



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING
May 14, 2025 | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
1700 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
THE EXECUTIVE TOWER, 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging was convened on May 14, 2025, at the Conference Room 200, 1700 West Washington Street, notice duly given.

MEMBERS PRESENT (13)	
Theresa Spitz, Chair	Carol Brown, Vice Chair
Brendon Blake	Leslie Moore
Gwen Relf	Teri Kennedy
Steve Wagner	Tim Dunn
Dr. Nelly Clotter-Woods	Lisa O'Neill
Belinda Akes	Lela Alston
Rebecca Clayton (Ex-Officio)	
MEMBERS ABSENT (0)	
STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT (8)	
Belinda Ray, GOYFF	Katie Skvarce, Presenter
Chantal Hutchinson, GOYFF	Sophia Braham, Presenter
Ann Carver, GOYFF	Maria Chavez, Guest
Brandon Baxter (Agency Liaison)	Roxanne Thomas, Guest

CALL TO ORDER

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, called the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging (GACA) meeting to order at **10:00 AM**. **Thirteen** members and **eight** staff/guests were present.

OPENING REMARKS

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, welcomed everyone again. She informed members that May is Older Americans Month. The month serves as a reminder to acknowledge all the valuable contributions of older adults and to promote their well-being.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- With the quorum met, **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, requested a review of the **February 12, 2025**, meeting minutes as drafted.
- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, asked for a discussion of the minutes.
 - **Carol Brown, Vice Chair**, requested a revision on page 2 under the section on Fall Prevention. Specifically, the second sentence of the sub-paragraph about Steve Wagner should read: "He serves as Co-chair of the Arizona Falls Prevention Coalition Policy & Advocacy Committee alongside Carol Brown, Co-chair." The word "Fall" should be corrected to "Falls."

- **Carol Brown, Vice Chair**, requested a revision on page 3, the 6th and 7th sub-bullet points, correcting Brandon Baker to Brandon Baxter.
- **Carol Brown, Vice Chair**, requested an amendment on page 5 regarding the bullet point listing the updates shared by Brandon Baxter. The third sentence should read: "Projected funding indicates that some Area Agencies on Aging could not cover payroll after two weeks if the funding freeze takes effect or if federal funds are not made available in a timely fashion."
- **Brendon Blake** requested a revision on page 4. Dr. Jenkins is missing an E in her name after the K.
- **Rebecca Clayton** requested a revision on page 6. The date of February 2024 should be 2025.
- **Lisa O'Neil** stated that Teri's name is incorrect, with only one 'R'. The first page under 'Members Absent', which states 'Terri Kennedy', should be amended to 'Teri Kennedy.'
- **Steve Wagner** stated that on pages 3 and 4, delete "fall council" and insert "[AZ Falls Prevention Coalition](#)"; strike the word "coalition" when referring to police and fire; and replace the word "consistency" with "safety."
- **Dr. Nelly Clotter-Woods** stated that the headers of each page should reflect the meeting date of 2/12/2025.
- With no other amendments requested, **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, moved to approve the meeting minutes as amended.
 - **Carol Brown** moved to approve the meeting minutes as amended.
 - **Brendon Blake** seconded the motion.
- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, called a vote, and at **10:12 AM**, the motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended passed with no dissenting votes.

WELCOME NEW GACA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, welcomed and introduced **Belinda Ray**, the new GACA Executive Director.
- **Belinda Ray** presented her background information, including educational history and work experience.

FRAUD AWARENESS

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, welcomed and introduced **Sophia Braham**, the Director of Community Engagement and Special Projects with [Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes](#).
 - **Sophia Braham** served at the [Arizona Department of Education](#) under Superintendent Kathy Hoffman as a project manager, where she led committees, task forces, and advisory councils for the Superintendent of Public Instruction. **Sophia Braham** is a native of Phoenix. She has a bachelor's and a master's degree in journalism and mass communication from [Arizona State University](#). She volunteers at nonprofits across the valley. Her main passion is birth justice. She enjoys baking, reading, going to the movies, and spending time with loved ones in her free time.
- **Sophia Braham** discussed common scams, including Cryptocurrency ATM, government agency impersonation, romance, door-to-door solar, and AI voice cloning. As highlighted on a 60 Minutes "Targeting Scams" episode, there has been an increase in AI voice cloning scams. Scammers are now using sophisticated AI to replicate the voices of loved ones, particularly grandchildren, to solicit money through wire transfers, Bitcoin, or other untraceable methods.
- **Sophia Braham** provided tips on how to protect yourself from scammers, such as the following:
 - **Verify Unexpected Requests:** Do not act immediately if you receive a call, text, or email from a family member urgently asking for money. Even if the voice sounds

identical, hang up and call them back on a known phone number to confirm the request.

