



# **Lower Rio Grande Valley AAA Area Plan**

**FFY 2027 - 2029**

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**As Required by the Older Americans Act, As  
Amended in 2020: Section 306, Area Plans**

**Pending Approval by HHSC  
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## Executive Summary

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves as the designated Planning and Service Area agency responsible for coordinating and delivering services to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties. Through a comprehensive network of programs and partnerships, the AAA works to promote independence, enhance quality of life, and support aging in place within the community.

The mission of the LRGVDC AAA is to provide access to coordinated services and supports that empower older adults and their caregivers to maintain independence, dignity, and well-being. The vision of the AAA is to develop and sustain a responsive, accessible, and person-centered system of care that meets the evolving needs of the aging population in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

The 2027–2029 Area Plan outlines the AAA’s strategic approach to addressing the needs of the region’s aging population through the delivery of core services, expansion of priority service areas, and strengthening of community-based supports. The plan is informed by a comprehensive needs assessment that incorporated survey data, stakeholder input, program experience, and consideration of regional conditions impacting older adults and caregivers.

Findings from the needs assessment identified several priority service areas, including Benefits Counseling, Transportation Services, Minor Home Repairs for Accessibility, Caregiver Support and Education, and Chronic Disease Self-Management programs. These priorities reflect the ongoing demand for services that support access to care, promote independence, and stabilize caregiving environments.

While the AAA demonstrates strong performance in delivering core services, key service gaps were identified. Transportation services were noted as a significant area of unmet need due to increasing costs associated with one-way trips and the limited number of available providers across the region. Additionally, the time-limited nature of certain services, such as Homemaker and Caregiver Support, presents challenges for individuals requiring ongoing assistance. Emerging needs related to mental health support and social isolation were also identified, highlighting the importance of addressing emotional well-being and social connectedness among older adults.

In response to these findings, the AAA has established four primary goals for the 2027–2029 planning period: maintaining and strengthening core services, expanding transportation capacity, addressing emerging needs related to mental health and social isolation, and improving continuity of care for individuals and caregivers. These goals are supported by targeted

objectives, strategies, and measurable outcomes designed to enhance service delivery, expand access, and improve coordination across programs.

The AAA will continue to prioritize individuals with the greatest economic and social need, including those with low income, disabilities, limited access to services, and those residing in rural and underserved areas. Through the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), Benefits Counseling, Caregiver Support programs, and care coordination initiatives such as Care Transitions Intervention (CTI) and Benjamin Rose Institute (BRI) Care Consultation, the AAA will ensure that services remain accessible, coordinated, and responsive to community needs.

This Area Plan reflects the AAA's commitment to strengthening the local system of care through collaboration, strategic planning, and continuous improvement. By aligning local priorities with the Texas State Plan on Aging, the AAA will continue to support the health, independence, and well-being of older adults and their caregivers throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

## **Organizational Profile**

**Reference:** [45 CFR 1321.57](#), [45 CFR 1321.63](#), & [45 CFR 1321.65\(b\)\(2\)](#)

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) is a regional planning organization serving Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties. The LRGVDC operates the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), which provide coordinated access to services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers.

The AAA/ADRC is responsible for planning, developing, and coordinating a comprehensive system of services that promotes independence, dignity, and quality of life. Services are funded through federal, state, and local resources and are delivered through a network of providers, contractors, and community partners.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Area Agency on Aging/Aging & Disability Resource Center (AAA/ADRC) serves a three-county region consisting of Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties in South Texas.

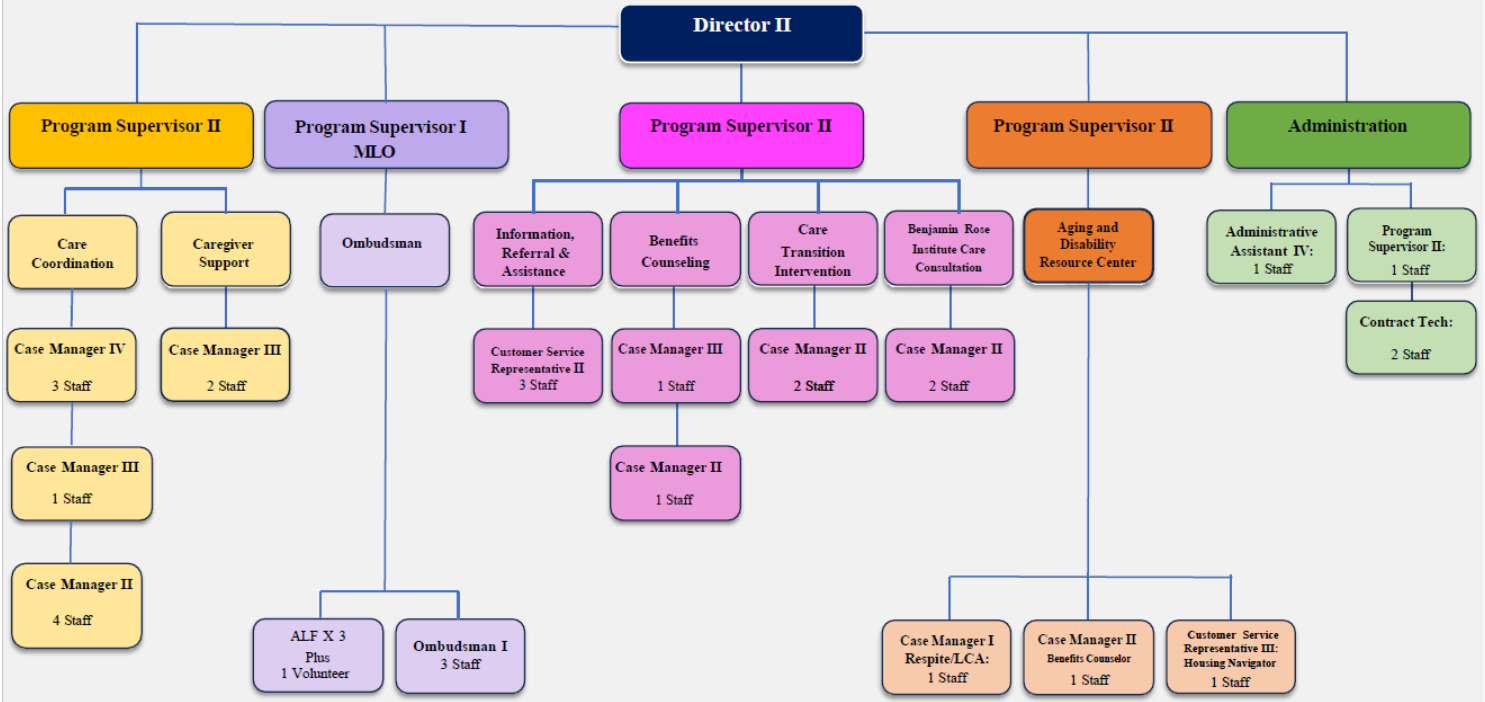
The region is characterized by a large and growing population, with a significant proportion of older adults and individuals with disabilities. The service area includes a mix of urban centers, rural communities, and colonias, many of which experience high levels of economic need and limited access to healthcare and supportive services.

