HHSC program areas and the ATWAC to create the ATW Strategic Plan/report (ASC strategies); and
- submitting a final draft of the plan/report to the Governor (ASC strategies).

### **Mandate 8: Full Cooperation**

Lastly, Executive Order RP-42 instructs that “all affected agencies and other public entities shall cooperate fully with the [Health and Human Services Commission] in the implementation of this order.” Planned strategies by HHSC to promote collaboration with affected agencies and other entities include:

- providing technical assistance and support to state and local agencies on policies and programs that affect older adults (ASC strategies);
- developing a clearinghouse of state aging programs to be a resource for state agencies to easily locate programs that serve older Texans (ASC strategies); and
- building relationships, partnerships, and coalitions with other state agencies and public organizations by serving on statewide aging initiatives, workgroups, collaboratives, and councils (ASC strategies).

## Conclusion

With feedback and guidance from the ATWAC and statewide partners, HHSC will implement the ATW Strategic Plan as detailed above during the 2020-2021 biennium. This plan fulfills the mandates specified in Executive Order RP-42 and serves as a working strategic plan for the ATW initiative, which seeks to support state and community readiness for the growing population of older Texans, while also encouraging Texans of all ages to prepare for their later years.

The transformation of Texas' health and human service agencies provides opportunities for the programs that impact older adults to increase collaboration and coordination of services. Through interdisciplinary coordination across programs and statewide outreach, this plan will help ensure older Texans, their family members and caregivers, aging services providers, and state government are prepared to support and enhance the quality of life for older Texans.

## Acronyms List

### **HHSC Program Areas**

ASC – Aging Services Coordination

BHS – Behavioral Health Services

CA-AES – Community Access, Access and Eligibility Services

MCS – Medicaid and CHIP Services

OSLTCO – Office of the State Long-term Care Ombudsman

### **Other State Agencies and Programs**

DFPS-APS – Department of Family and Protective Services, Adult Protective Services

DSHS-LIS, AV Library – Department of State Health Services, Library and Information Services, Audiovisual Library

TCDD – Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities

TWC-ILS OIB – Texas Workforce Commission, Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind

## **Appendix A. Aging Texas Well Issue Areas**

- Caregiving
- Community Supports
- Education
- Employment
- Financial
- Health and Long-term Care
- Housing
- Legal
- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Protections
- Recreation
- Social Engagement
- Spirituality
- Transportation
- Volunteerism

## **Appendix B. ATWAC Priority Areas**

### Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee 2019-2020 Priority Issue Areas

- Active engagement, volunteerism, companionship
- Housing
- Ageism
- Community readiness/capacity
- Emergency response
- Poverty
- Program service coordination
- Grandparents and other older relatives raising grandchildren

### Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee 2016-2017 Priority Issue Areas

- Behavioral health
- Healthcare
- Evidence-based programs
- Nutrition
- Respite services
- Transportation
- Awareness and education