- o Establish a Family Code Word: Create a secret code word or phrase with your family members.
- **Sophia Braham** informed the council that her office received a grant in 2023 that funded new elder scam resources, including magnets that provide tips on avoiding smartphone and social media scams. Magnets can be requested through her office.
- **Sophia Braham** is available to conduct presentations on elder abuse scams in the community statewide. She also plans the [Attorney General's](#) town halls. A town hall will discuss elder scams in June 2025 in Douglas, AZ.
- The [Attorney General's](#) office has a resource for reporting elder abuse at seniorabuse@az.gov.
- **Steve Wagner** inquired about economic numbers related to scams
- **Sophia Braham** indicated cryptocurrency scams are in the millions (with individuals sometimes losing up to \$90,000 a day), and romance scams are also significant, costing millions annually.
- **Brendon Blake** shared that he heard of a nationwide figure of around \$189 million lost to cryptocurrency scams.
- **Rebecca Clayton** noted that underreporting due to embarrassment is an issue.
- **Sophia Braham** encouraged GACA members to join AZ Attorney General Kris Mayes' [Taskforce Against Senior Abuse](#) (TASA).

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION FACTS AND FIGURES REPORT

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, welcomed and introduced **Katie Skvarce**, the Director of Communications for the [Alzheimer's Association Southwest Chapter](#).
 - o Having an extensive public and media relations background, **Katie Skvarce** worked in the broadcast news business in Phoenix and is now a key contributor to the Alzheimer's Public Awareness Campaign. In 2022, she was named Research Champion for the Desert Southwest Chapter. She has done dozens of presentations across the state and in Southern Nevada on the latest breaking news in Alzheimer's research. Katie has a Bachelor of Journalism degree from the [University of Wisconsin](#). She's married with two daughters. She will celebrate her 8th anniversary at the [Alzheimer's Association Southwest Chapter](#).
- **Katie Skvarce** presented the [2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Report](#). The annual report explores the burden of Alzheimer's and dementia on individuals, caregivers, the government, and the nation's health care system.
- **Katie Skvarce** stated that 7.2 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's dementia. 151,500 Arizonans 65+ are living with Alzheimer's disease. 240,000 Arizonans are providing unpaid dementia care. Arizona will need a 190% increase in geriatricians to meet the 2025 demand.
- **Katie Skvarce** shared that almost two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's are women. Older Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are disproportionately more likely than older non-Hispanic whites to have Alzheimer's or other dementias. Population-based studies for different population groups are needed.
- **Katie Skvarce** presented that Yuma County has the highest incidence of Alzheimer's in Arizona. Santa Cruz and Greenlee Counties all have a higher prevalence of the disease. Southwest has one of the fastest growth rates for Alzheimer's disease in the country. Alzheimer's is the sixth-leading cause of death for Americans 65+. Between 2000 and 2022, Alzheimer's Deaths Increased by 142%.
- **Katie Skvarce** stated there is no cure, but there are treatments to slow the progression of the disease. The treatments can be expensive, presenting issues with accessibility and equity. The hope is that new prescription medications will help lower costs and make treatment more accessible. To help lower risk factors and minimize the disease's

transformation, engaging in a healthy lifestyle such as increased exercise, dietary changes, and early detection is recommended.

STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

- **Carol Brown, Vice Chair**, encouraged members to get involved and participate in the strategic planning session scheduled for Monday, June 23, 2025, from 10 AM to 1 PM at [Arizona Connected Working Space](#) (ADOA), 1400 West Washington Street. Lunch will be provided.

WORKGROUP REPORTS

- Educational Workgroup
 - **Leslie Moore** shared that the workgroup has done several educational series this fiscal year. The group's focus is on dispelling the Myths of Aging Adults. The educational workgroup presented a series at the 2025 Caregiver Summit, the Caring for the Caregiver event hosted by [AllThrive365](#), and the [Arizona Senior Center Association](#) conference.
 - **Leslie Moore** encouraged members to attend the strategic planning meeting in June, as this would be a good opportunity to brainstorm new ideas and determine which counties and communities to focus on.

ALZHEIMER'S COMMITTEE REPORT

- **Brendon Blake** informed the council that the April meeting welcomed many new members, broadening the voices involved in data collection and discussion. The group reviewed its current status and explored the mission and vision for moving forward, with suggestions for refining those statements.
- **Brendon Blake** confirmed that a virtual option is available. The next meeting is May 30, 2025, from 9 AM - 11 AM at the Executive Tower at 1700 W Washington St., Phoenix, AZ 85007, conference Room #104. A set meeting schedule will be established for future meetings.
- **Leslie Moore** inquired about contributing statistics to the subcommittee.
- **Brendon Blake** encouraged the contribution of statistics and emphasized the goal of unifying information from various sources, with plans to eventually collaborate with community entities.