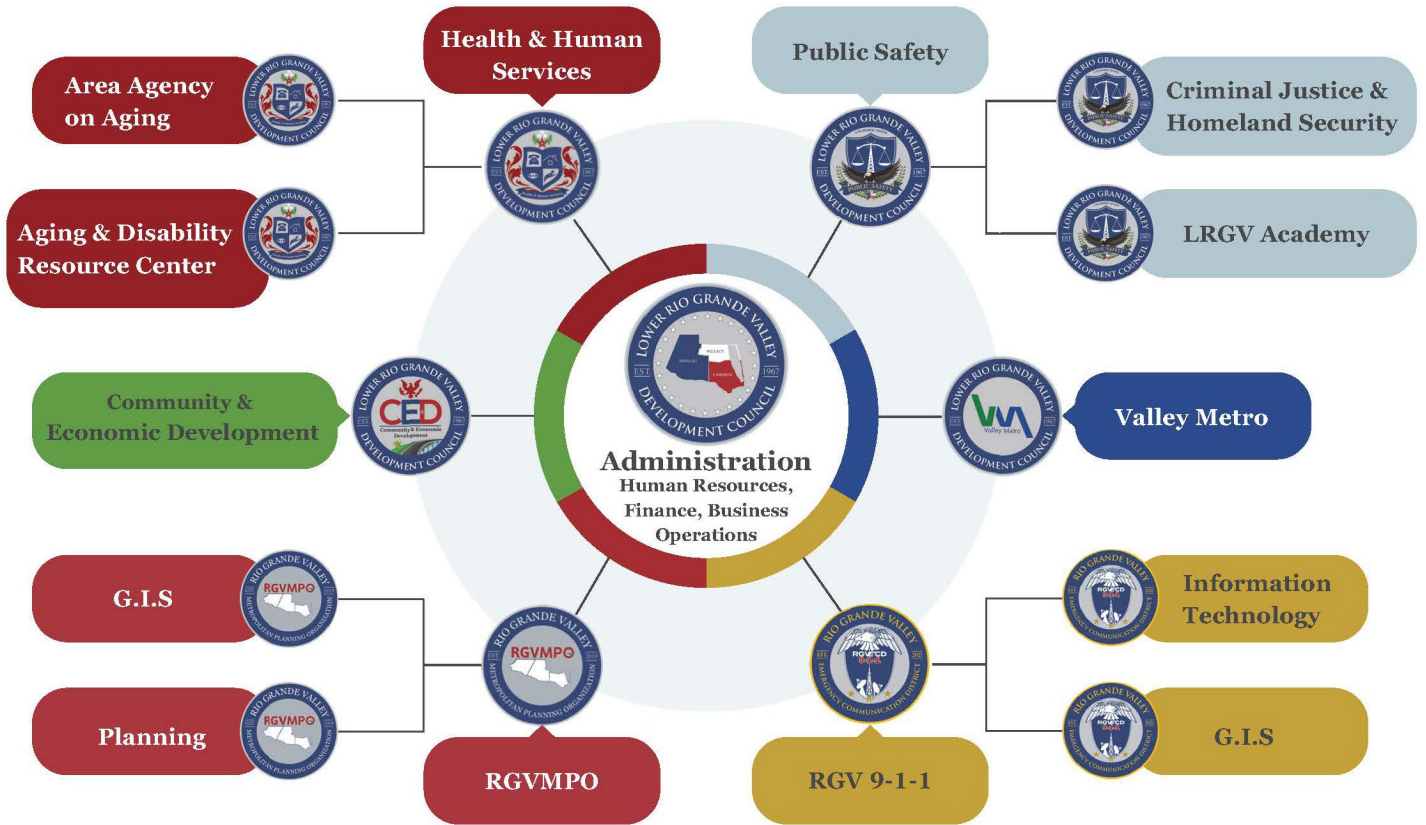
The population of the region is predominantly Hispanic/Latino, and many residents are bilingual or Spanish-speaking, requiring culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery. Additionally, the region experiences higher-than-average rates of poverty, chronic health conditions, and uninsured individuals compared to state and national averages. Poverty is defined based on federal poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Individuals with incomes at or below 100% to 125% of the federal poverty level are considered to have limited financial resources that significantly impact access to services and supports.

Geographic factors, including rural isolation and transportation barriers, further impact access to services, particularly for older adults and individuals with mobility limitations.

These demographic and socioeconomic characteristics highlight the need for a coordinated, accessible, and responsive system of services to meet the needs of the region's diverse population. These factors were considered in the development of priorities, goals, and service strategies outlined in this Area Plan.

# HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AREA AGENCY ON AGING





## **Advisory Council Composition**

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council is composed of members representing Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties to ensure regional representation.

