



Aging Texas Well

Community Assessment Toolkit - 2009

- Information*
- Tools*
- Resources*





Aging



Texas Well

An initiative of the
Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services

Aging Texas Well Assessment Toolkit – Table of Contents

	Introduction	1
	Chapter 1 – Understanding the ATW Process	5
	Chapter 2 – ATW Community Indicators	17
	Chapter 3 – ATW Community Assessment	21
	Chapter 4 – Seeking Recognition for Your Community	39
	Appendices	41



Introduction





The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), through Aging Texas Well (ATW), has a wide array of information, tools and resources to help people and their communities begin the process of aging well. DADS is committed to providing the right information and encouraging the action that will make aging well a reality for all Texans and their communities. The purpose of the ATW initiative is to identify and discuss aging policy issues, guide state government readiness, and promote increased community preparedness for an aging Texas.

ATW is focused on ensuring that Texas' aging population has a sense of well-being brought about by dealing effectively with life's changes and challenges. Pursuing positive, meaningful relationships and remaining independent and active are key to meeting these challenges. As outlined in Executive Order RP 42 (Appendix 1), part of the ATW mandate is to work with public and private community partners to build capacity to serve a growing aging population through community assessment processes. This community assessment toolkit addresses the community capacity building portion of the Executive Order.

As the baby boomers reach retirement, local governments will face even greater challenges in creating physical and social environments that support their needs. ATW encourages communities to identify features that define an aging-friendly community, to assess their communities' aging friendliness, and to undertake planning and action steps to build an aging-friendly community. If successful, Texas communities, both rural and urban, will have a better understanding of what it means to become "aging-friendly" and the most effective ways to remain that way.

This guide was developed by DADS and the Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee (ATWAC) as a starting point to assist communities that want to determine their current capacity. It will assist local communities to identify the physical, social and institutional elements that aging populations need to lead full and productive lives in their communities. It is intended to be a resource for a community-building process that begins with understanding the extent to which a community is already meeting the needs of its residents, identifying specific conditions and issues that need to be addressed, and planning to enable aging-friendly communities to flourish.

This guide consists of four chapters:

-  [Chapter 1](#) – Understanding the Aging Texas Well Process
-  [Chapter 2](#) – ATW Community Indicators
-  [Chapter 3](#) – ATW Community Assessment
-  [Chapter 4](#) – Seeking Recognition for Your Community

The process for each community will be unique as they attempt to identify and understand the needs of people across the varied phases of their lives and for developing community responses to those needs. This guide is intended to provide a framework for collaboration, analysis and consensus about shaping a community that both values residents and meets the needs of all members of the community. In addition to the social dimensions of community building, the result is likely to involve local governments in making physical and programmatic changes that address the needs of all its citizens.

Although each community is unique in the way it makes and implements decisions, participation in the Aging Texas Well Community Assessment and

the use of this guide are intended to occur within and support the normal community planning and budgeting processes. The physical and programmatic changes a community chooses to make to meet the needs of its population often emerge from that community's comprehensive planning process. In other circumstances, a community might deal with a complex, specific issue on an *ad hoc* basis, and then relate that issue to other aspects of community operations or improvements.

The process described in this guide can be used in either approach. The key point, however, is the community must make a commitment of taking the first steps to build an aging-friendly community. This can be accomplished by assessing livability in a comprehensive way, drawing up realistic plans to make needed changes, and ultimately allocating resources to ensure those changes are made.

Once the assessment process is complete, action committee members can decide if they want to take the next step and apply for recognition or certification through other organizations. Being recognized by other agencies highlights the successes taking place at the local level, the partners making strides to better the community, and offers opportunities for residents to continue supporting the important activities that are taking place. Being recognized also offers the community, its local government and Chamber of Commerce the opportunity to set itself apart from neighbors as a place that embraces people of all ages and abilities. For more information on these groups certifying and/or recognizing communities, see Chapter 4.

If you have questions about getting the process started in your community, contact the DADS Aging Texas Well Coordinator at 512-438-5471 or email the coordinator at AgingTexasWellCoordinator@DADS.state.tx.us for guidance or assistance with planning and organizing your community's ATW Action Committee.



Chapter One: **Understanding the ATW process**

The purpose of the state of Texas ATW initiative is to identify and discuss aging policy issues, guide state government readiness, and promote increased community preparedness for an aging Texas. It strives to ensure that state and local social infrastructure facilitates aging well throughout the life span. ATW consists of 16 life areas (see Appendix 2) and recognizes:

- Successful aging does not begin at age 60, but begins at birth;
- Everything an individual does throughout life will impact the aging process;
- The well-being of older Texans is holistic in nature, spans multiple life areas, and is driven by individual choices and quality of life; and
- A strong relationship exists between individual actions and community support as individuals prepare for aging well.

Many communities across the nation are beginning to analyze the readiness of their communities for the baby boomer population. The ATW Community Assessment is part of this national movement to promote aging-friendly communities through planning and capacity building. National organizations, including the National Governor's Association, Administration on Aging, AARP, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) and National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA), have all recognized the need for every state and community to prepare for the implications and effects of

the demographic trends of longevity, aging-in-place, and other realities of the baby boomer generation.

