

Member and Family Newsletter



Winter 2026



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Message from the Assistant Director

By **Zane Garcia Ramadan**
DDD Assistant Director



Dear Members and Families,

Shortly after the publication of our last newsletter, the Division published its 5-year Strategic Plan. A full copy of the plan can be found on our website. Versions are available in English and Spanish, as well as plain language versions. We are committed to keeping members, families, and stakeholders informed of our progress on the goals and objectives. As progress is made, the Strategic Planning webpage, des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/strategic-planning, will be updated. Please bookmark this page and check back often. There is also a link to a form if you want to provide feedback on the plan.

One way you can help us better understand the progress we are making towards our goals and objectives in the strategic plan is through your participation in the NCI survey. National Core Indicators - Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI-IDD) is a joint effort between the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI). Arizona was one of the first fifteen states to participate when the program began in 1997.

NCI-IDD uses surveys and in-person interviews to measure member satisfaction with DDD programs and services.

Vital Research LLC (Vital) is the NCI-IDD Surveys vendor. They have been conducting in-person surveys with randomly selected members. They are also managing the three NCI-IDD Family Surveys. Each Family Survey is specific to the member identified on the letter included with the survey. The Family Guardian Survey (FGS), Adult Family Survey (AFS), and Child Family Survey (CFS) can be completed online or on paper. All Family Surveys are anonymous. More information is available on the Vital Arizona website at vitalresearch.com/arizona/idd/index.html.

Participation in all surveys is optional. However, I encourage all selected members and families to participate. Your feedback is critical. It will help DDD improve its programs. A larger group of responses provides more reliable data. This data (because it comes directly from you) gives us the best sense of whether the Division's support is providing a meaningful difference to those we support, and if not, where there are areas that we need to improve.

Thank you for your continued support as we work to empower Arizonans with developmental disabilities to live self-directed, healthy, and meaningful lives.

To view a video about National Core Indicators, visit:

<https://vitalresearch.com/arizona/idd/index.html>



Asthma



Asthma is a condition that causes airways to narrow and fill with mucus. As a result, it is harder to breathe, and people feel they can't get enough air in their lungs. Asthma also causes wheezing and coughing with a tight feeling in the chest. It is a lifelong disease that can be serious and life-threatening.

Asthma can start at any age.

Doctors order inhalers and breathing treatments to help control asthma symptoms. The inhalers and breathing treatments help open the lungs' airways, making breathing easier.

There are different types of medicines in inhalers and breathing treatments. Some medicines work quickly. Others work over a long period of time. The way the medicines open your lungs is by relaxing the lung muscles or reducing swelling in the lungs.

If inhalers and breathing treatments do not help enough with asthma your doctor may also give you an injection in the office. This is to help with with reducing swelling in the lungs.

You may also be given an antibiotic for asthma because germs may be causing asthma to get worse.