VULNERABLE ADULTS STUDY COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT

- **Brendon Blake** is a liaison to the Elderly and Physically Disabled (EPD) group. He is leading a study committee focused on addressing abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals with developmental disabilities and older adults. The EPD group is developing ten recommendations to present to the full committee.
- A key objective of this initiative is to establish efficient methods within ADHS for disseminating vital information to stakeholders. A writing group, combining the EPD's technical expertise with legal insights on developmental disabilities, is collaborating to achieve this goal. Additionally, initial discussions regarding guardianship are underway, with a target completion date of June 2025.
- **Tim Dunn** commended Brendon's leadership, noting his crucial role in advancing these critical conversations.

LIAISON UPDATES

DIVISION OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES (DAAS)

- **Rebecca Clayton** wanted to recognize that Governor Hobbs has proclaimed May as Older Americans Month in Arizona.

- **Rebecca Clayton** presented that the State Plan on Aging is being developed by the [Division of Aging and Adult Services](#) (APS) with the assistance of consulting agency [Myers and Stauffer](#). Although typically a five-year plan, an interim two-year plan will be from October 2026 through September 2028.
- **Rebecca Clayton** shared that this year's [Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference](#) will occur on June 16, 2025, and registration is still open.
- The [Long-Term Care Ombudsman program](#) has moved back to [DES](#) and is now housed within the Director's Office of Community Engagement. A timeline for the position is expected by early June.
- Arizona APS was selected to present at the national APS conference on our Advanced Investigations unit, which focuses on repeat perpetrators and strongly partners with the Attorney General's Elder Affairs unit.
- Arizona APS presented at the inaugural Tribal Elder Justice Summit on March 27-28, 2026. APS presented an overview of how APS partners with Arizona Tribes and Territories.
- The final piece of [HB2764](#) regarding the use of the APS registry took effect on March 31, 2025.

ARIZONA'S AREA AGENCIES ON AGING (Az Aging)

- **Brandon Baxter** presented potential federal cuts to the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) and the [Administration for Children and Families](#) (ACF) that could result in program restructuring.
- **Brandon Baxter** stated [AZAging](#) continues to be concerned about the likelihood of potential cuts and elimination of key services for older adults provided by Area Agencies on Aging statewide. In addition to these cuts directly to Area Agencies on Aging, we continue to be concerned about the potential cuts to community action agencies, various headstart programs, and [LIHEAP](#), which help fund administrative structures at some of our Area Agencies on Aging. Over twenty full-time employee positions with Area Agencies on Aging will be eliminated statewide in preparation for budget cuts.
- **Brandon Baxter** presented regarding the state budget. AZAging requests a continuation of previously appropriated one-time funding from the State Legislature for home and community-based services and housing assistance.
- **Brandon Baxter** stated AZAging continues to monitor the proposed cuts to the Medicaid program. Over 60% of older Arizonans rely on Medicaid to pay for long-term care and supportive services that allow them to remain in their homes and community with dignity and respect through the [Arizona Long-Term Care System](#) (ALTCS).
- **Brandon Baxter** announced Robert Ojeda as the new Area Agency on Aging director at the Pima Council on Aging.
- **Brandon Baxter** provided regional updates for the Area Agency on Aging.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, announced that June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, highlighted by "[The Longest Day](#)" event. Governor Hobbs has proclaimed this awareness month, and council members will be informed if a photo opportunity arises.
- **Brendon Blake** noted that council members could contact him with questions about the signed cryptocurrency legislation.
- **Carol Brown** stated that GOYFF has approved the purchase of rack cards and name tags for council members when they are representing GACA.
- **Belinda Akes** announced that May is Older Americans' Month. A memory care café in Casa Grande (Central Arizona) will serve BBQ, and a musician named Bob Villa will perform on Monday, May 19, 2025.

- **Lisa O'Neil** announced the establishment of a new helpline called [AgriStress Helpline](#), which is specifically designed to help farmers, ranchers, forestry professionals, and other agricultural community members in rural areas.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, announced future meeting dates.
 - August 13, 2025
 - November 12, 2025

ADJOURN

- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - **Belinda Akes** moved to adjourn the Council meeting.
 - **Gwen Relf** seconded the motion.
- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, asked if further discussion was needed, but no members did.
- **Theresa Spitz, Chair**, called for a vote. At 11:51 AM, the motion to adjourn the meeting passed with no dissenting votes.

Dated May 15, 2025
Governor's Advisory Council on Aging
Respectfully Submitted By:
Belinda Ray
Executive Director, GOYFF