



**TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION**

**FINAL DRAFT: AGING TEXAS WELL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ATWAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, May 5, 2021  
9:00 a.m.**

**TEAMS Live Event Meeting**

Table 1: Aging Texas Well AC member attendance at Wednesday, May 5, 2021 meeting.

<b>MEMBER NAME</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>MEMBER NAME</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Bordie, Patricia	X		Wang, Jing	X	
Crocker, Andrew	X				
Flores, Richard	X				
Ghesani, Aftab	X				
Gray, Anna	X				
Jackson, Patrick	X				
Johnson, Larry	X				
Leo, Lucia	X		Vacant (ex-officio)		
Mermelstein, Tammy	X		Vacant (ex-officio)		
Pittman, Greg	X		Taylor, Lynda (ex-officio)	X	

Yes: Indicates attended the meeting

No: Indicates did not attend the meeting

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome and opening remarks**

The Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Ms. Tammy Mermelstein, Madam Vice-Chair, who presided over the meeting.

Mr. Eric Owens, Facilitator, Advisory Committee Coordination Office, Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), announced that the meeting was being conducted via a Teams Live Events virtual platform in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, conducted roll call, and noted that a quorum was present for the meeting. Table 1 notes committee members' attendance at the meeting.

**Agenda Item 2: Approve February 3, 2021, meeting minutes**

Ms. Tammy Mermelstein, Madam Vice-Chair, called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2021 meeting with edits. Ms. Olivia Burns, ATWAC Program Liaison, announced the edits submitted by Ms. Lynda Taylor. Ms. Burns will make the necessary edits.

## **Motion:**

Mr. Aftab Ghesani moved to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2021 meeting as amended. Mr. Richard Flores seconded the motion. The Committee members unanimously approved the minutes by a roll call vote conducted by Mr. Owens, with ten approves, no disapproves, and one abstention by Dr. Jing Wang, who was not a member during the February 3, 2021 meeting.

## **Agenda Item 3: Special Topic: Transitions and Decisions**

Dr. Zohray Talib, MD and Saleena Jafry, provided a presentation on "The Aga Khan Council for the USA Social Welfare Board" and referenced a PowerPoint entitled "Aging Gracefully: An Initiative of the Aga Khan Council for the US."

## **Agenda Item 4: Division Updates**

- a. Community Access, Access and Eligibility Services:** Wes Yeager, Office of Aging and Disability Resource Centers, shared updates regarding initiatives within the Community Access Division. Mr. Yeager shared that the local Aging and Disability Resource Centers are addressing COVID-19 vaccine access through the CARES Act funding. He also shared progress on enhancements to the Lifespan Respite Program. Input on the Take Time Texas website was recently sought via an online survey and the project's next steps are coordinating with an institution of higher learning to conduct an assessment on caregiver needs. Mr. Yeager also shared updates on the Foster Grandparent Program. HHSC adjusted operations during the pandemic to provide other communication methods for staying connected, including a virtual pen pal program, mailing out information packets via snail mail, and regular check-in phone calls. Additionally, 200 smart tablets are set to be distributed to volunteers in early June.
- b. Aging Services Coordination:** Holly Riley, Director, provided an overview on two bills her office is tracking during the legislative session: SB 1917, which would direct HHSC to conduct an awareness campaign on services for older adults with vision loss; and HB 4572, which directs HHSC to establish a new statewide interagency aging services coordinating council. Ms. Riley announced the Civil Monetary Penalty grant on Enhancing Quality of Life through Volunteerism and work with 10 Central Texas nursing facilities is ending this month. The project created new resources for to support volunteers in nursing facilities. Additionally, Ms. Riley shared updates on the 22-23 Aging Texas Well Strategic Plan and survey. The report is due to the Governor's office and legislature on August 31, 2021. The survey deadline was extended through May 15.

## **Agenda Item 5: Committee Operations:**

- a. Chair/Vice Chair update: Presiding officer provides updates to members on future committee operations:** Ms. Tammy Mermelstein, Madam Vice-Chair, provided the following updates regarding committee operations:
  - Presiding Officer – Ms. Mermelstein reminded members that the Chair position was currently vacant and, as the Vice Chair, she is currently serving as presiding officer until elections for Chair can be held.

- Officer Elections – Ms. Mermelstein announced that elections for Chair would take place during the August quarterly meeting and explained the nomination process.