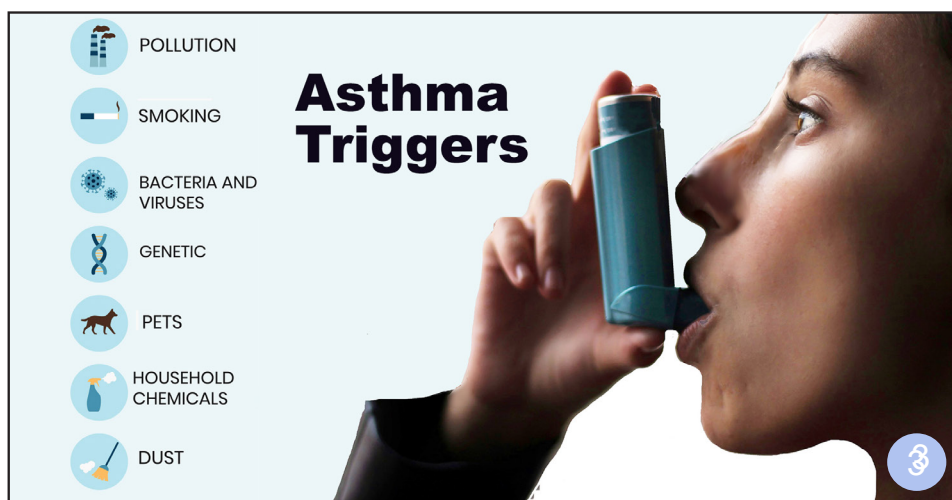
Talk to your doctor about how to

manage asthma. Ask for instructions on when and how to use the inhalers. Avoid things that can cause flare-ups, such as smoke, strong odors, pet dander, or dust. During a flare-up, asthma symptoms feel worse and can include dizziness, shortness of breath, and blue lips. People with a flare-up should go to the hospital.

Go to all of your doctor appointments so the doctor can check your lungs and ensure you are taking the right asthma medicine. People can live a healthy life with asthma when they follow their doctor's treatment plan.

Reference

American Lung Association. (2025). Asthma. Retrieved 10/13/25 from: <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/asthma>





GET A FLU SHOT

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness. It is caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Anyone can get the flu. Serious problems related to the flu can happen at any age. Some people are at high risk of serious flu-related complications if they get it.

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea (this is more common in children than adults)

The best way to prevent the flu is to get the flu vaccine. The flu vaccine (or flu shot) has been shown to reduce flu-related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications. You can also do the following to help slow the spread of germs:

- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Wash your hands often.

You can also call your DDD Health Plan or the DDD Tribal Health Program for more information about where to get a flu shot.

- Mercy Care: 1-800-624-3879
- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan: 1-800-348-4058
- DDD Tribal Health Program: 1-844-770- 9500 ext. 7 (TTY/TDD 711)

Cancer Screening

Screening tests are used to find cancer before a person has symptoms. Regular screening gives you the best chance of finding cancer early, when it's usually easier to treat.

Talk with your doctor about the pros and cons of cancer screening options and the reasons you may avoid or delay cancer screening. Your doctor will answer all of your questions. It's also important to let your doctor know how they can make testing easier for you.

Women's wellness exams are for women of all ages. Young women should have their first wellness exam between the ages of 13 and 15. You should see your doctor every year.

Special exams like a clinical breast exam and screenings will protect your overall health and help find cancer early as you get older. Talk to your doctor about what screening tests are right for you.

Breast Cancer Testing

Breast self-awareness is knowing how your breasts look and feel. It can help you notice any changes. You might find changes during a breast self-exam. You should report pain, lumps, or changes in size or shape to your doctor.

A clinical breast exam is an exam by a doctor or nurse who uses their hands to feel for lumps or other changes.

A mammogram is an X-ray that looks for changes in breast tissue like lumps or cysts. Women at average risk should start testing at age 40. Talk with your doctor about how often testing should be done.

Cervical Cancer Testing

A Pap test (or Pap smear) looks for precancers, cell changes on the cervix that

might become cancer if not treated. The cells are checked to see if they look normal. Pap tests should be started at age 21 and repeated every three years even if you are not sexually active.

An HPV test looks for the virus (human papillomavirus) that can cause cell changes on the cervix. The cells are tested for HPV. Ask your doctor if this test is right for you.

Colon Cancer Testing

People at average risk for colon cancer should start regular screening at age 45. Regular

screening can be done with a sensitive test that looks for signs of cancer in a person's stool (poop) or with an exam that looks inside the colon. Talk with your doctor about which tests might be good options for you. No matter which test you choose, the important thing is to get tested.



- FIT (fecal immunochemical test) looks for blood in the stool, indicating potential polyps or cancer.
- DNA stool test Cologuard looks for altered DNA in the stool, indicating potential precancerous polyps or cancer.
- A colonoscopy test looks inside the colon. This test can prevent colon cancer by finding abnormal areas before they turn into cancer.

Prostate Cancer Testing

A blood test called a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test measures the level of PSA in the blood. PSA is a substance made by the prostate. The levels of PSA in the blood can be higher in men who have prostate cancer. Men at average risk should consider testing at age 50. Ask your doctor if you should be tested and how often testing should be done.