The net result of the ATW assessment process is a framework for building an aging-friendly community that has the support of a network of stakeholders who will work together to implement it. To complete the community assessment, there are several steps a community must undertake:

- Designate an executive sponsor with the authority to activate the process;
- Designate an action committee leader;
- Organize your community by building your action committee;
- Assess your community;
- Plan for future successes by building on strengths and closing gaps; and
- Implement your Aging Texas Well plan.

Communities wishing to apply for formal recognition or certification can do so with additional resources found in Chapter 4 of this toolkit.



Designating an action committee leader or executive sponsor

The selection of the ATW action committee leader is a very important step in the community assessment process. The action committee leader could be the executive sponsor of the project, but doesn't have to be. They will be the single point of contact for the overall community assessment and will drive the activities of the project.

This person must be willing to advocate for the work that needs to be completed, be a cheerleader throughout the process, and motivate the committee members to achieve goals and remain focused as the ATW Community Plan is developed. As the coordinator for the entire process, the leader will serve as a single point of contact in organizing the information-gathering process, facilitating partnership meetings, and communicating progress and results.

Action committee leaders will want to keep the following information in mind as they move forward in developing the ATW Action Committee:

- An effective assessment recognizes the diversity of the community;
- The assessment team should represent and collect information from all these perspectives, including business and the faith-based and nonprofit sectors;
- An accurate assessment views the community from multiple perspectives;
- Aging Texas Well is a holistic model that recognizes interconnectedness across 16 life areas (see Appendix 2);
- Communities should think holistically and evaluate their strengths, resources, and the needs of older Texans in as many of these areas as feasible;
- An accurate assessment should be comprehensive, yet a process to determine priorities may be required;
- Community leaders may want to identify priority areas and narrow the initial focus on critical activities to meet their community's goals;
- Quality assessment is an ongoing process; and
- The success of community preparedness is cumulative and will require periodic updates.



Organizing your community, building your action committee

After designating the action committee leader, a community is ready to organize its stakeholders. From the outset of the process, multiple stakeholders, both public and private, need to be involved. These stakeholders include elected community officials, city council, city departments and agencies, planning and zoning commissions, and any other entity that affects the physical environment and operations of community programs. In addition, citizens who have expertise in matters relating to the aging process and populations, as well as aging adults, should be involved in the process.

These people and organizations should be brought together as members of an ATW Action Committee. It is suggested the committee comprise 10-20 interested individuals, and reflect the community in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity and income. Beyond the action committee leader, the following list serves as a guideline of suggested representatives on the Action Committee:

- Mayor or designee
- City council member(s)
- Area Agency on Aging Director
- Housing professional with knowledge of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements
- Planning or zoning commission representative
- Residential real estate professional

- Consumer aid professional
- Housing contractor
- Non-profit and faith-based organizations
- Public safety services (police, fire, EMS)
- Geriatrician or gerontologist
- Chamber of commerce or retail/service merchant association representative
- Transportation authority representative
- Senior transportation provider
- Recreation director or representative
- Educator from local academic institution
- Clergy
- Older adults

The Action Committee should also call on experts and community volunteers when necessary to help with assessing the community and designing solutions to address the unique needs of the community or specific areas of focus under consideration by the committee.

The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) can provide the following types of support to communities performing assessments:

- Technical assistance to local staff and volunteers to support and develop “best practices” for the assessment process;
- Guidance on aging-friendly activities and Aging Texas Well;
- Assist in identifying positive press opportunities; and

- Placing community information and features on the Aging Texas Well website.

There are four steps to successful ATW Action Committee meetings and related community activities.

1. Identify and unite partners that share objectives and offer ongoing resources and support.
 - Use the DADS ATW Community Assessment process to evaluate and build community infrastructure;
 - Hold an initial strategic meeting with the ATW Action Committee to share the team's vision and agree on the areas of focus;
 - After completing the Community Assessment, develop a regional plan of action and timeline to accomplish the vision; and
 - Hold regularly scheduled meetings for the Action Committee to update the team on ATW-related activities.
2. Create special activity-based events to reinforce the ATW Community Assessment message and encourage ongoing participation.
 - Coordinate a community-wide launch event, and subsequent quarterly follow-up events; and
 - Develop quarterly events to encourage community participants, recognize partners, and attract new citizens to ATW Community Assessment activities.
3. Provide recognition and incentives to further the message, reward accomplishments, and encourage new involvement.
 - Develop opportunities for recognition of participants and partners to provide motivation for community participants.
4. Involve media partners to build broader community awareness and involvement.



Assessing Your Community

Once the Action Committee Leader/Executive Sponsor has been selected and the Action Committee has been formed, the formal assessment process can begin. The ATW Community Indicators in this guide and the companion indicator worksheets in Chapter 3 are designed to provide structure for the community discussion and decision-making to enable communities to become more aging-friendly. Each community should customize the assessment process to meet its own unique circumstances and priorities.

