**Why Texas Talks**

Aging presents new opportunities and experiences. Many older adults are staying active by pursuing second and third careers or passions they’ve cultivated through volunteering or traveling. However, we don’t think to share with our loved ones our preferences for our future, what that might look like and how that might impact them.

In Texas, over 3 million adults are older than 65 years old, and this population is expected to grow to 6 million by 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1) The influx of older adults impacts all Texans.

Texas Talks encourages organizations and its employees to pro-actively talk about and prepare for age-related needs with loved ones every year during November and December. There are 70 percent of families that have their first conversation about aging needs and issues after a health care emergency, such as a fall or a stroke.[[2]](#footnote-2) It can be difficult to discuss needs and preferences with a loved one in moments of crisis.

**Why Participate in the Texas Talks?**

**Older Adults in the Workforce**

Older adults are remaining in the workforce longer than ever before, bringing new aging issues to the workplace. Texas Talks can help your employees begin preparing for their own age-related needs, and begin age-related conversations and preparations with their older loved ones.

The following statistics were compiled by Texas Health and Human Services:

* Over 1.35 million Texans age 60 or older are employed, and over 50 percent of all Texans in that age group are working.
* Over 80 percent of working Texans between the ages of 60-64 are working more than 30 hours a week.
* Over 10 percent of Texans between the ages of 75-79 are still working.

**Caregiving in the Workforce**

Caregivers are paid employees (formal) or family members and friends (informal) who help an older adult or person with disabilities with their daily living activities. Many caregivers express that caregiving is a rewarding experience. But if unprepared for the role, caregiving can cause mental and physical stress, even absenteeism and loss of productivity at work.

Fortunately, there are government services and supports that can provide help to caregivers and their loved ones. Empowering employees with facts about caregiving and aging issues might help reduce stress, costs and some of the burdens of caregiving.

At some point, most people will be an informal caregiver for a loved one.

* 42 percent of U.S. workers have provided care for an older adult relative or friend in the past five years.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* 20 percent of female U.S. workers are family caregivers,[[4]](#footnote-4) and caregiving reduces paid work hours for middle-aged women by about 41 percent.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* Caregiving-related workday interruptions and absenteeism cost about $25.2 billion to the burden borne by businesses from lost productivity each year.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Instructions for Texas Talks**

The Texas Talks campaign is quick and easy to use — it only takes four steps. Texas Talks empowers employees and their families to begin making preparations around aging issues and topics, so they are more prepared for the next chapter.

1. **Open the template emails.** Open the four email templates (included in toolkit) and fill in the editable information with your organization’s relevant details.
2. **Download and print the Texas Talks flyers**. Post the flyers in prominent, high traffic areas (such as breakrooms) to bring attention to the campaign.
3. **Send out the template materials**. HHS has provided four template emails, though you are free to adapt the messages into a different format like a company newsletter if it improves reach to employees and clients. You can also develop your own timeline, although it is recommended to not send all the materials at one time. Staggering the messages will allow people time to process the information before moving on to the next topic. HHS suggests you wait two weeks between materials. Organizations using Texas Talks are asked to send template materials during November and December because there is a better chance families will have opportunities throughout the holidays to discuss aging needs and expectations. HHS suggests the following timeline:
   * 1. Email 1 – Nov. 4 – Nov. 10
     2. Email 2 – Nov. 18 – Nov. 24
     3. Email 3 – Dec. 2 – Dec. 8
     4. Email 4 – Dec. 16 – Dec. 22
4. **Complete the survey**. HHS will send a quick survey on Jan. 14 to gather your feedback. We appreciate your feedback. It will help us improve the 2019 Texas Talks campaign.

**Template Emails**

**Subject line:** Texas Talks #1: Collecting and Storing Personal Information

**Body:** ***[name of organization]*** is partnering with the Texas Health and Human Services office of Aging Service Coordination to bring you Texas Talks. During November and December, you will receive four emails on four different topics and conversation points about aging. Aging Services Coordination encourages you to have conversations about aging and plan for the future with older loved ones in your life. Having these conversations are important to [aging and living well](https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/age-well-live-well).

Every day in the U.S. about 10,000 adults turn 65 years old.[[7]](#footnote-7) In Texas, over 3 million adults are over the age of 65,[[8]](#footnote-8) and that number is growing fast. Aging is a normal part of life, but something we often overlook talking about. There are 70 percent of families that have their first age-related conversation after a health emergency, such as a fall or a stroke.[[9]](#footnote-9) To help you and your loved ones age well, have these conversations before there is an emergency.

The easiest way to begin conversations about aging is to start gradually with an approachable topic. Consider discussing where your loved one stores personal information (for example, medical and financial records) in case of an emergency, and if they are comfortable sharing this information with you or another family member or friend of their choice. This can be a vulnerable subject, so don’t be offended if they tell you they would rather share personal information with another family member.

