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SUPPORT AND SERVICES - A RESOURCE GUIDE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO GUARDIANSHIP

This guide identifies practical help that may allow an adult to remain safe and make decisions with assistance. The right combination depends on the person's wishes, abilities, finances, location, and care needs. It is educational information, not legal or medical advice, and the availability and cost of services should be confirmed with each provider.

Why consider supports and services?

A need for help with meals, medication, transportation, bills, or housing does not by itself mean that a guardianship is necessary. Texas courts consider whether feasible alternatives and supports can avoid the need for a guardianship. Services can be combined with family assistance and appropriate legal documents. A service provider ordinarily does not gain authority to make decisions for the person simply by providing help.

Start with the person and the specific need

Ask the adult which tasks are difficult, what help they would accept, and whom they trust. Identify immediate safety concerns, then list the tasks that recur each day or week. Consider whether the adult can make a decision with information explained in an accessible way, more time, or help from a trusted person. Document the services tried, the provider, cost or funding source, and whether the arrangement works.

Help at home and with daily living

An adult may be able to remain at home with meal delivery, grocery shopping, housekeeping, laundry, home repairs or accessibility changes, a medical alert system, and assistance with bathing, dressing, mobility, and other daily activities. Adult day programs offer supervision and activities for part of the day; respite care gives a family caregiver a break. A care manager can help assess needs and coordinate providers. Ask each provider exactly what it will do, its hours, qualifications, supervision, transportation policy, and emergency procedures.

If living at home is no longer workable, consider adult foster care, assisted living, memory care, or nursing care according to the level of supervision and medical care required. Tour the setting and review its services, staffing, costs, and contract before making a commitment.

Health and behavioral health

A physician or care team may recommend home health, nursing, physical or occupational therapy, speech therapy, behavioral health services, adaptive equipment, or medication management. A pharmacist can discuss packaging and delivery options. An in-home companion or homemaker should not be assumed to provide nursing or medication administration; confirm the provider's qualifications and the scope of services. For mental health or substance use needs, contact the local mental health authority or a treating professional. Call 988 for a mental health or suicide crisis; call 911 for an immediate emergency.

Money, benefits, and housing

Depending on the need, help may include benefits counseling, assistance applying for Medicaid or other public benefits, a supervised bill payment arrangement, utility assistance, employment services, affordable housing resources, and review of property tax exemptions. Review who has access to accounts, what records will be supplied, and how errors or suspected misuse will be handled. A paid bill payer or financial adviser does not automatically have authority to sign for the adult.

Medicaid long-term services may help some eligible people receive care at home or in the community. STAR+PLUS and other programs have separate eligibility and service rules. Ask the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) or Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) which programs fit the person's circumstances; do not assume Medicare or Medicaid will cover a particular caregiver, facility, or service.

Transportation and community connection

Consider accessible public transit or paratransit, volunteer or paid rides, medical transportation, escorted trips, senior centers, community dining, friendly visits, and recreational or educational programs. Ask whether the rider needs door-to-door assistance or someone to remain with the person at an appointment.

Decision support and legal authority

A trusted supporter can help an adult understand choices, communicate with providers, and weigh options while the adult continues to make the decision. A supported decision-making agreement or an appropriate authorization to share information may make this help easier to use. If the adult has the required capacity, powers of attorney and other planning documents may authorize an agent to act in the areas covered by those documents. These arrangements have different legal effects and should be tailored to the adult's situation. If essential decisions still cannot be made or implemented

safely after workable supports are considered, seek advice about whether a limited guardianship or another court remedy is needed.

Where to begin

For a family in Collin or Denton County, the North Central Texas ADRC is a useful first call. Families elsewhere can locate their regional ADRC through HHS. These starting points can connect families with local providers and program rules:

Aging and Disability Resource Centers:

Statewide: (855) 937-2372

North Central Texas ADRC: (877) 229-9084

hhs.texas.gov/services/aging/long-term-care/aging-disability-resource-centers/find-adrc

2-1-1 Texas: Dial 2-1-1 or visit 211texas.org for local food, housing, utility, health, and other services.

Texas HHS service locator: resources.hhs.texas.gov/pages/find-services - find an Area Agency on Aging, ADRC, local mental health authority, or local intellectual and developmental disability authority by county.

Medicaid and benefits: YourTexasBenefits.com; ask HHS or an ADRC about eligibility and long-term care programs.

Disability rights and decision support: disabilityrightstx.org - information about rights, supported decision-making, and alternatives to guardianship.

Caregiver support: hhs.texas.gov/services/health/support-caregivers/caregiver-support-resources - respite and caregiver resources.

Additional resource directory

The following organizations and programs address different needs. Some offer information or advocacy, while others provide direct services or determine eligibility. Availability varies by location, funding, age, and disability. Ask the organization or an ADRC for its current service area and requirements.

Disability advocacy and independent living

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (txdisabilities.org) advocates on disability rights and public policy. The Arc of Texas (thearcoftexas.org) focuses on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and offers local chapter connections. Texas Parent to Parent (txp2p.org) offers family support, education, and referrals.