The assessment process is structured around three components of daily life of older adults – their home life, their need for mobility, and their community life. For each component, there are goals, indicators and questions that focus on specific issues confronting aging Texans. These goals and indicators are selected because they can be addressed within the scope of responsibilities of local government and in partnership with other stakeholders such as non-profit and business organizations.

There are five steps in the Aging Texas Well Community Assessment process:

1. Collect data and information to obtain responses to the questions for each indicator. Methods include obtaining census data and other aggregate community data, conducting key informant interviews with major stakeholders, holding focus groups with emerging elders and older adults, and observing the community through walking or riding tours.
2. Develop a brief summary of the findings from the data and information collection process. A blank page at the end of each section is available for summarizing or explaining findings.

3. Analyze the findings by the Aging Texas Well Action Committee and reach conclusions on each indicator to identify strengths as well as issues to be addressed in the subsequent planning.
4. Develop the Action Committee's recommendations for policy implementation.
5. (Optional) Use your data as a basis for application for community certification/recognition from the organizations listed in Chapter 4.



Planning for Future Successes – Building on Strengths – Closing Gaps

Once the assessment has been completed, the Action Committee should understand both the strengths and weaknesses need to be addressed in the planning. The work of the Action Committee then shifts to identifying ways to build on the strengths, prioritizing identified weaknesses, designing alternative solutions to address those weaknesses, and preparing recommendations for adoption and action. Recommended strategies, action steps, timelines, and an analysis of resources for plan implementation will be developed.

The result of the planning could be recommendations for new or expanded services, programs, and assistance or modifications to the infrastructure that will help older adults. Some long term strategies may be required to prepare for baby boomers aging-in-place.

As many stakeholder and constituency groups as practical should be involved in the process to ensure a strong foundation of community support for the plan and its subsequent implementation.

The plan should identify which of the stakeholders will be responsible for implementing specific parts of the plan. It should be endorsed by the Action Committee and then by your community's executive and legislative branches as appropriate.

It is important to keep in mind that this planning will likely take months or even years to complete. Plan your follow-up steps to the assessment appropriately. Continue to build on the momentum of the assessment process with your Action Committee. It is not necessary to wait for the entire plan to be completed before implementing parts of the plan. Identify key areas where momentum and energy exist and begin using that energy to start transforming your community.



Implementing your Aging Texas Well Plan

The final step in translating the plan into action is to move in the direction of building a community that is becoming more aging-friendly. Decision-makers – elected officials, civic leaders, key members of non-governmental organizations – must be engaged and authorize changes in policies, resource allocation and actions. For example, the mayor and city council may decide to adjust operating and capital budgets; planning commissions may recommend building and land-use changes; local businesses may re-focus their product and service offerings; regional agencies may opt to perform their functions in different ways; and other organizations and individuals may also modify their approaches. Keeping the Action Committee functioning is a way of institutionalizing a monitor function to ensure the plan is implemented and that the community-building process continues.

It is also important to keep in mind:

- **Policy must be translated into action.** The Action Committee's work is not complete until residents have realized the benefits from the policy changes. Stick with the process until recommendations have been properly implemented.
- **Public funds are not the only answer.** With limited public resources, communities must seek other creative solutions to obtain necessary funding. Consider grant opportunities, public/private partnerships, or collaborating with other community organizations to pool resources and funds to pursue common goals.
- **Public awareness is an important strategy.** Older residents cannot benefit from the supportive infrastructure unless they are aware of the services and resources available to them. Include outreach and a public awareness plan in the implementation of strategies.
- **Partners are a key to success.** It is evident building community capacity for an aging Texas requires that many elements of the community work together. Representatives from government, advocacy, public and private entities must work together to collectively support older adults and their families.
- **Planning processes are a means to seek change.** The process of conducting an Aging Texas Well Community Assessment and creating an Action Plan for the future can be challenging, resource consuming, and time intensive. However, this process allows community leaders to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the community infrastructure and collectively identify needed changes. The goals and objectives outlined in your community plan provide the structure and direction that serve to enhance successful outcomes.
- **Progress is incremental.** Evaluation is the key to successful community capacity building. At times, progress may seem slow. It is important to recognize and celebrate the achievement of small

goals as you take the steps necessary to build Aging Texas Well Friendly infrastructure.

- The result of this process will be individual communities, as well as a state, that will be more supportive of aging Texans.



Chapter Two: **Aging Texas Well Community Indicators**

What is an Aging Friendly Community?

In partnership with individuals and communities, an aging-friendly community engages in collaborative and building processes that involve assessment, conducts planning that anticipates and prepares for the aging of its citizens, and guarantees implementation. This results in policies and actions that maximize opportunities for successful aging across the life course.

Aging Texas Well means that aging Texans are:

- Active and engaged in their communities;
- Safely self-sufficient and independent;
- Physically, mentally and spiritually healthy;
- Living in safe and comfortable community-based settings; and
- Meeting basic food, shelter, medical and safety needs.

