
—TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEMORANDUM—

Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) – Access and Intake Division

TITLE:	Electronic Help Desk Procedures	NUMBER:	AAA-TA 500
SECTION:	Area Agencies on Aging	APPROVAL:	Aimee Mick for Betty Ford
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RELEVANT CITATIONS:	NA		
DISTRIBUTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Director <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Director <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fiscal Director <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AAA Section Staff		

The Department is revising the technical assistance memorandum (TA) to reflect a change in the response time from 24 to 48 hours. The 48 hour response time does not include times when DADS is closed such as weekends, holidays, and weather related events.

The Help Desk was established by the Department to provide a single source for questions related to the Older Americans Act, rule and policy interpretations, and best practices, and requests for extensions for the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). This was done to offer an avenue by which relevant and consistent information can be distributed throughout the aging network. Additionally, the Help Desk provides the AAAs and the Department with a source of written documentation for rule and policy interpretation, best practices and requests for extensions of time.

AAAs should submit all Fiscal, Program, and Performance questions to the Help Desk. Relevant subject matter experts (SME) answer questions of a routine nature. The SME may initiate a telephone or email discussion with an AAA to narrow the focus of an issue to the pertinent questions. AAAs may request a telephone consultation or technical assistance by sending an email to the Help Desk. The Help Desk can coordinate the scheduling of the telephone consultation with the SME. All answers to Help Desk related questions and summary of telephone consultations or technical assistance will be provided through the Help Desk.

AAAs are discouraged from sending courtesy copies of Help Desk inquiries to AAA Section staff or from contacting the AAA Section Staff directly with their inquiries. When an email that should be handled via the Help Desk is sent directly to a SME, the SME will forward the email to the Help Desk with a courtesy email to the inquirer advising the email was forwarded to the Help Desk for processing.

The Help Desk is staffed 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays and weather related emergencies when the agency is officially closed. Each morning the Technical Support Coordinator begins a review of inquiries received in the help mailbox. Inquiries are answered in the following order:

1. Urgent inquiries requiring an immediate response when marked urgent in the subject line.
2. Requests for extension of time when request for extension is indicated in the subject line.
3. Routine inquiries that have standardized responses, require research or interagency consultation. Inquiries in this category will be handled using the first in, first out method.

Note: Any inquires received after 4:30 p.m. will be processed the next business day.

Urgent inquiries and requests for extension of time are answered within four hours. Routine inquiries and inquiries requiring research or interagency consultation are answered within 48 hours unless additional time is necessary to clarify an inquiry. In this case, a notice will be sent from the Help Desk to the sender indicating additional time is necessary to research and answer the inquiry.

In addition to responding to the sender, questions relevant to the Aging Network will be stripped of AAA identifiers and the questions and responses will be distributed to AAA Directors and appropriate staff members. Frequently asked questions and hot topic issues will be selected for inclusion in the "Tell All" electronic communication.

Email Standards

The volume of emails processed by the Help Desk each quarter led the AAA section to initiate standards for email originating from the AAA section. These standards are intended to increase Help Desk efficiency, improve consistency of responses and to increase customer satisfaction.

AAAs are encouraged to use these standards when generating email to DADS.

Email will be formatted in HTML using the standard editor in Microsoft Outlook. Use of external editors (i.e. Microsoft Word) to compose or edit email has been discontinued except in limited, justified special circumstances. Email will be formatted in Arial or Tahoma 12 point, regular font. These standards are in line with those established in the DADS E-mail Guide.

The use of special formatting, bullets, symbols, or characters not supported by the Outlook editor is discontinued, as is the use of italicized font. Italicized text may be used to emphasize a word or phrase or to denote the title of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, plays, and other works individually produced or publicized. The use of quotations or underlining may be used in place of italics.

The use of email stationary, backgrounds or emoticons are not allowed.

Questions relating to this document should be directed to the help mailbox at T3Ahelp@dads.state.tx.us.