The current Advisory Council reflects regional representation across all three counties, with approximately 50% of members representing Hidalgo County, 40% representing Cameron County, and 10% representing Willacy County. This distribution ensures balanced representation across the service area and supports the inclusion of both urban and rural community perspectives.

The Council includes individuals who reflect the populations served and required stakeholder groups, including:

- Older adults
- Individuals with disabilities
- Family caregivers
- Representatives of community-based organizations
- Healthcare and social service providers
- Public and private sector stakeholders

Membership is structured to ensure that a majority of members are individuals who are directly impacted by or represent older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers, in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements. The composition of the Advisory Council reflects the demographic and geographic diversity of the region, including underserved and rural communities, and supports culturally and linguistically appropriate representation.

The selection and appointment of Advisory Council members for the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) follow a structured and formal process as outlined in the Council's Rules of Function.

Individuals interested in serving on the Advisory Council submit applications to the AAA office. Candidates are selected based on their demonstrated interest, commitment, and concern for the well-being of older adults, as well as their willingness to actively participate in Council meetings and responsibilities.

The Advisory Council reviews submitted applications and evaluates candidates to ensure appropriate representation and alignment with required membership composition. Recommendations for membership are then forwarded to the LRGVDC Board of Directors, which holds final authority for all appointments.

All appointed members, including designated alternates, serve a term of two (2) years. Members may be reappointed based on continued participation and contribution to the Council.

To maintain full membership, vacancies are reviewed annually, with discussions occurring mid year and recommendations finalized prior to the start of the new term cycle.

This structured selection process ensures that the Advisory Council remains representative, engaged, and capable of effectively supporting the planning and administration of AAA programs and services.

**Member Selection Schedule:**

The LRGVDC Area Agency on Aging follows an established annual selection process to ensure timely appointment of Citizens Advisory Council members. Vacancies and expiring terms are reviewed in June, with applications accepted and evaluated during the summer months. The Citizens Advisory Council submits recommendations in August to the LRGVDC Board of Directors, which serves as the appointing authority. All appointments are finalized prior to October 1 to ensure a fully constituted Council at the start of each term. Mid-term vacancies are addressed as needed following the same process.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Advisory Council plays an active role in both the development and ongoing administration of the Area Plan.

During the development process, the Advisory Council reviews community needs assessment data, identifies community needs and service gaps, and provides input on priority areas, goals, and strategies. Council members contribute perspectives based on their professional expertise and lived experiences, ensuring that the Area Plan reflects the diverse needs of older adults and caregivers across the region.

The Advisory Council also supports public engagement efforts by encouraging community participation and providing feedback gathered from stakeholders.

In the administration of the Area Plan, the Advisory Council provides ongoing guidance by reviewing program updates, monitoring progress toward established goals, and making recommendations to improve service delivery. The Council helps ensure that services remain responsive to community needs and aligned with identified priorities.

Through monthly meetings, executive meetings, and collaboration with AAA staff, the Advisory Council supports accountability, informed decision-making, and the effective implementation of the Area Plan.

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) makes ongoing efforts to maintain representation from all counties through targeted outreach and recruitment. When vacancies occur, priority is given to maintaining balanced geographic representation to ensure that the perspectives and needs of all counties within the PSA are included.

## **Stewardship & Oversight**

**Reference:** [OAA of 1965, as amended through P.L. 116-131 \(3/25/2020\)](#), & [45 CFR 1321.59](#)

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) maintains responsibility for the stewardship and oversight of all programs, services, and funding administered within the service area.

The AAA ensures that all services are delivered in compliance with federal and state requirements under the Older Americans Act, as well as applicable policies and procedures. Oversight activities include monitoring program performance, reviewing service delivery outcomes, and ensuring that services align with identified community needs and Area Plan goals.

The AAA provides oversight of contracted providers through established monitoring processes, including regular reporting, performance evaluations, and ongoing communication to ensure accountability and quality of services. Contracted services are evaluated to confirm that funds are utilized appropriately and that service delivery meets established standards.

Financial oversight is maintained through coordination with the LRGVDC fiscal department to ensure proper budgeting, expenditure tracking, and compliance with funding requirements. This includes adherence to procurement standards and financial management practices.

Additionally, the AAA conducts internal reviews and works closely with program staff to ensure consistency in service delivery, documentation, and compliance with program requirements. Corrective actions are implemented as needed to address identified gaps or areas for improvement.

Through these efforts, the AAA ensures responsible management of public funds, continuous improvement of services, and accountability to the individuals and communities served.

## Key Topic Areas

Reference: [45 CFR 1321.65\(b\)\(5\)](#), [45 CFR 1321.65\(b\)\(2\)](#), & [45 CFR 1321.65\(c\)](#)

The LRGVDC AAA provides a coordinated system of services designed to support independence, health, and well-being among older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers. Core program areas include access services, supportive services, caregiver support, nutrition services, health and wellness programs, and advocacy services across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties.

### **Greatest Economic Need (GEN):**

The LRGVDC AAA defines Greatest Economic Need as individuals with income at or below 125% of the federal poverty level, as well as those experiencing financial hardship that limits access to basic needs such as housing, food, healthcare, and transportation.

### **Greatest Social Need (GSN):**

The LRGVDC AAA defines Greatest Social Need as individuals experiencing barriers that limit their ability to live independently, including social isolation, disability, language barriers, geographic isolation, and lack of access to services.

Key services provided within these core program areas include:

- Information and Referral/Assistance (IR&A) through the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
- Benefits Counseling (SHIP/MIPPA)
- Legal Assistance
- Transportation Services
- Homemaker Services
- Minor Home Repairs for Accessibility
- Caregiver Support and Education
- Caregiver Respite
- Congregate Meals and Home-Delivered Meals
- Health Maintenance and Chronic Disease Self-Management Programs

- Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- Care Transitions Intervention (CTI)
- Benjamin Rose Institute (BRI) Care Consultation
- Housing Navigator

### **Core Program Area 1: Supportive Service**

Case management services provide a comprehensive and person-centered approach to supporting older adults as they navigate the complexities of aging. Case Managers conduct thorough assessments to identify individual needs, strengths, and available support, and develop personalized care plans that promote independence and overall well-being. Through ongoing coordination, Case Managers connect individuals to a range of community resources, including healthcare services, home-based support, transportation services, and legal assistance. These services are delivered throughout Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties.

