**HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Health Education Programs provided by the Area Agency on Aging are classes that are evidence-based.  Since 2003, the aging services network has been steadily moving towards wider implementation of disease prevention and health promotion programs that are based on scientific evidence and demonstrated to improve the health of older adults.

These programs have been rigorously tested in controlled settings, proven effective, and translated into practical models that are widely available to the public in a community setting. Each of the program’s evaluations were subjected to the gold standards of the research community.  Therefore, it is important to take note of when an individual attends any of these programs, they can be confident they are participating in a program that works and is highly likely to improve their health and well-being.

**ADVANTAGES OF EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS**

Implementing an evidence-based program is widely considered a “best practice” strategy for community health promotion. Evidence-based programs can add value in many ways.

* Positively impacting the health of the program participants.
* Class facilitators can concentrate their efforts on program delivery rather than program development.
* Older adults want to invest their time in programs that have been proven to work.
* The demonstrated outcomes of evidence-based programs are appealing to individuals of the community and potential partners.

**THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS ARE OFFERED BY THE AAA:**

1. A Matter of Balance – a falls prevention program that provides practical strategies to manage fear of falling or falls.
2. Caregiver Stress Busting – a program that provides techniques and strategies to support caregivers to improve their coping skills when caring for their loved ones diagnosed with dementia or a chronic disease.
3. Texercise – an exercise program specifically designed that encourages individuals and communities to adopt healthy lifestyle habits such as regular physical activity and good nutrition.

These programs are offered at no cost to the participants and their caregivers.  Classes are provided in person in a community setting or virtually via a web-based software.  The participates must be 60 and older. *Note: For Stress Busting for Dementia classes a caregiver can be 18 or older who is caring for someone with dementia. For Stress Busing for a Chronic Disease a caregiver or their loved one must be 60 and older – one of them must be 60 and older.*

**STAFFING FOR HEALTH EDUCATION SERVICES:**

Tiffany Soto, Senior Program Coordinator/Dementia Care Specialist 254-292-1857 **tiffany.soto@hot.cog.tx.us**

**CAREGIVER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**AAA subcontracts to provide counseling to caregivers to assist in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiver roles. This included counseling for dementia related illnesses for individuals, support groups; and caregiver training for individual caregivers and families.**

**CARE COORDINATION PROGRAM**

***The Care Coordination program which includes care coordination/caregiver support coordination empowers senior citizens 60 and older and their family caregivers to maintain their independence, freedom, and dignity by identifying needs and arranging social services required for living independently.***

The program is broad based and includes care coordination services provided directly by AAA staff and a variety of authorized related services contracted by AAA through local service providers

In Care Coordination a AAA case manager personally assesses the social service needs of a client with the client to identify, plan, arrange, authorize, coordinate, and follow-up on needed contracted services which can include:

* Personnel Assistance - a case manager arranges for short-term services to assist clients with bathing, dressing, toileting, light house cleaning, and meal preparation.  This covers hands-on assistance in all activities of daily living.
* Homemaker - a case manager arranges for short-term services to assist clients with light house cleaning, errands, and meal preparation.
* Income Support - a case manager arranges for the purchase of appliances (refrigerator/freezer, washer/dryer, microwaves, freestanding ranges, stove tops, and window ac units).
* Home Repairs/Modifications - a case manager focuses primarily on contracted repairs/modifications that improve accessibility, structure, safety, and weatherization of the home for low-income homeowners 60 and older that are living in unsafe and/or unhealthy environments.
* Health Maintenance - a case manager arranges for the purchase of durable medical equipment that enables clients to be more independent and assists them with their daily activities.
* Respite - a case manager arranges for short-term relief to caregivers.  Services are provided in the client’s home environment on a short term, temporary (6 months maximum) basis while the caregiver is unavailable or needs relief.  This service also allows the caregiver to take care of themselves, so they are better able to sustain care for their loved one over an extended period.
* Caregiver Education and Training - AAAHOT subcontracts with Oliver Counseling to provide dementia related counseling to caregivers to assist in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiver roles.  This includes counseling for dementia related illnesses for individuals, support groups, and caregiver training for individual caregivers and families.