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/prevention/screening.html>



Quitting Tobacco

The American Cancer Society says that quitting tobacco and nicotine products such as cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping products, cigars, and chew can be hard because the substances in tobacco are addictive. Smoking and vaping may also fill an emotional need. Lastly, quitting may lead to headaches, weight gain, cough, and trouble sleeping. It should be noted that there has been an increase in vape use, especially in young adults.

Better health: Worth the struggle of quitting.

Ending tobacco and nicotine product use may help prevent damage to the lungs, throat, heart, and blood system. Cancer risks may be reduced by quitting tobacco. The sooner you quit, the more benefit you may have.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shares that quitting tobacco use is the most important step people can take to improve their health. This is true no matter a person's age or how long they have been smoking. In addition, there are other benefits to quitting tobacco:

- Lowered risk of early death.
- Reduced risk of heart and lung disease and cancer.
- Better health for pregnant women and their babies.
- Reduced costs to people who use tobacco, health care systems, and society.

There is another good reason to quit tobacco. Others around you will not be harmed by secondhand smoke.

In an online article, the CDC writes: "Quitting smoking is the single best way to protect family members, coworkers, friends, and others from the health risks associated with breathing secondhand smoke."

Quitting tobacco is a win-win situation. Former smokers can improve their health and protect their loved ones and friends from secondhand smoke.

Talk with your doctor about ways to quit use of any type of tobacco and nicotine products.

Resources:

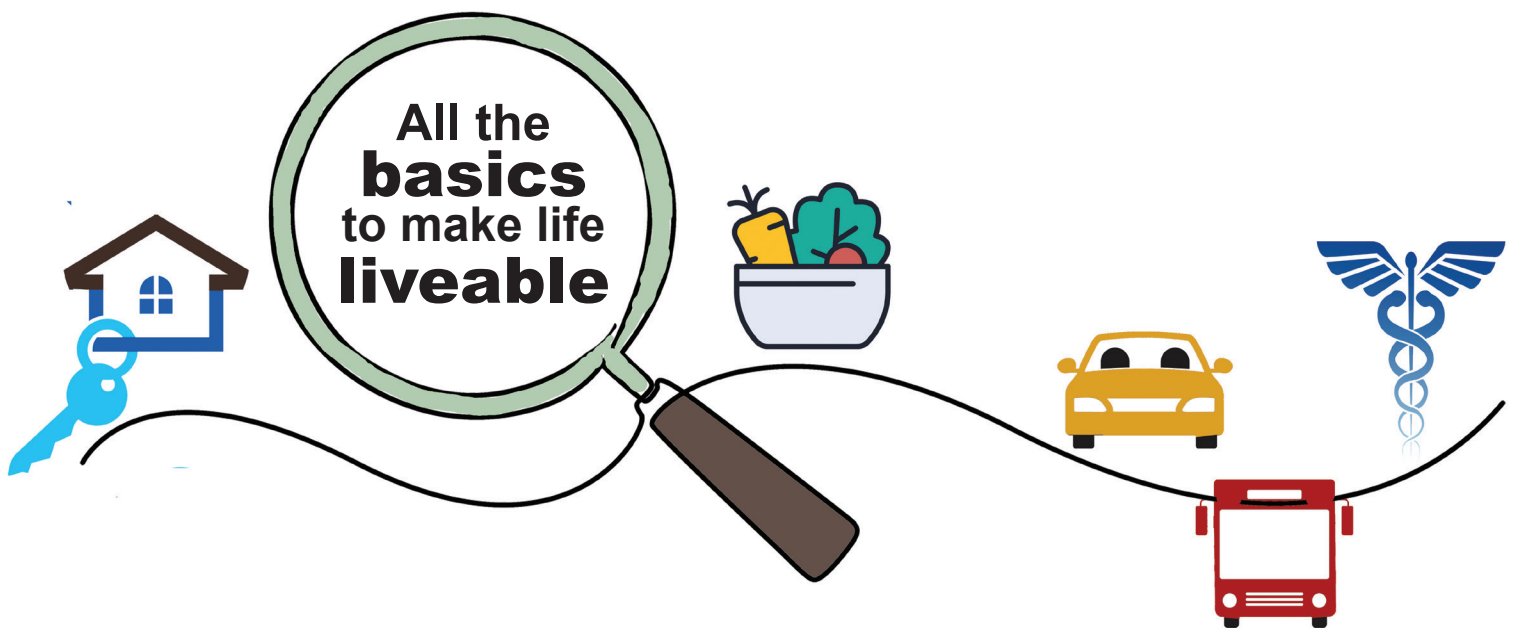
The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) website offers no-cost smoking cessation tools.