The Area Agency on Aging employs a diverse workforce, including staff who are bilingual and able to meet the linguistic needs of the community, ensuring effective communication and culturally appropriate service delivery. Ongoing monitoring and follow-up allow Case Managers to adjust care plans as needed, ensuring that services remain responsive and aligned with each individual's changing needs. These efforts directly support the Area Plan goals of improving access to services, enhancing service coordination, and promoting independence for older adults.

Health Maintenance services further support these goals by providing essential medical supplies and equipment that allow individuals to manage chronic conditions and maintain their health at home. Items may include incontinence supplies, nutritional supplements, glucose monitors, diabetic shoes, and other allowable supports. By increasing access to these resources, individuals are better able to manage their health, reduce complications, and maintain a higher quality of life.

Homemaker services provide short-term, non-medical, in-home assistance to support individuals who need help with routine household tasks. Services may include light housekeeping, laundry, and meal preparation based on individual needs. These services help maintain a safe and stable home environment, allowing individuals to remain in their homes and communities while reducing the risk of decline or institutionalization.

Residential Repair services contribute to long-term safety and independence by providing minor home modifications that improve accessibility. These may include the installation of ramps, grab bars, step-in showers, and other adjustments that reduce fall risks and improve mobility within the home. These modifications support individuals in maintaining independence and aging in place safely.

Transportation services provide or arrange for transporting an older individual from one location to another to access essential services and supports. This service is limited to Demand/Response transportation, which is designed to carry an individual from a specific origin to a specific destination upon request. Transportation is scheduled in advance, typically within twenty-four to forty-eight hours, based on the individual's needs.

Together, these services form a coordinated system of support that addresses both immediate and long-term needs of older adults. By focusing on access, coordination, and safety, the Area Agency on Aging continues to strengthen service delivery across the region and advance the goals outlined in the Area Plan.

## **Core Program Area 2: Nutrition Services**

### **Congregate Meals**

The Area Agency on Aging partners with local providers, Amigos Del Valle and Bright Nutrition, as subrecipients to deliver nutrition services, including congregate and home-delivered meals, throughout Cameron, Willacy, and Hidalgo Counties. Services are provided to individuals aged 60 and older, as well as for the spouses of eligible individuals regardless of age, with priority given to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Both providers operate central kitchens to ensure consistency and quality of meals across the tri-county region. Amigos Del Valle operates its central kitchen in San Benito, Texas, preparing, packaging, and delivering meals to 29 nutrition sites. Bright Nutrition operates its central kitchen in Los Fresnos, Texas, serving 12 nutrition sites. Congregate meal locations are equipped with heated holding cabinets to maintain appropriate food temperatures. Meal service is supported by dedicated volunteers, and participants access sites through various means, including personal transportation, public transit, walking, or assistance from family members and caregivers.

All nutrition services are delivered in compliance with the standards established by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission for congregate and home-delivered meal programs. While services continue to be provided across the region, efforts remain focused on increasing access for at-risk and underserved populations.

Enhanced outreach efforts by the Area Agency on Aging and its providers, particularly in low-income housing communities and smaller cities, have supported the expansion of congregate meal sites and improved access to services for older adults and caregivers.

The Area Agency on Aging remains committed to strengthening partnerships with providers, senior centers, and community organizations to expand service capacity and improve access to nutrition services. While the region has experienced challenges in securing and maintaining nutrition providers, recent efforts have strengthened the provider network. The AAA will continue to work collaboratively across all three counties to identify and develop additional provider capacity to meet the growing needs of the region.

### **Home Delivered Meals**

The Area Agency on Aging collaborates with local provider Amigos Del Valle as a subrecipient to deliver home-delivered meal services throughout Cameron, Willacy, and Hidalgo Counties. Amigos Del Valle operates a central kitchen in San Benito, Texas, where meals are prepared, packaged, and distributed to 29 nutrition sites across the region.

Upon arrival at each designated nutrition site, meals are placed in heated holding cabinets to maintain proper temperature and food safety standards until distribution. Meals are then delivered to participants by trained staff, volunteers, and delivery drivers using temperature-controlled equipment to ensure quality and compliance with program standards.

The demand for home-delivered meal services continues to increase steadily, with a growing number of older adults requiring support to remain safe in their homes. In response, several communities within the tri-county region have contributed local funding through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to supplement services and expand access for eligible residents.

In addition to providing nutritious meals, this service reduces the burden of grocery shopping and meal preparation for older adults. It also addresses key social determinants of health, particularly social isolation. Regular meal deliveries offer consistent interaction and serve as informal wellness checks, providing an added layer of support for individuals who may have limited daily contact.

The region also has a high prevalence of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, making these services especially critical. For these participants, home-delivered meals provide an added level of safety by ensuring meals are properly prepared and by offering

routine check-ins that help monitor their well-being.

For many participants, the delivery driver may be the only point of contact they have throughout the day. As a result, home-delivered meals provide not only nutritional support, but also a critical connection that promotes safety, independence, and overall well-being.

### **Core Program Area 3: Evidence Based Disease Prevention & Health Promotion Services**

#### **Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs)**

Caregiver support has become a central focus of services within the Area Agency on Aging, with the BRI Care Consultation program leading these efforts across the region. This evidence-based program is designed to provide individualized support to caregivers through a structured assessment process that identifies their specific needs, challenges, and available support.

Based on this assessment, staff develop a personalized care plan that focuses on practical strategies, education, and ongoing support. The program emphasizes flexibility and accessibility, with staff making every effort to meet participants where they are—whether through direct contact in the community or scheduled calls at times that best fit the caregiver’s availability. This approach allows the program to remain responsive to the realities caregivers face and ensures consistent engagement. Through these efforts, the BRI program continues to strengthen caregiver support in the region by reducing stress, improving confidence in caregiving roles, and enhancing the overall well-being of both caregivers and care recipients.