**b. Strategic Planning sub-committee Updates:** Mr. Richard Flores, Sub-committee Chair, provided the following updates:

- Strategic Planning Subcommittee – Mr. Flores provided an overview of the subcommittee work that has divided into three groups to draft position statements on the following focus areas:
  - i. Community Resources
  - ii. Health and Long-term Care
  - iii. Caregiving

Mr. Flores reminded members of a guiding document previously provided to help the groups complete their tasks and maintain deadlines. The final results will be included in the committee's section of the 22-23 Aging Texas Well Strategic Plan.

**c. Member Updates: Members provide updates from their respective organizations:**

Members shared the following updates on relevant activities outside of committee business:

- **Patty Bordie:** Ms. Bordie shared that the Area Agencies on Aging are currently focusing on the vaccination efforts and the reopening processes for various programs, including senior centers, congregate meal sites, and transportation services. She also noted that AAAs are hosting a variety of events to celebrate Older Americans Month.
- **Andy Crocker:** Mr. Crocker shared that Texas AgriLife is focusing on processes for returning to in-person programming and provided updates on current projects, including a Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities grant and a project providing support for military caregivers.
- **Richard Flores:** Mr. Flores shared that the Aging and Disability Resource Centers are working on vaccine-related efforts, including a focus on community education, addressing hesitancy in rural and colonia communities, and reaching those who are homebound or disabled.
- **Aftab Ghesani:** Mr. Ghesani shared that he participated on recent a panel on efforts to make Houston a dementia-friendly city.
- **Anna Gray:** Ms. Gray shared that United Healthcare is focusing strategies to provide in-person services during the pandemic. She noted that this has posed challenges for health plan members who had to relocate during the pandemic. She noted that virtual services are still being provided and that there has been an increase in members applying to take advantage of extended benefits.
- **Patrick Jackson:** Mr. Jackson shared he has been focusing on vaccination efforts. He also noted that homelessness among older adults in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is a growing issue.
- **Larry Johnson:** Mr. Johnson shared updates from an HHSC workgroup he participates in: Vision Loss in Older Adults. The workgroup has divided into the following three subgroups:
  - i. Training – This group is working to develop training for home health providers, long-term care facility staff, and others who serve older adults that may be experiencing vision loss.

- ii. Awareness – This group is focusing on strategies for building awareness of services and supports available for older adults with vision loss.
- iii. Collaboration – This group is working on strategies to increase collaboration between various service providers and professionals that work with older adults, including a potential Low Vision Summit for leaders in various fields.
- **Lucia Leo:** As a caregiver, Ms. Leo shared she has been focusing helping her mother get vaccinated, as well as dealing with ongoing symptoms from the virus (e.g. fatigue, memory loss and balance issues). Ms. Leo also shared updates from her role as Veterans Affairs employee. She noted that vaccinations are steadily increasing and that more people are back onsite for services, though virtual connections are still being encouraged.
- **Greg Pittman:** Mr. Pittman shared that Meals on Wheels has been focusing on strategies for reaching older adults in rural areas, including ways to increase Internet options. His organization has been partnering with Amazon to use an Alexa-like device for virtual check-ins. He also shared he has been serving on the Governor’s Broadband Development Council that is working to identify ways to expand broadband access to Texans across the state.
- **Lynda Taylor:** Ms. Taylor shared that the next webinar for the Texas Alzheimer’s State Plan will be on June 2, 2021 at 10am.
- **Dr. Jing Wang:** Dr. Wang shared she has been working on a new grant focusing on the use of sleep and glucose monitors to assist early Alzheimer’s patients and their caregivers.
- **Tammy Mermelstein:** Ms. Mermelstein shared she has been working to promote the Collaboratory for Aging Resources and Education’s new services, as the organization recently launched. She also shared she is preparing for the second year of the Adopt-a-Grandparent program that pairs college students with older adults to regularly meet and learn from each other. Additionally, Ms. Mermelstein noted she is leading a Student Caregiver Initiative at University of Houston that will email a survey on caregiver topics campus-wide to identify students in caregiver roles and share resources that may help them.

**Agenda Item 6: Public Comment:**

No public comment was offered.

**Agenda Item 6: Review of action and agenda items for next meeting and wrap-up**

- Ms. Burns reminded everyone that the survey to inform the 22-23 Aging Texas Well Strategic Plan will be open until 5/15 and that she will re-share the links with the members.
- Ms. Tammy Mermelstein, Vice Chair, announced that the next ATWAC meeting is on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.
- With no further business, Ms. Mermelstein adjourned the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

Below is the link to the archived video of the May 5, 2021 Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee meeting that will be available for viewing approximately two years from date of meeting. <https://texashhsc.swagit.com/play/05052021-1103/6/>