Strengthening residential life, approaches to mobility, and community life will support aging Texans and ensure they have a high quality of life as they age-in-place. A set of indicators has been developed to assess these broad domains.



What are ATW Community Indicators?

The ATW Community Indicators are designed to elicit information about the older adults in Texas communities and include how they live, what issues are important to them, and how the community organizes its services and physical environments in relation to their needs. By understanding these key aspects of Texas communities, each community's core values in relation to older adults can be better understood.

The ATW Indicators are organized around the key aspects of aging Texans' daily lives – demographics, residential, transportation, health care, mental health and substance abuse services, recreation and well-being, and community supports and services.

Each section of the community assessment includes multiple indicators. Contained within the assessment are six sections:

- Demographics
- Residential
- Transportation
- Health care, mental health and substance abuse services
- Recreation and well-being
- Community supports and services

Each indicator helps a community determine its strengths and gaps in services and supports. Some of the questions ask for objective, quantitative, measurable, or obtainable information. Others are more subjective or

qualitative and are designed to reveal a community's perception of an issue. Responses to these questions demonstrate the unique reality of each community across Texas.

A key member of the ATW Action Committee or a consultant can coordinate the gathering of the source materials needed to answer the objective questions. That individual should also work with the community and the overall Action Committee to organize the process to respond to the subjective questions as completely and accurately as possible, given the time and resources that are available in the community.

Several points of consideration as you move forward in the assessment process:

- There are many expressions used to describe persons 60 years of age and older. These adjectives include senior, senior citizen, elder, older person, and older adult, just to name a few. The indicators use the term "older adult" through the text except where the term "senior" or the newly coined "emerging elder" are more appropriate.
- The use of the word "community." The entities assessing the indicators may be a city, a group of cities, or a neighborhood. To encourage the broadest possible inclusion, the term "community" has been selected in the text of this assessment.
- At the end of each Indicator section, there is space to list conclusions reached about community strengths and gaps. These notes can be used to guide future planning and synergies.
- Consider contacting the Aging Texas Well Coordinator at the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) for guidance

and assistance throughout the assessment process. This assistance can take the form of;

- Technical assistance to local staff and volunteers to support and develop “best practices” for the assessment process;
- Guidance on aging-friendly activities and Aging Texas Well; and
- Placing community information and features on the Aging Texas Well website.



Chapter Three: **Community Assessment Worksheets**

The ATW Indicators worksheets are organized around the key aspects of aging Texans' daily lives – demographics, residential, transportation, health care, recreation and well-being, and community supports and services.

Each section of the community assessment includes multiple indicators. Within the assessment are six sections, and each section has a worksheet. Please click on the links below to access the worksheet forms from the DADS website. Samples of the worksheets are included here for information purposes only.

- [Demographics](#)
- [Residential](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Health care](#)
- [Recreation and well-being](#)
- [Community supports and services](#)

Each indicator helps a community determine its strengths and where there are gaps in services and supports. Some of the questions ask for objective, quantitative, measurable, or obtainable information. Others are more subjective or qualitative, designed to reveal a community's perception of an issue. Responses to these questions demonstrate the unique reality of each community across Texas.



Demographic Indicators Worksheet

Each community should provide basic demographic information. This information can be found at the U.S. Census Bureau website (www.census.gov). At the main page, locate the American FactFinder button on the left side of the page. Clicking this button will take you to a search box for fast access to information. Enter the name of your community and select the state of Texas. You will have access to much of the information you will need to complete this section of the assessment. **Note:** Use each section's summary sheet(s) to guide discussion of your community's strengths and gaps during the action committee's review and discussion. If you would like to request technical assistance or share your findings with the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), please contact the Aging Texas Well (ATW) Coordinator at 512-438-5471.

Provide the following population information for your community

Population: _____ Percentage of population 60 or older: _____ Male: _____

Median age: _____ Age 60 and older population: _____ Female: _____

Population breakdown

Age 45 to 54 _____ Age 55 to 59 _____ Age 60 to 64 _____

Age 65 to 74 _____ Age 75 to 84 _____ Age 85 and older _____

Poverty Rates

Percentage of those 60 and older _____ Percentage of all families _____

Grandparents raising grandchildren

Responsible for grandchildren _____

Less than one year _____ One or two years _____

Three or four years _____ Five or more years _____

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has determined that housing costs should not exceed 30 percent of household income.

Monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income with a mortgage

20.0% to 24.9% _____ 25.0% to 29.9% _____

30.0% to 34.9% _____ 35.0% or more _____

Gross rent as a percentage of household income

20.0% to 24.9% _____ 25.0% to 29.9% _____

30.0% to 34.9% _____ 35.0% or more _____



Residential Indicators Worksheet

The components of residential indicators encompass many physical aspects related to an older adult's home environment. The evaluation of housing is paramount, given that 80% of older adults surveyed by AARP¹ indicate they want to remain at home as long as possible – that is, to “age in place.” **Note:** While many of the issues in this community assessment are broader than a “yes” or “no” response, this worksheet is a starting point for the action committee to begin assessing the existence and adequacy of each item in your community.