The Care Transitions Intervention (CTI) program complements these efforts by focusing on individuals aged 60 and older who are transitioning from hospital to home. CTI Coaches work directly with participants to support safe and effective transitions, helping reduce hospital readmissions through education, care coordination, and follow-up support. CTI services are tailored to each participant, with Coaches providing guidance on medication management, follow-up care, and self-management strategies. By working closely with individuals and their support systems, the program promotes continuity of care and improved health outcomes.

Together, these evidence-based programs reflect the AAA’s commitment to delivering person-centered services that respond to both caregiver needs and the broader health and stability of older adults in the region.

**Core Program Area 4: Family Caregiver Support Services** – includes efforts to enhance service and support for caregivers.

Family Caregiver Support Services focus on enhancing support for caregivers through direct service delivery by the Area Agency on Aging. The program is supported by a team of 10 case managers who allocate their time between care coordination and caregiver support/respite services, ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of both caregivers and care recipients across the tri-county region. Case managers conduct caregiver assessments and provide individualized support, education, and coordination of services for caregivers and care recipients aged 60 and above.

Through comprehensive assessments, case managers identify the unique needs of caregivers and provide tailored support to promote caregiver well-being and prevent burnout. Services are designed to remain responsive to the increasing demand for caregiver support while maintaining quality and accessibility. These efforts support improved identification of caregivers and increased access to available services across the region.

The program is further strengthened through collaboration with community partners to expand access to evidence-based programs and caregiver resources. The Area Agency on Aging works closely with partners to support initiatives such as Caregiver SOS and Stress-Busting programs, as well as caregiver support groups, which provide practical tools, education, and emotional support. Additional efforts include psychoeducational clinics, distribution of emergency preparedness kits, and participation in regional initiatives that support caregivers. In collaboration with the ADRC, the agency hosts the LIIFE Conference, which provides education, resources, and support to caregivers across the region.

A key priority remains increasing awareness of available caregiver services. Staff actively engage in outreach and collaborate with community partners, healthcare providers, and local organizations to promote services and reach underserved populations. These efforts contribute to improved caregiver engagement, increased utilization of support services, and stronger coordination of care.

Through continued program development and partnership efforts, the Area Agency on Aging aims to strengthen caregiver stability, reduce caregiver stress, and support the long-term well-being of both caregivers and care recipients. These outcomes align with the broader goals of promoting independence, improving quality of life, and sustaining individuals in their homes and communities.

## **Core Program Area 5: Legal Assistance, SHIP, & MIPPA**

Legal Assistance is a critical direct service provided by the Area Agency on Aging and is facilitated by a team of Benefits counselors. The program currently includes six full-time staff certified as Benefits Counselor II (BC II), serving the tri-county region of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties.

Benefits Counselors provide a range of services, including assistance with administrative hearings, SNAP applications, Medicaid issues, Advance Directives, and one-on-one support related to entitlement programs.

Additionally, Benefits Counselors provide State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) services, offering counseling, assistance, and outreach to Medicare beneficiaries, caregivers, and individuals assisting them. These services include providing information on Medicare benefits, assisting with applications for programs such as Medicare Savings Programs and Low-Income Subsidy, and supporting individuals in understanding and accessing available healthcare coverage options.

The program maintains strong collaboration with community partners, healthcare providers, and service organizations to ensure coordinated service delivery and expanded access to assistance. Staff have also established off-site service locations in collaboration with local partners, allowing older adults to receive services within their communities without the need to travel to the main office.

Over time, the program has experienced continued demand for services, reflecting both the needs of the population and the effectiveness of outreach efforts. The AAA maintains sufficient staffing levels to meet current demand and ensures timely and responsive service delivery across the region.

Additionally, as part of the Council of Governments' emergency response framework, staff remain available to support older adults during disaster situations and coordinate with appropriate agencies to ensure continuity of services.

Through ongoing collaboration, outreach, and staff expertise, Legal Assistance services continue to support the rights, access to benefits, and overall well-being of older adults in the region.

## **Core Program Area 6: Ombudsman Services**

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTC) is designed to advocate for the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents in long-term care facilities, including nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Within the AAA, the program provides direct resident advocacy, complaint investigation and resolution, education on resident rights, and system-level advocacy to improve quality of care.

Service provision includes routine facility visits, confidential complaint handling, resident and family consultation, staff training, and coordination with regulatory agencies. The program ensures residents have a voice and that concerns related to care, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or quality of life is addressed in a timely and effective manner. The AAA's LTC currently serves 37 nursing homes and 24 assisted living facilities within the planning and service area.

The Managing Local Ombudsman oversees program operations, ensuring compliance with federal and state requirements, supervising staff and volunteers, managing caseloads, and coordinating with the State Ombudsman Office. Three Ombudsman staff provide direct advocacy through routine facility visits, complaint investigation and resolution, and resident rights education, with assigned facilities to ensure consistent coverage. The program is further supported by three trained volunteers who conduct visits, engage with residents, and report concerns to staff, enhancing overall program reach and presence.

### **General Description of the Service**

The AAA prioritizes services for individuals with the greatest economic need, including those with low income, limited financial resources, and increased reliance on public benefits.

Services such as Benefits Counseling, Transportation, and Homemaker Services are critical in addressing economic barriers and ensuring access to essential resources and care. Outreach efforts are targeted to ensure that economically disadvantaged individuals are aware of and able to access available services.

The AAA also prioritizes individuals with the greatest social need, including those experiencing social isolation, limited access to services, language barriers, disability, and geographic isolation.

Programs such as Caregiver Support, ADRC services, CTI, and BRI Care Consultation are designed to address these challenges by providing coordinated support, education, and connections to community resources.

Special emphasis is placed on reducing social isolation and improving access to services in rural and underserved areas.