Care Coordination Staffing: Destiny Zavalla – Senior Care Coordinator

**BENEFITS COUNSELING PROGRAM**

***The Benefits Counseling program directly provides financial related assistance and Medicare/Medicaid related help to clients through Legal Assistance (one-on-one) and Legal Awareness events (group presentations).***

The Benefits Counseling Program is directly administered by AAA staff and provides one-on-one legal assistance services to persons age 60 and older and to any adult Medicare recipient regardless of age.  Individualized counseling is offered to those in need of assistance with Medicare Part D Prescription Drug programs, Medigap supplemental insurance, Medicaid estate planning, advanced planning for retirement, health care services, Medicare preventive services, consumer issues and preparation of Advanced Directives.  The program also provides group legal awareness presentations and group education for all ages through community presentations and special events to promote health and wellness, safety, and legal education.

Legal Assistance

For many people, the complexities of laws, rules and regulations governing legal, health and financial issues in today’s world are sometimes overwhelming.  Assistance from AAA benefits counseling staff can be helpful to individuals in a personalized and private setting to navigate many of the complicated issues.

Specific objectives of Legal Assistance:

* Provide individualized counseling and assistance in understanding the complexities of specific programs for persons 60 and older and Medicare recipients of any age.
* Provide counseling and assistance regarding public and private benefits, legal documents (advance directives), insurance information, preventive health related services, and representation for administrative hearings and appeals.

Legal Assistance services provide the older consumer with free individualized help on a variety of matters, including applications for governmental services, choices of health or prescription insurance coverage and choices of how an individual wants to be treated as they near the end of their life.

Legal Assistance can also provide an advocate to assist or represent an older person in an appeal or hearing when that person believes they have been wrongfully denied a service or benefit.

Legal Awareness

Through the Legal Awareness component of the Benefits Counseling Program, **groups** of interested persons receive information about many different governmental and private services and benefits.  As laws change and new programs are established, Legal Awareness strives to empower older consumers in group settings through education, information, and self-advocacy.

Specific objectives of Legal Awareness:

* Provide information in group presentations about Medicare, Medicaid, and many other government programs.
* Serve as an information link for all ages through educational events and workshops.
* Encourage the establishment of community resource centers.
* Foster the creation of regional community partnerships that encourage and support greater public awareness.
* Train volunteers working throughout our communities to assist with outreach and services.

**Benefits Counseling Staffing:** Jan Enders – Sr. Benefits Counselor Rose Contreras – Sr. Benefits Counselor

 **LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM**

***The LTC Ombudsman Program advocates for quality of life and quality of care for residents in long-term care facilities.  Residents and their families are served by developing and using the talents and efforts of specially trained volunteers, professionals, advocacy and membership organizations, and regulatory agencies who are interested in long-term care and elder rights issues.***

Through direct advocacy the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program utilizes volunteers and  AAA staff to achieve the best possible quality of life and care for individuals' living in long-term care facilities in our six-county service area..

The program’s primary focus is on resolving resident issues and complaints relating to resident’s rights, quality of care and quality of life.

Each nursing facility and assisted living facility in the HOTCOG region is visited by a staff member or volunteer Ombudsman on a regular basis.  A staff member attempts to respond to community generated complaints within two business days of receipt.  These complaints usually come from family members, community professionals or the facilities themselves.

Services included in the Ombudsman program are:

* Advocacy:

An Ombudsman advocates for resident’s rights and quality of care.  They help protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents.

* Counseling:   Staff Ombudsman often work with residents and/or their families on a variety of issues outside of the usual complaints. They may assist with Medicare or Medicaid eligibility issues, appeals, end of life issues or assist with appropriate referrals.
* Problem resolution:

Using notification, negotiation, mediation or applicable rules and regulations, the Ombudsman can often assist residents, their families, and facilities in resolving their differences or issues.  When the Ombudsman cannot resolve the problem, or when it involves abuse or complex issues, the Ombudsman will make the proper referrals.

* Training**:**

The Ombudsman program provides training to nursing home and assisted living facilities staff to help ensure that the residents receive quality of care and life in the facility.

* Empowerment:

An Ombudsman can assist with the development of family and resident councils in the facility. The ombudsman will assist the resident or family member in becoming effective self-advocates.

Ombudsman Program Staffing: Ursula Johnson – Manager 254-292-1851 **Ursula.johnson@hot.cog.tx.us**

Lynda Mitchell – P. T. Staff Ombudsman

<https://www.hotcog.org/health-and-human-services/area-agency-on-aging>