

## Aging Services

The Texas Catholic Conference *supports services that provide care and dignity to aging Texans.*

The fact that people now live longer requires a rethinking of the role of the elderly in society and in the process of development. It would be well, therefore, to create a wide range of opportunities to make use of the potential, experiences and expertise of older persons. This approach and attitude will enable them both to remain connected to society and to continue to make a mark in the world, whether for volunteerism or work. Further, and perhaps more importantly, carving out a niche for the elderly starting from the simple and continued appreciation of their presence by their own family will prevent their stigmatization and exclusion. *(Intervention by the Holy See at the Third Commission of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Aging)*

### *A Texas Bishop Speaks:*

"We must also insist on the Christian care of the elderly and sick. In this recession, so many of our aging brothers and sisters have suffered significant financial losses at a time when they can no longer work to support the additional costs they face. We have an obligation to provide access to necessary services and supports."



*-Bishop Michael Pfeifer, Diocese of San Angelo*

## Church Teaching

- ★ The elderly constitute an important school of life, capable of transmitting values and traditions, and of fostering the growth of younger generations, who thus learn to seek not only their own good but also that of others. If the elderly are in situations where they experience suffering and dependence, not only do they need health care services and appropriate assistance, but — and above all — they need to be treated with love. *(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 222)*
- ★ Elderly people help us to see human affairs with greater wisdom, because life's vicissitudes have brought them knowledge and maturity. They are the guardians of our collective memory, and thus the privileged interpreters of that body of ideals and common values which support and guide life in society. To exclude the elderly is in a sense to deny the past, in which the present is firmly rooted, in the name of a modernity without memory. Precisely because of their mature experience, the elderly are able to offer young people precious advice and guidance. *(Pope John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly)*
- ★ Beginning our discussion of the rights of man, we see that every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which he is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his own. *(Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris)*

## Resources

- ★ **Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services** ([www.dads.state.tx.us/](http://www.dads.state.tx.us/))
- ★ **Catholic Charities USA** ([www.CatholicCharitiesUSA.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesUSA.org))
- ★ **Administration on Aging** of the United States Department of Health and Human Service ([www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov))

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The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

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# Aging Services

Ensuring the dignity of older Americans includes ensuring their quality of life in our communities. All made in God's image, each has a right to what is necessary for a productive and dignified life. This not only includes the most basic needs but the right to productive work, to choose one's state of life, to set up and care for one's family. Catholic social teaching also establishes that society must be evaluated based on how it treats its most vulnerable members, and calls for a preferential option for the poor. Policies must protect the poor and vulnerable, many of whom include the elderly.<sup>i</sup>

The Texas Catholic Conference supports support for aging Texans, and especially in Nursing Home diversion and in ensuring enhanced background checks, more training requirements, and competitive wages for home care workers who assist aging Texans.

## Aging Texans<sup>ii</sup>

According to the Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer, in 2000 the number of Texans 65 and older was slightly higher than two million, but by 2020 the number will be nearly 3.5 million. In 2000 this group comprised 9.9 percent of the state's population, but in 2020 it will rise to 14.2 percent. The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services' Aging Texas Well Indicators Survey Overview Report found that:

- Among older Texans, 88% have one or more chronic conditions; more than one-third have at least three chronic conditions; and while many exercise at least three times a week, 64% of older Texans are overweight or obese.
- More than 25 percent of older Texans report having a mental health diagnosis with increases in depression and anxiety disorders from 2004 to 2008.
- The biggest source of income is retirement income from Social Security. More than half of older Texans have income from personal savings, but only eight percent report personal savings as their biggest source of income.
- Older Texans spend at least one-third of their income on housing costs.
- Eighteen percent of older Texans provide care to a family member or friend over age 60 or to a child 18 years of age or younger, or both, an increase from 16 percent in 2004.
- More than 25 percent of older Texans report that loneliness is a problem. Fifty-four percent report spending time daily with family, friends, or neighbors, and another 37 percent at least weekly.
- Most older Texans say that spiritual life is very important.

## Nursing Home Diversion

Although less than 15% of the aged population lives in nursing homes, nursing home care is the most expensive form of care for older adults. Families are decimated by the cost of nursing home care which can cost more than \$6,000 per month. As a State, we need to look at housing options and alternatives for older adults as an entire "system" and not just one fragmented piece---nursing home diversion.

The State of Texas must be committed to:

- providing community-based alternatives for people with disabilities and recognizing that such services and supports advance the best interests of all Texans;
- ensuring that consumers and their families must have a choice from among the broadest range of supports to most effectively meet their needs in their homes, community settings, or other residential settings; and
- guaranteeing that people with disabilities have the opportunity to enjoy full lives of independence, productivity and self-determination

*(Last updated August 11, 2010, 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Session)*

<sup>i</sup> "Special Populations: Supporting Seniors." *Catholic Charities USA - Working to Reduce Poverty in America*. Web. 11 Aug. 2010. <[www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=655](http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=655)>.

<sup>ii</sup> *Aging Texas Well Indicators Survey Overview Report*. Rep. Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services, Apr. 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2010. <[www.dads.state.tx.us/news\\_info/publications/studies/ATWIndicators2009.pdf](http://www.dads.state.tx.us/news_info/publications/studies/ATWIndicators2009.pdf)>.