### **Efforts to Expand Home and Community-Based Services**

The AAA is committed to expanding home and community-based services (HCBS) to support individuals in maintaining independence and avoiding institutional care.

Efforts include strengthening service delivery through Homemaker Services, Minor Home Repairs for Accessibility, Caregiver Support, and Transportation services. These programs are essential in supporting aging in place and improving quality of life.

The AAA will continue to explore opportunities to expand service capacity, particularly in areas where gaps have been identified, including transportation and access to supportive services.

### **Efforts to Serve Special Populations**

The AAA provides targeted outreach and services to special populations, including individuals with disabilities, caregivers, rural populations, and those with limited English proficiency.

Through ADRC access points, Benefits Counseling, Ombudsman services, and care coordination programs such as CTI and BRI, the AAA ensures that services are accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the needs of diverse populations within the region.

### **Needs Assessment Activities**

**Reference:** [45 CFR 1321.65\(b\)\(3\)](#) & [45 CFR 1321.65\(c\)](#)

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Area Agency on Aging (LRGVDC AAA) conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to identify priority service needs among older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties.

The needs assessment incorporated multiple data sources and activities, including:

- A regional survey distributed across all three counties
- Input from the Citizens Advisory Council and Board of Directors
- Feedback from service providers and program staff
- Review of service utilization data and trends

- Consideration of regional demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

This multi-faceted approach ensured that the needs assessment reflects both quantitative data and real-time community insights.

Based on survey results and stakeholder input, the following five services were identified as the highest priority needs across the region:

- 1. Benefit Counseling**
- 2. Transportation Services**
- 3. Minor Home Repairs for Accessibility**
- 4. Caregiver Support and Education**
- 5. Chronic Disease Self-Management Programs**

These services reflect the continued demand for support that promotes independence, access to care, and stability for older adults and caregivers.

Additional services identified by the community include:

- Congregate Meals
- Homemaker Services
- Caregiver Respite
- Mental Health Support and Counseling
- Social Engagement and Isolation Prevention
- Information and Referral Services

These findings highlight the importance of maintaining a comprehensive system of services that addresses both basic needs and overall well-being.

While the AAA demonstrates strong performance across several core service areas, key service gaps were identified through the needs assessment process.

Transportation services were identified as a primary gap due to the increasing cost of one-way trips and a regional shortage of available service providers. These challenges limit the number of individuals that can be served and create barriers to accessing essential services, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Additionally, the time-limited nature of certain services, including Homemaker and Caregiver Support, presents a challenge for individuals requiring ongoing assistance. While these services are designed to provide temporary support, many clients experience long-term needs that extend beyond the authorized service period.

The needs assessment also **identified emerging needs related to mental health support and social isolation** among older adults. These findings reflect evolving community conditions and highlight the importance of expanding services that address emotional well-being, social connectedness, and quality of life. The AAA will consider these emerging needs in future service planning and program development.

The results of the needs assessment provide a clear framework for service planning within the 2027–2029 Area Plan. Identified priorities, service gaps, and emerging needs will guide the AAA’s goals, objectives, and resource allocation to ensure a coordinated and responsive system of care for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers across the Planning and Service Area.

The AAA acknowledges several constraints that impact its ability to fully address identified needs. These include limited funding resources, increasing service costs, provider shortages—particularly in transportation and in-home services—and geographic challenges across rural and underserved areas. Additionally, workforce limitations and the time-limited structure of certain programs restrict the ability to provide long-term support for individuals with ongoing needs.

## **Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Outcomes**

Reference: [45 CFR 1321.65\(e\)](#)

### **GOAL 1: Maintain and Strengthen Core Services**

**Ensure continued access to high-quality core services that support independence and well-being among older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers.**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Maintain or increase the number of individuals served through:
  - Benefits Counseling (SHIP/MIPPA/Legal Assistance)
  - Caregiver Support and Education (Title III-E)
  - Chronic Disease Self-Management and Health Maintenance programs
  - Minor Home Repairs for Accessibility

2. Ensure equitable access to services across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties

**Strategies:**

- Utilize ADRC (Information and Referral/Assistance) to connect individuals to appropriate services
- Continue implementation of evidence-based programs, including Chronic Disease Self-Management
- Support service delivery through existing provider networks and subrecipients
- Conduct targeted outreach to individuals with greatest economic and social need
- Monitor service utilization and performance through internal reporting systems

**Outcomes:**

**Short-Term Outcomes (Year 1):**

- Maintain or increase the number of individuals served across core service areas
- Increase awareness and access to services through ADRC and outreach efforts

**Intermediate Outcomes (Years 1–2):**

- Sustained service utilization across Benefits Counseling, Caregiver Support, CDSMP, and Home Accessibility
- Improved access to services for individuals with greatest economic and social need

**Long-Term Outcomes (Years 2–3):**

- Improved ability of older adults to remain independent in their homes and communities
- Increased stability and support for caregivers across the region

**GOAL 2: Expand Transportation Services and Capacity**

**Improve access to transportation services to address unmet demand and reduce barriers to essential services.**

**Objectives:**

1. Increase the number of individuals receiving transportation services

2. Improve cost-efficiency of transportation service delivery
3. Expand the network of transportation providers across the region
4. Improve access to services in rural and underserved areas, including Willacy County

**Strategies:**

- Utilize ADRC to identify and prioritize transportation needs
- Recruit and contract with additional transportation providers and community partners
- Collaborate with local transit agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community-based providers
- Evaluate cost structures, including one-way trip costs, to improve service efficiency
- Monitor service utilization, cost per trip, and provider capacity to inform adjustments

**Outcomes:**

Short-Term Outcomes (Year 1):

- Increase the number of individuals receiving transportation services
- Identify and initiate partnerships with additional transportation providers

Intermediate Outcomes (Years 1–2):

- Expanded transportation provider network across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties
- Improved access to transportation services in rural and underserved areas

Long-Term Outcomes (Years 2–3):