Available Housing

1. Is each of these types of housing available within your community?

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Single-family homes..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Multifamily homes..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Accessory dwelling units..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Assisted living facilities..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Continuing care retirement communities..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Nursing homes..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

2. Is affordable housing available in each of these housing types?

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Single-family homes..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Multifamily homes..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Accessory dwelling units..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Assisted living facilities..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Continuing care retirement communities..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Nursing homes..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

3. Are affordable housing options located near basic shopping opportunities and/or near a regular transit route?..... Yes No

4. Are affordable housing options located near recreational opportunities?..... Yes No

5. Do the legal requirements in your community permit shared housing among a group of older residents?..... Yes No

6. Does your community permit accessory dwelling units in an area zoned as a single-family district?..... Yes No

7. Are there multifamily housing units that are accessible to people with varying or changing physical abilities?..... Yes No

¹ AARP, Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide, Public Policy Institute (2005)

8. Are there any special housing complexes or apartment buildings especially for older people in your community?..... Yes No

9. Do public transit routes serve areas of town that offer accessible and affordable housing?..... Yes No

10. Does the land-use plan or zoning ordinance allow multifamily housing to be developed in your community?..... Yes No

If so, in which locations in your community? _____

11. Are these locations within walking distance of basic shopping and recreational activities?..... Yes No

12. Are you aware of people who can't find appropriate housing within your community? For example, do affordable, accessible multifamily housing or assisted living facilities have long waiting lists?..... Yes No

If so, which types? _____

Property Tax Relief

13. Does your community offer any property tax reductions for homeowners over age 60 or 65?..... Yes No

14. If so, are such programs limited to those whose income is below a specific threshold? List threshold:

15. Is this program well publicized?..... Yes No

Repairing and Modifying Homes

16. Do lending agencies in your community offer reverse mortgages to homeowners over age 62?..... Yes No

17. Does your community offer a weatherization assistance program?.. Yes No

18. Does your community offer a financial assistance program for home modifications?..... Yes No

19. Does your community offer a financial assistance program for maintenance and repairs?..... Yes No

20. In addition to assistance with these activities, does your community have a program that helps older persons evaluate the need for home repair, modification, weatherization, etc.?..... Yes No

21. Does your community have a program to assist with routine or seasonal home maintenance chores (waste removal, yard work, gutter cleaning)?..... Yes No

22. The median sales price of a single-family home in your community is \$_____ for the year _____.

The median gross rent for a one bedroom apartment in your community is \$_____ for the year _____.

Housing Assistance Programs

Program	Available	Estimated number of older adult users
Colonia Self-Help Centers (SHC)		
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program		
Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)		
Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESGP)		
HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program		
Housing Tax Credit Program		
Housing Trust Fund Program		
Multifamily Housing Preservation Initiatives		
Statewide Housing Assistance Payments Program (Section 8)		
Texas "Bootstrap" Loan Program		
Texas First Time Homebuyer Program		
Texas Loan Star Program		
Texas Statewide Homebuyer Education Program (TSHEP)		
Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)		
Other		



Transportation Indicators Worksheet

Navigating around one's community, whether by walking, driving or public or private transportation, is the focus of the mobility indicators. According to the National Highway Safety Administration¹, changes in vision, physical strength and cognition as a person ages can affect one's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle or use public transportation systems. These indicators enable a community to determine if there are adequate transportation options for older adults.

Availability of Public Transportation

1. Does your community have a regularly scheduled bus or other public transportation service that picks up passengers at established stops? (If there is no regularly scheduled service, skip to question No. 12.)..... Yes No

2. If there are regularly scheduled bus or other services, are stops located within a 10-minute walk of residences in the sections of town with older residents?..... Yes No
Note any sections of the community that are not served.

3. Are the sidewalks that serve bus stops maintained? Is shade available? Are street crossings safe?..... Yes No

4. Does this system serve hospitals, clinics, shopping facilities and other routine destinations of interest to older persons? (Include a bus route brochure with application.)..... Yes No
If not, which key destinations are not served? _____

5. When is this service available?
(Every day? Monday through Friday only? Saturdays? Sundays? Holidays? Hours of service?)

6. Would other service times help older residents?..... Yes No
If so, which times? _____

7. Are schedules and route maps easy to read?..... Yes No

8. Are they readily available at locations throughout the community?..... Yes No

9. Is transportation information available in languages other than English?..... Yes No
If so, note which languages and whether this meets the language needs of the community.

¹ National Highway Safety Administration, Driving Safely While Aging Gracefully, online publication. Accessed on 2/17/2008 at: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Driving%20Safely%20Aging%20Web/

10. Are reduced public transportation fares available for older residents?..... Yes No

11. The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all fixed-route bus systems must be accessible to those with disabilities. How do those traveling in wheeled mobility devices and other types of mobility devices access vehicles in this system? What accommodations are made for individuals with vision or hearing impairments?