The Texas State Independent Living Council (SILC) (txsilc.org) works to improve independent living and lists Texas Centers for Independent Living, which provide local peer support and other independent living services. The Southwest ADA Center (southwestada.org) provides information and training about accessibility and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Disability Rights Texas (disabilityrightstx.org) provides disability rights information and advocacy.

Medicaid and developmental disability programs

Your Texas Benefits (YourTexasBenefits.com) is the state application portal for Medicaid and other benefits. The Texas HHS Medicaid and CHIP pages (hhs.texas.gov/medicaid) explain Children's Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicaid.gov provides a Texas state profile and federal program information. An older publication titled A Roadmap to Understanding Texas Medicaid Waivers offers background, but an ADRC or local intellectual and developmental disability authority (LIDDA) should confirm current programs, rules, and interest lists.

Ask specifically about STAR+PLUS and its Home and Community Based Services waiver for eligible adults; Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS); Texas Home Living (TxHmL); and Home and Community-based Services (HCS) for eligible people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Some programs maintain interest lists, and eligibility is determined separately. The former Community Based Alternatives (CBA) waiver transitioned into STAR+PLUS HCBS; families should ask about the current program name.

State agencies, work, and assistive technology

Texas Health and Human Services (hhs.texas.gov) is the current entry point for many aging, disability, mental health, Medicaid, and long-term care services that older materials attribute to the former Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) or Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). The Texas Department of State Health Services (dshs.texas.gov) remains a separate public health agency. Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation (twc.texas.gov/programs/vocational-rehabilitation) assists eligible people with disabilities to prepare for and maintain employment.

The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities (gov.texas.gov/organization/disabilities) addresses access and disability policy. The Texas Technology Access Program (ttap.disabilitystudies.utexas.edu) is a current assistive technology resource; the older list's "Texas Assistive Technology Network" may refer to a different education network. Ability Connection (abilityconnection.org) offers disability services in its service area. 2-1-1 Texas (211texas.org) searches local programs by need and ZIP code.

Older adults, meals, and dementia

Texas Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) can connect people age 60 or older and caregivers with local services. Locate the appropriate AAA through resources.hhs.texas.gov/pages/find-services. Meals

on Wheels programs provide local meal delivery; ask the AAA or 2-1-1 for the provider serving the adult's address. The Senior Source (theseniorsource.org) serves the Dallas area. The Aging Services Council of Central Texas (agingservicescouncil.org) is a regional resource for Central Texas. The Alzheimer's Association (alz.org) offers education and caregiver support.

Mental health, crisis, and substance use

For a mental health or suicide crisis, call or text 988; for immediate danger call 911. Texas HHS lists local mental health or behavioral health authorities and county crisis lines at hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use. This is the current starting point for older references to the "Texas Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division," "Texas Suicide Prevention," or general Texas suicide and mental health crisis hotlines. MHMR Tarrant (mhmrarrant.org) and the Suicide & Crisis Center of North Texas (sccenter.org) are regional examples; confirm the appropriate service for the person's county.

NAMI Texas (namitexas.org), Mental Health America of Texas (check current affiliates through mhanational.org), and Texas HHS mental health resources offer information, education, advocacy, or referrals. "Speak Your Mind Texas" appears in older resource lists; use the current HHS mental health directory for a present-day referral. For substance use treatment, HHS lists Outreach, Screening, Assessment and Referral (OSAR) centers. Older references to the Department of State Health Services substance abuse program and the Association of Substance Abuse Programs should be checked through HHS.

Regional organizations such as the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and the East Texas Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse may offer local help; confirm current operations and service areas before relying on them.

Physical disability and brain injury

Texas Centers for Independent Living and the Texas Technology Access Program can help identify independent living and assistive technology resources. HHS Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services (CRS) supports eligible people with traumatic brain or spinal cord injuries (hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/comprehensive-rehabilitation-services-crs). The Texas Brain Injury Alliance (txbia.org) provides information and support. Ask HHS about current options instead of relying on older references to a "Rehabilitation Technology Resource Center."

Affordable housing and community assistance

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (tdhca.texas.gov) provides the Help for Texans housing resource search. HUD (hud.gov) provides rental assistance information and a resource locator. Local housing authorities, including Dallas Housing Authority (dhantx.com) and Houston Housing Authority (housingforhouston.com), administer programs in their service areas. Texas Housers (texashousers.org), formerly the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service, is primarily an advocacy and information organization. Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation

(tsahc.org) offers housing programs subject to eligibility.

Faith-based and community charities may also help with food, housing, caregiver support, or other immediate needs. Examples from the source list include Buckner International (buckner.org), Catholic Charities (find the local diocesan agency), and Lutheran Social Services (confirm the local organization and current services). Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Adult Protective Services addresses suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation; its reporting contact appears below.

When there is an urgent concern

Call 911 for immediate danger or a medical emergency. For a mental health or suicide crisis, call or text 988. To report suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of an older adult or an adult with a disability, contact Texas Adult Protective Services at (800) 252-5400 or TxAbuseHotline.org. A report does not itself appoint a guardian.

Final thoughts

Start with one or two concrete needs and contact the appropriate local resource. The person may need several services working together, and the plan should be revisited as needs change. Our office can discuss how the proposed supports relate to decision-making documents and whether a guardianship is necessary in a particular case.

If you have any questions regarding Supports and Services, please call our office at (972) 418-2919.