- Reduced transportation-related barriers to accessing medical and essential services
- Improved health outcomes through increased access to care

### **GOAL 3: Address Emerging Needs in Mental Health and Social Isolation**

**Enhance service delivery to address mental health needs and reduce social isolation among older adults.**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Increase access to mental health support and counseling resources
2. Expand opportunities for social engagement and community participation
3. Identify and engage isolated individuals through outreach and service coordination

#### **Strategies:**

- Utilize ADRC to connect individuals to mental health and social support services
- Partner with community organizations, behavioral health providers, and local programs
- Incorporate social engagement opportunities through existing programs and community events
- Leverage programs such as Caregiver Support and BRI Care Consultation to address emotional well-being

#### **Outcomes:**

##### **Short-Term Outcomes (Year 1):**

- Increased identification of individuals experiencing social isolation
- Increased referrals to mental health and social support services

##### **Intermediate Outcomes (Years 1–2):**

- Increased participation in social engagement and mental health-related programs
- Strengthened partnerships with community-based and behavioral health providers

##### **Long-Term Outcomes (Years 2–3):**

- Reduced levels of social isolation among older adults
- Improved emotional well-being and quality of life

## **GOAL 4: Strengthen Continuity of Care and Support Systems**

**Improve coordination of services to address the gap between time-limited services and long-term needs.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Improve transition planning for individuals receiving time-limited services, including Homemaker and Caregiver Support
2. Strengthen referral pathways to long-term services and community-based resources
3. Enhance ongoing support for caregivers beyond initial service periods

### **Strategies:**

- Utilize ADRC as a central access point for referrals and service coordination
- Implement follow-up processes through Case Management, CTI (Care Transitions Intervention), and BRI Care Consultation programs
- Strengthen partnerships with long-term care providers, healthcare systems, and community organizations
- Provide ongoing caregiver education, support groups, and resource connections

### **Outcomes:**

#### Short-Term Outcomes (Year 1):

- Increased referrals to community-based and long-term support services
- Implementation of follow-up and care coordination processes

#### Intermediate Outcomes (Years 1–2):

- Improved coordination between AAA programs (ADRC, CTI, BRI, Case Management)
- Increased successful transitions from short-term to long-term supports

#### Long-Term Outcomes (Years 2–3):

- Improved continuity of care for individuals with ongoing needs
- Increased caregiver stability and reduced risk of service disruption

## **Alignment with State Plan on Aging**

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Area Agency on Aging (LRGVDC AAA) has developed goals for the 2027–2029 Area Plan that are aligned with the priorities outlined in the Texas State Plan on Aging.

The AAA’s goals support statewide efforts to strengthen access to home and community-based services, promote independence among older adults, support caregivers, and enhance the overall coordination of services.

Specifically, the AAA’s focus on maintaining and strengthening core services aligns with the State Plan’s emphasis on ensuring access to essential support that allow individuals to remain in their homes and communities.

The identified need to expand transportation services aligns with the State Plan’s priority to improve access to services and reduce barriers for older adults, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Efforts to address emerging needs related to mental health and social isolation align with statewide initiatives to improve quality of life, social connectedness, and emotional well-being among older adults.

Additionally, the AAA’s focus on strengthening continuity of care reflects the State Plan’s emphasis on coordination of services and development of a comprehensive system of care that supports individuals across the continuum of need.

Through these aligned goals, the AAA contributes to the broader statewide vision of promoting independence, dignity, and quality of life for older Texans and their caregivers.

## **Long Range Planning**

**Reference:** [OAA of 1965, as amended through P.L. 116-131 \(3/25/2020\)](#)

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves a rapidly growing and diverse population across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties. The Aging Services Network within the Planning and Service Area (PSA) has demonstrated the ability to provide core services; however, continued population growth, aging trends, and persistent socioeconomic challenges will require strategic expansion and adaptation over the next five to ten years.

The region is experiencing significant growth in the older adult population, including an increase in individuals with chronic health conditions and Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. This growth is occurring alongside high rates of poverty, limited access to healthcare, and transportation barriers, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Additionally, there is

an increasing need to address mental health concerns among older adults, including cognitive decline, depression, and social isolation. These trends will require enhanced workforce capacity and specialized training to ensure staff and providers are equipped to effectively serve this population.

These changes are expected to increase demand across all service lines, including caregiver support, case management, transportation coordination, ombudsman, benefits counseling, evidence-based programs, information referral and assistance, housing navigation, nutrition services, in-home services, and senior center services targeting isolation. Population growth will also place increased pressure on housing availability, particularly the need for safe, affordable, and accessible housing that supports aging in place. The region's predominantly Hispanic population and high percentage of Spanish-speaking residents further require culturally and linguistically appropriate services, shaping how services are delivered across the system.

To respond to these projected needs, the AAA continues to strengthen and adapt its programs and service delivery model. This includes expanding caregiver support services, increasing access to evidence-based programs, and enhancing coordination of services through case management. The AAA emphasizes flexible, person-centered service delivery, including meeting participants in community settings and providing services in ways that accommodate individual needs. Strengthening partnerships with community organizations, healthcare providers, housing authorities, and local governments remains essential to expanding service reach and improving coordination.

Resource adjustments will focus on increasing provider capacity in high-demand service areas such as nutrition services, in-home supports, residential repair, and transportation. Continued investment in outreach, particularly in rural areas and low-income communities, will be critical to ensuring equitable access to services. In addition, future program development will require increased investment in workforce training, particularly in dementia care, behavioral health, and culturally responsive practices.

To support the continued growth and effectiveness of the Aging Services Network, the AAA recommends that the State Unit on Aging (SUA) prioritize capacity-building in key areas. These include expanding access to affordable and accessible housing, strengthening coordinated transportation systems, investing in workforce development and training, enhancing emergency preparedness efforts, and increasing support for caregiver services. Additional priorities include strengthening protections against elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, expanding access to assistive technology, and improving coordination between aging services and healthcare systems.