Some things to include in this conversation include:

* Trust and comfort. Do they feel comfortable sharing their personal information with someone in particular, perhaps a certain family member? When would they feel comfortable sharing this information? Also, do they want the same person making financial and health decisions for them, or do they want different people handling different components of their life in case of an accident?
* Basic information. What is their date of birth, social security number and driver’s license number? Who is their emergency contact?
* Medical history. Who are their physicians and how can they be contacted? What medications are they taking?

To learn more about this topic, as well as facts about talking with older loved ones, go to <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/age-well-live-well/texas-talks>. This website provides further guidance on all of the 2018 Texas Talks subjects and materials. Explore all the Texas Talks materials, however so no one is overwhelmed, we encourage you to have conversations about one aging topic at a time.

**Subject Line:** Texas Talks #2: Social Engagement

**Body:** Staying engagedand connected within our communityis important to aging and living well; however, it often gets lost in our busy schedules. Finding a new activity or returning to a loved activity can give the older adult in your life something to be excited about, and provide them with new opportunities to engage with other community members. Many older adults express they are lonely, which is why it is so important for older adults to engage with their community. There are 19 percent of Americans age 62–91 who are lonely, and loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26 percent. [[10]](#footnote-10) Fortunately, the good news is being socially connected can help reduce lonlieness and improve quality of life.

When talking with older adult family members and friends about social engagement, include asking:

* What do they enjoy doing?
* Is there something they used to enjoy doing they don’t do anymore?
  + If they have experienced barriers to the activity, brainstorm with them how you both can adapt the activities so they can start again.
* What are some new activities they might be interested in trying?
* Is there a class or group at the local library, community center or faith community they might like to go to?

To learn more about this topic, as well as information about talking with older loved ones, go to <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/age-well-live-well/texas-talks>. This website provides further guidance on all of the 2018 Texas Talks subject and materials. Explore all the Texas Talks materials, however so no one is overwhelmed, we encourage you to have conversations about one aging topic at a time.

**Subject Line:** Texas Talks #3: Physical Health

**Body:** Engaging in regular physical activity is important for aging and living well. Regular physical activity can help older adults remain independent and able to complete routine daily living activies (for example, grocery shopping, cooking, bathing, dressing). Physical activity also helps reduce the risk of developing a chronic condition (for example, diabetes, cardio vascular diseases). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends older adults get at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week; however, 80 percent of adults do not meet this recommendation. The good news is there are many things that can be done to create a healthy lifestyle.

When talking with your older adult family members and friends about physical health, be sure to ask:

* What type of physical activity do they participate in?
* What kinds of physical activity do they enjoy doing?
* Do they go to a senior or community center?
  + If not, do they want to go?
* Are there any new activities they want to try?

If your older adult family members and friends aren’t exercising, consider suggesting Texercise. Texercise is a free health initiative of Texas Health and Human Services. Through its educational and motivational resources, Texercise can help older Texans improve their health and quality of life – helping ensure they age and live well. You can order a [Texercise handbook](https://www.dads.state.tx.us/texercise/orderform.cfm) for them and show them Texercise videos to work out with.

To learn more about this topic, as well as information about talking with older loved ones, go to <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/age-well-live-well/texas-talks>. This website provides further guidance on all of the 2018 Texas Talks subject and materials. Explore all the Texas Talks materials, however so no one is overwhelmed, we encourage you to have conversations about one aging topic at a time.

**Subject Line:** Texas Talks #4: Caregiving

**Body:** Caregivers can be paid employees (formal) or family members and friends (informal) who help an older adult perform daily, normal activities, like cooking dinner or getting dressed. There are 20 percent of employees between the ages 35-64 who are currently caring for non-youth family member, and 50 percent of U.S. workers expect to provide care for an older adult in the next five years. Most adults (one in four) will be a caregiver at some point in their life.[[11]](#footnote-11) While caregiving can be a highly rewarding experience, it can create some difficult questions for informal caregivers. Who is going to take care of my loved one while I am at work? How much does it cost to hire a home care attendent? I am feeling stressed out – are there organizations and programs that can help?

Talking about caregiving can have some delicate issues come up – such as finances, personal wishes and role reversals. As with all conversations about aging, approach this topic with sensitivity and understanding. Don’t try to figure out the specifics right away, rather this is the time to lay the groundwork for future coversations. You can create tentative action plans and start investigating the types of available resources. Working on these openly and honestly with your loved one will create the necessary trust and understanding.

Things to consider discussing include:

* What are the resources, and who can we go to for help with caregiving?
* How much does it cost to hire a caregiver?
* Who is going to oversee the formal or informal caregiving?
* What types of assistance is available to me as a caregiver at my worksite (for example, time off, flexible scheduling, respite services, educational programs, etc.)

To learn more about this topic, as well as information about talking with older loved ones, go to <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/age-well-live-well/texas-talks>. This website provides further guidance on all of the 2018 Texas Talks subject and materials. Explore all the Texas Talks materials, however so no one is overwhelmed, we encourage you to have conversations about one aging topic at

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