

Issue Brief

Aging Awareness

AGING IN TEXAS

Aging happens to everyone, but not everyone is aware of the issues they may encounter later in life. Stereotypes of older adults do not help. For example, dementia is not normal, older adults are not too rigid to change, and older people are not all the same.

- Between now and 2050, the older population in Texas will continue to become a larger share of the total population.¹
- More than 345 Texas residents reach age 65 each day.
- Texas added 1 million people age 65 and older to its population between 2000 and 2014.
- By 2030, the older adult population in Texas will reach nearly 6 million.

In the United States today, about one in seven people is over the age of 65.² More older adults are alive today than at any time in the past, and they are expected to live even longer – an average of an additional 19 years. Compared to the number of years spent in childhood or middle adulthood, the years spent in older adulthood have the potential to be the longest stage of life.

Aging is a complex series of physical, mental, functional and social changes, and everyone experiences it differently. Although some of the aging process is related to genetics and biological health, aging is also affected by actions and environment.

Physical changes include slower response times, trouble with vision and hearing, and for many, arthritis and joint stiffness. Many older adults experience impaired short-term memory and have trouble concentrating. Functional and family changes may include retirement, caregiving responsibilities and the death of a spouse, siblings or friends. These challenges can result in increased risk for isolation, depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide.

Despite difficult changes, older age can also provide new opportunities for education, volunteerism, recreation, exercise, social engagement and re-employment. It is a time for reflecting on achievements and contemplating future goals.

When the transitions of aging become a challenge, or when unexpected crises hit, older adults may have trouble adjusting to the resulting physical, mental or financial limitations, particularly when they must find new sources of support or cope with the loss of loved ones. Many do their best to be prepared; they engage in healthy habits and diligently set aside funds for the future. However, others may struggle to make ends meet financially or juggle the need to put food on the table with the need to pay for medications.

Nutrition, housing and transportation call for system-wide attention. Additionally, the coordination of health-care services, access to care, the cost of care, health disparities and the need for more medical professionals also need to be addressed.

Age-related issues encompass diverse, wide-ranging sub-issues that call for exploration and discussion. Common to all of them is the need for awareness. No matter how much time and money is spent addressing the issues, if older adults are unaware of resources or lack access to them, change will be unlikely.

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This information has been developed and provided by Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee.

RESOURCES

Texas Health and Human Services

Provides leadership and oversight of Texas' health and human services system programs • hhs.texas.gov/

Long-term Care Provider Search

To find and compare long-term services and supports in Texas • apps.hhs.texas.gov/LTCSearch/

Consumer Rights and Services

To find information about HHS programs and services, and to report an incident or file a complaint • 800-458-9858, option 2 • dads.state.tx.us/services/crs/abuse.html

2-1-1 Texas

Connects people to community services and supports • 2-1-1 or 877-541-7905 • 211texas.org/

Area Agencies on Aging

Statewide network that provides local services, supports and programs for older Texans, their families and caregivers • 800-252-9240

Aging and Disability Resource Centers

Information about long-term services and supports • 855-937-2372

Long-term Care Ombudsman

Provides advocates for quality of life and care for nursing home and assisted-living facility residents • dads.state.tx.us/news_info/ombudsman/

Yourtexasbenefits.com

Online access to Texas Health and Human Services Commission benefits including Medicaid, nursing home care and other services for people who are older or have disabilities

Medical Transportation Program

Authorizes and arranges transportation for eligible Medicaid recipients to access covered healthcare services • 877-633-8747

Eldercare Locator

Connects older adults and their families to local services • 800-677-1116 • eldercare.gov

Disability.gov

Online access to federal government information on disability programs and services

Own Your Future

Long-term care information to meet health or personal care needs over an extended period • ownyourfuturetexas.org



CITATIONS

1. Texas Demographic Center. (2016). *Aging in Texas: Introduction*.
2. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2017). *A profile of older Americans: 2016*. Washington, DC: Administration on Aging.

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