To support continued growth and enhance service delivery, the Area Agency on Aging is actively pursuing participation in a healthcare hub model through the GUIDE program,

expanding coordinated support for caregivers of Medicare beneficiaries living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.

The AAA remains committed to organizational sustainability through strategic planning, strong fiscal oversight, workforce development, and continuous program evaluation. The agency leverages multiple funding sources and maintains strong partnerships to support service delivery across the region. Data-driven decision-making is used to monitor performance, identify service gaps, and guide program improvements.

Through these efforts, the AAA is positioned to strengthen and sustain its role within the Aging Services Network, ensuring continued access to coordinated, person-centered services that support independence, safety, and quality of life for older adults and caregivers across the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

## **Appendix A – Emergency Preparedness**

**Reference:** [45 CFR 1321.103](#)

The LRGVDC-AAA operates under the LRGVDC Emergency Preparedness Plan and coordinates with local cities, counties, and state agencies to support response efforts based on the severity, level of risk, and identified priority populations. The AAA remains operational during emergencies to the extent possible, with continuous assessment to ensure the safety of both staff and clients.

During emergency situations, the LRGVDC-AAA activates internal protocols to ensure continuity of operations, including implementation of telecommute policies and procedures to maintain uninterrupted service delivery. The LRGVDC-AAA utilizes communication systems, including agency-issued phones, remote connectivity tools, and mobile hotspot devices, to ensure ongoing communication with staff, partners, and clients. Services remain operational as appropriate, with the safety of employees and clients continuously assessed and prioritized. Priority outreach is conducted for high-risk individuals, while core services—including Information, Referral and Assistance, Case Management, Benefits Counseling (SHIP/MIPPA/Legal Assistance), Ombudsman, Care Transitions Intervention (CTI), and BRI Care Consultation—remain operational. Essential supportive services such as home-delivered meals, transportation, homemaker, respite, residential repair, and the coordination or distribution of emergency supplies are maintained or adapted as needed.

The LRGVDC-AAA collaborates closely with local emergency management offices, community partners, and service providers across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties to support coordinated response efforts, resource distribution, and communication with vulnerable populations.

## Appendix B – Public Comment Activities

Reference: [45 CFR 1321.65\(b\)\(4\)](#) and [45 CFR 1321.29](#)

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Area Agency on Aging conducted a 30-day public comment period from April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 to April May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 to solicit feedback on the draft 2027–2029 Area Plan. The draft was made publicly available through electronic distribution, community partners, and public postings, including the use of QR codes linking to the full document and comment form.

Public input was collected through community meetings, advisory council engagement, and an online submission process. All feedback received during the public comment period will be reviewed and incorporated as appropriate prior to final submission to HHSC.

### Event Schedule for Community Needs Assessment

#### Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

#### Area Agency on Aging

Date	Site	Address	County
03/10/2026	Community Needs Assessment – Citizens advisory Council	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo
3/11/2026	Aging and Disability Resource Center committee meeting	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo
03/16/2026	Area Plan Round Table Talks	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo
03/23/2026	Area Plan Round Table Talks	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo
03/23/2026	Amigos Del Valle - Casa 4	Raymondville Texas	Willacy

<b>Date</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>County</b>
03/26/2026	Willacy County Family Night	10804 Bus 77 Raymondville, TX 78580	Willacy
03/30/2026	Community Needs Assessment – Mission Housing Authority	810 N. Mayberry Mission, Texas 78572	Hidalgo
04/1/2026	Wellmed Brownsville	26 S. Coria Street Brownsville, TX 78520	Cameron
04/1/2026	Wellmed Harlingen	509 S Expressway 83 Ste B2, Harlingen, TX 78550	Cameron
04/14/2026	Citizens Advisory Council Meeting	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo
04/23/2026	Email Area Plan Draft to the LRGVDC Board of Directors for Review	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo
04/29/2026	Present the Area Plan Draft to the LRGVDC Board of Directors	301 W. Railroad Weslaco Texas 78596	Hidalgo

## **Appendix C – [N/A]**

Additional information/attachments to be added at the discretion of the AAA. Note: this is an optional attachment for the AAA to add individualized details to their Area Plan. Additional attachments are optional at the discretion of the AAA.

## Attachment 1: 2027-2029 Projected Distribution of Serviced by County

2027-2029 Projected Distribution of Direct Service Funds by County				
Supportive Services	Hidalgo County	Cameron County	Willacy County	
Assisted Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Care Coordination (Case Management)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chore Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Activity & Health Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency Response	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homemaker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homemaker - Voucher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Income Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information, Referral & Assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction and Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal Assistance 60+	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal Awareness (Legal Outreach)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Information Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residential Repair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Center Operations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Reassurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation - Voucher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visiting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Nutrition Services</b>				
Congregate Meals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home Delivered Meals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrition Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrition Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrition Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant Assessment - Nutrition Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Health Promotion Services</b>				
Evidenced Based Intervention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health Maintenance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health Screening and Monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental Health Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Fitness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Family Caregiver</b>				
Caregiver Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caregiver Information Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caregiver Support Coordination / CM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caregiver Support Groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caregiver Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respite In Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respite Out of Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respite Out of Home, Overnight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respite, Voucher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ombudsman Services</b>				
Ombudsman Program Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Special Activities - As Approved</b>				
Special Initiative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **Attachment 2: Verification of Intent & Assurances**

**Reference:** [OAA of 1965, as amended through P.L. 116-131 \(3/25/2020\)](#)

Separate attachment (template provided) requires signature by one authorized representative of AAA.

By an authorized official signing the Verification of Intent and Assurances, the AAA is assuring the written activities included in the plan will be completed during the effective period with amendment submission as required.

Certification of such assurances include the following:

- Input through a 30-calendar day public comment period.
- Input from the AAA advisory council.
- Composition requirements of advisory council are met.
- Approval from the AAA's governing board.
- Active policies and procedures are in place to identify both organizational and individual conflicts of interest.
- Direct Service Waiver will be submitted as required.
- Annual budget process will include submission of number of individuals served, type and number of units provided, and corresponding expenditures.