Dial-a-Ride

12. Does your community have a dial-a-ride service? (If not, skip to question No. 18)..... Yes No

13. Who is eligible to use the service? _____

14. What do riders have to do to participate? _____

15. What area does the service cover? _____

16. Does it offer door-to-door service for residents?..... Yes No

17. How far ahead do you need to call for service? _____

Specialized Services

18. Do local organizations (such as senior centers, churches or other groups) offer van service to meal sites, doctor's appointments, or special recreational excursions?..... Yes No

19. Is this service well advertised?..... Yes No

20. Who is eligible for this type of trip? _____

21. Do medical centers offer their own transportation service for dialysis and other regular medical needs?..... Yes No

Volunteer Services

22. Is there an organized volunteer driver program in your community? Yes No

23. For what purposes is that program available? _____

24. Is it available to all older residents?..... Yes No

25. How is it advertised? _____



Health Care, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Indicators

Health and mental health care are essential for maintaining independent living. To many people, access to health services means not only physical proximity but availability of services as well. These indicators enable a community to evaluate whether there is an adequate range of health care, mental health and substance abuse options available for older adults.

1. Does your community have a health clinic or hospital outpatient service that meets the needs of older residents?..... Yes No
2. Is that clinic available to people of varying incomes?..... Yes No
3. Is that clinic on a bus route, or is it available through a special service van?..... Yes No
4. Are there doctors and dentists who are particularly responsive to the needs of older residents?..... Yes No
5. Are there medical offices that are easily accessible by public transportation?..... Yes No
6. Do medical offices provide information about transportation alternatives for accessing their services?..... Yes No
7. Is access to health care a problem for those in your community with limited incomes?..... Yes No
8. Are home health care services available in the community?..... Yes No
9. Are home health care services readily available to those needing help to maintain independent living?..... Yes No
10. Are there adequate substance abuse services for older adults?..... Yes No
11. Are there adequate mental health services?..... Yes No
12. Are there adult day services and other facilities designed especially to respond to the needs of those with dementia or Alzheimer's disease?..... Yes No
13. Is adequate public information available about health care, mental health care, substance abuse services and Medicare benefits through discussion groups and opportunities to talk with professionals?..... Yes No
14. Does your community offer programs for preventative health care, such as flu shots, support groups, nutrition classes?..... Yes No



Recreation and Well-Being Indicators

Recreational and social activities as part of an active lifestyle are important to aging adults because they help them maintain health, independence and well-being. Some advocates promote the concept of active living, which focuses on staying physically active, while others go further in promoting active aging - a concept related to enhanced physical and mental activity as a means of promoting personal health. Regardless of the approach, communities should support recreational opportunities for citizens across the lifecycle.

1. Do the parks in your community offer walkways and benches in an atmosphere that is safe and inviting?..... Yes No
2. Do public parks provide trails and picnic facilities that are accessible to older people and people with disabilities?..... Yes No
3. Does your community have a senior center or other recreational center with a variety of active and passive recreational and leisure activities for older residents?..... Yes No
4. If your community does not have a dedicated senior center, do its recreation centers have space or programs designed for older people? Yes No
5. Is there a mall or other facility that offers comfortable indoor walking for exercise?..... Yes No
6. Does your community have a Texercise team or support the Texercise program?..... Yes No
7. Does your community have additional facilities for recreation, cultural events and intellectual stimulation in your community?..... Yes No

Note the additional facilities available.



Community Supports and Services Indicators

A livable community is a caring community. It is a community in which volunteers help each other and offer the kinds of support that allow residents to live independently. Volunteering and social engagement benefit not only those receiving support, but it also gives those who provide the service a sense of worth and belonging.

1. Does your community have an information hotline or a directory of services for older persons?..... Yes No
2. Are programs that are offered for the older adult population well publicized?..... Yes No
3. Does the community offer a Meals on Wheels program?..... Yes No
4. How do people in need get access to that service? _____
5. How do people find out about opportunities to volunteer? _____
6. Are there opportunities for congregate meals for older residents in the community?..... Yes No
7. Are they widely publicized?..... Yes No
8. Is there a reliable source of information about home care, cleaning services and maintenance services for older adults?..... Yes No
9. Where is this information available? _____
10. Is it widely publicized and updated regularly?..... Yes No
11. Does the community have specialized support groups for older residents and their caregivers?..... Yes No
12. How is information about those groups shared? _____
13. Are there easily accessible opportunities for informal sharing and social interaction that would appeal to older residents (for example, cafés, bookstores)?..... Yes No
14. How do new people in the community find out about these and get involved?

15. Is there a hotline or other communication system to help potential volunteers learn about the types of services needed?..... Yes No

- 16. Where is this information available? _____
- 17. Does the community offer intergenerational programs?..... Yes No
- 18. How do residents find out about them and get involved? _____
- 19. Is there a legal services program for older people in the community? Yes No
- 20. Is a listing of elder law attorneys available from the local or state bar association?..... Yes No
- 21. Does the senior center, library or other group in your community offer programs or seminars on legal issues of interest to older populations?..... Yes No



Chapter Four: Seeking Recognition for Your Community

Once communities complete their ATW Community assessment, they can apply for community certification or recognition from one of the organizations listed below. Though the organizations listed below are not affiliated with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) or Aging Texas Well (ATW), the certifications and recognitions they award build on the process of community assessment and the infrastructure developed to complete the assessment process. These organizations have their own rules and requirements for application which are available on their respective web sites.

Texas Department of Agriculture's Certified Retirement Community

Website: www.agri.state.tx.us

Process: A non-competitive certification process requiring communities to complete a checklist of requirements and develop a multi-year planning tool.

The Texas Certified Retirement Community Program is a new initiative from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to help rural Texas communities encourage retirees and potential retirees to make their homes in Texas communities that have met the criteria for certification by the department as a Texas Certified Retirement Community.

This program was created to promote Texas a retirement destination to retirees both inside and outside of the state, as well as encouraging tourism for the state. TDA offers a variety of tools on their website to create and market a certified retirement community, develop brochures, respond to direct inquires to certified communities, and showcase the benefits of retirement in Texas.

Environmental Protection Agency's Excellence in Building Healthy Communities in Active Aging

Website: <http://www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/awards/>

Process: A competitive award process that has two annual deadlines and requires cities to compete against other applicants for a limited number of awards.

The principal goal of the Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging Award program is to raise awareness across the nation about healthy synergies that can be achieved by communities combining Smart Growth and Active Aging Concepts.

Awards will be presented to communities that demonstrate the best and most inclusive overall approach to implementing smart growth and active aging at the neighborhood, tribe, municipality, county, and/or regional levels.

Two types of awards will be made – the Commitment Award and the Achievement Award. The Commitment Award recognizes communities that have developed and begun to initiate a specific plan to implement smart growth and active aging principles. The Achievement Award is given for overall excellence in building healthy communities for active aging.

APPENDICES

[Appendix 1](#)

Executive Order RP42 - April 1, 2005

[Appendix 2](#)

Aging Texas Well life areas

Appendix 1

Executive Order RP42 - April 1, 2005

Relating to the creation of the Aging Texas Well
advisory committee and plan.

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

Executive Department

Austin, Texas

April 1, 2005

WHEREAS, the State of Texas values older Texans and is committed to ensuring that all Texans age well with dignity, independence and opportunities to contribute to society; and

WHEREAS, Texas has 3.1 million people over the age of sixty, the fourth largest such population in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the elderly population represents an increasingly diverse and rapidly growing group as a result of increased longevity and the aging of the baby boom generation; and

WHEREAS, the Aging Texas Well initiative was first created in 1997 to encourage Texans to prepare individually for aging in all aspects of life and to ensure that state and local social services infrastructure facilitates aging well throughout the life span; and

WHEREAS, the changing demographics of the state will create the need for comprehensive policy changes in response to: growing numbers of informal caregivers for older Texans, rapidly increasing costs associated with caring

for those with chronic disease and disability, the need for providers with geriatric training, the aging of persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities and their caregivers, and increasing numbers of older Texans with transportation and mobility needs; and

WHEREAS, recent federal initiatives such as the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health and the Medicare Modernization Act will also impact the state's ability to appropriately serve this population; and

WHEREAS, these demographic trends will create new and different demands on state services across all functions of state government, and will introduce new opportunities for economic and community growth while driving health and long-term care costs inexorably higher unless Texans emphasize healthy lifestyles that include physical activity and good nutrition; and

WHEREAS, local communities have a critical role in preparing for the future demographic changes by building capacity to support an aging population; and

WHEREAS, the White House Conference on Aging, scheduled for October 2005, provides an opportunity for states to further review and amend aging policies in their state;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Perry, Governor of Texas, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas as the Chief Executive Officer, do hereby order the following:

Advisory Committee. The current Department of Aging and Disability Services Aging Resource Group shall be reconstituted as the Aging Texas

Well Advisory Committee to advise the Department and to make recommendations to state leadership on implementation of the Aging Texas Well initiative.

Aging Texas Well Plan. With the advice of the Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee, the Department of Aging and Disability Services shall create and disseminate a comprehensive and effective working plan to identify and discuss aging policy issues, guide state government readiness and promote increased community preparedness for an aging Texas. The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services shall biannually update the plan and shall evaluate and report on its implementation.

Review of State Policy. With the advice of the Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee, the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services shall review and/or comment on state policies, concentrating on current critical trends including but not limited to:

- Improving services and supports for informal caregivers;
- Promoting ways to increase evidence-based disability and disease prevention activities;
- Increasing the recruitment and retention of health care providers trained in geriatrics;
- Improving the provision of services and supports to persons with developmental disabilities and mental retardation who are aging;
- 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 persons; and

- Reviewing federal changes in health care policy, particularly the impact of the Medicare D prescription drug benefit, on the ability of older Texans to access medications.

State Agency Readiness. The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services shall lead a planning effort to ensure the readiness of all Texas state agencies to serve an aging population by identifying issues and current initiatives, future needs, action steps, and methods of performance evaluation. The effort shall advance an intergenerational approach to policies, programs, and services to address the needs of Texans across the lifespan.

Texercise. The Department of Aging and Disability Services, Department of State Health Services, Governor’s Advisory Council on Physical Fitness, and other appropriate state and community organizations shall continue to promote and expand the internationally-recognized Texercise program as a means to ensure healthy lifestyles in older Texans.

Local Community Preparedness. The Department of Aging and Disability Services shall work with public and private community partners, including state and local governments, to build capacity to serve a growing aging population through partnership development and action planning using formal community assessment processes.

Report of Compliance. The Aging Texas Well Plan shall serve as a report on implementation of this order.

Full Cooperation. All affected agencies and other public entities shall cooperate fully with the Department of Aging and Disability Services in the implementation of this order.

This executive order supersedes all previous orders in conflict or inconsistent with its terms and shall remain in effect and in full force until modified, amended, rescinded, or superseded by me or by a succeeding Governor.

Given under my hand this the 1st day of April, 2005.

RICK PERRY

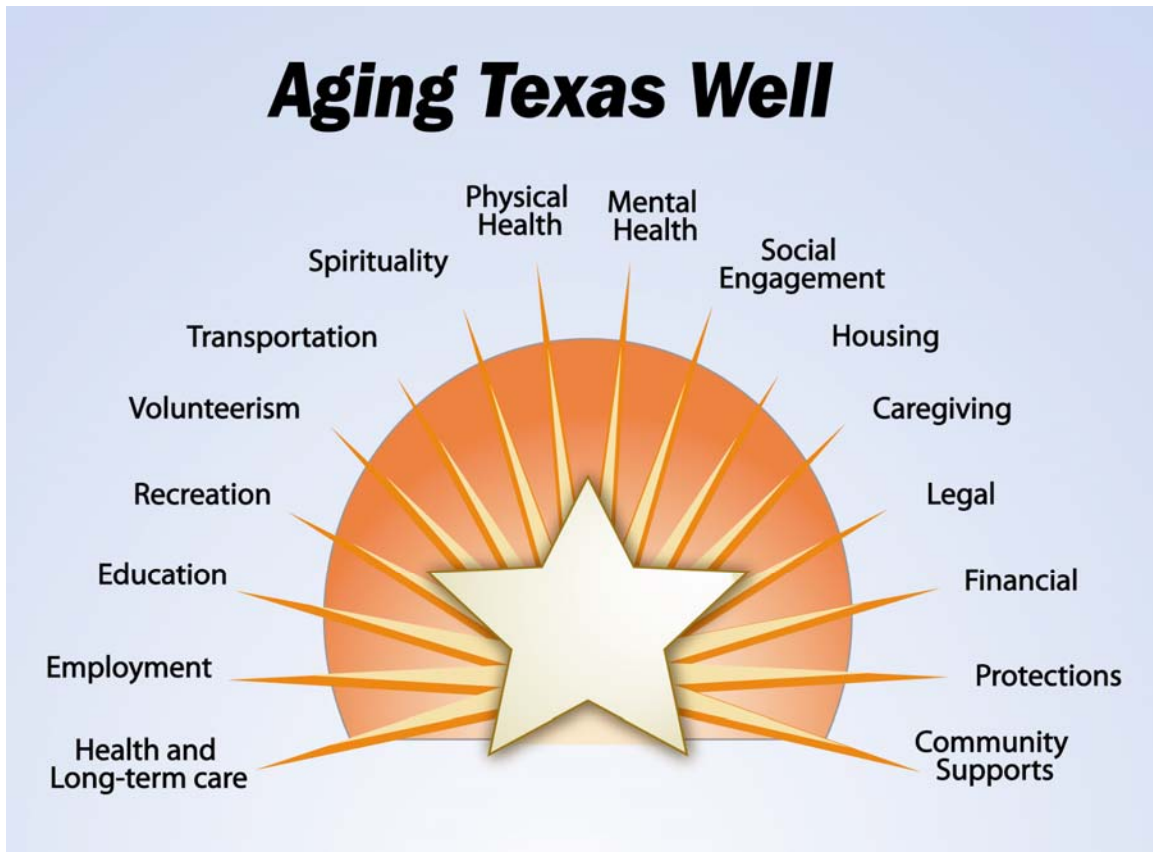
Governor

ATTESTED BY:

ROGER WILLIAMS

Secretary of State

Appendix 2



ATW aims for improvements in 16 life areas, some of which focus on individual preparedness and others focus on social infrastructure.

From the individual perspective, ATW addresses the areas of physical health, mental health, social engagement, spirituality, and financial and legal preparedness.

Social domains are quite varied, and include employment, protections, transportation, housing, volunteerism, community supports, and long-term services and supports, among others.

Taken together, these life areas empower aging Texans to take control of their lives, promote a positive aging experience, meet the challenge of obstacles with resources, and foster innovative solutions for generations of Texans to come.

www.AgingTexasWell.org

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