<https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/chronic-disease/tobacco-free-az/index.php>

Arizona Smokers Hotline (ASH Line) - <https://www.azdhs.gov/ashline/>

Sources: [cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco/why-people-start-using-tobacco.html](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco/why-people-start-using-tobacco.html)

[cdc.gov/tobacco/about/benefits-of-quitting.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/about/benefits-of-quitting.html)



Key to Good Health

Health-Related Social Needs (HRSN) are social and economic factors that affect a person's ability to maintain good health and well-being. These include budget instability and the lack of access to:

- healthy food
- affordable housing and utilities
- health care
- transportation

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) can assist members whose health is affected by Health-Related Social Needs. Some of the ways we can assist are:

Employment Support and Services

DDD offers job support to help eligible members gain the skills needed to find and keep a job.

Affordable Housing

DDD works with public housing agencies and the Arizona Department of Housing (ADOH) to find housing options for eligible members.

Member and Family Assistance DDD works with members and families to resolve certain issues. This help may include working with school districts and the public behavioral health system.

Support Coordinators can provide:

- Information about services for DDD members.
- Help with referrals to additional services.
- Help to work through the DDD system.
- Help to find community resources.

You can also access the DDD's Community Resource Guide at:

des.az.gov/sites/default/files/dl/DDD-2116A.pdf

To learn about Health-Related Social Needs,

visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/places/measure-definitions/health-related-social-needs.html>

Housing and Health Opportunities



Some members may be eligible for the AHCCCS Housing and Health Opportunities (H2O) Program. The goal of the program is to help people enrolled in AHCCCS with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) designation who are homeless. The program may also accept members at risk of becoming homeless.

The AHCCCS Housing and Health Opportunities (H2O) works to:

- Improve the health and well-being of at-risk members.
- Reduce the cost of care for members who have found homes.
- Reduce homelessness and maintain housing stability.

AHCCCS works with members who have an SMI designation who are:

- Homeless, and
- Have a chronic health condition; or

- Live in a correctional facility with a release date scheduled within 90 days or have been released from a correctional facility within the last 90 days.

Visit the H2O AHCCCS web page for more information: <https://www.azahcccs.gov/Resources/Federal/HousingWaiverRequest.html>

For additional support for community members, reach out to Solari (H2O-PA) to connect about your eligibility determination, referrals to providers, or other questions about the H2O program.

Phone: Toll Free 1-855-814-4673

Local: 480-546-7135

Email: H2Omembersupport@solari-inc.org

<https://community.solari-inc.org/h2o/>



Crisis Services

Any Arizona resident, with or without insurance, can get help. If you or someone you know is having a behavioral health crisis, call one of the crisis lines listed below. You should call if you are feeling really sad, hopeless, or angry and feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else. Crisis help includes:

- 24-hour-a-day helplines answered by trained crisis specialists.
- Mobile teams with behavioral health professionals travel to the person having a crisis. The mobile team may help the person get more care if needed.
- Facility-based crisis stabilization centers give first-line help that includes treatment with medication.

Arizona Statewide Crisis Hotline:

Phone:

1-844-534-HOPE (4673)

Text:

4HOPE (44673)

National Crisis Hotlines:

- National 24-Hour Crisis Hotline, Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988

- Videophone — 988lifeline.org

National Substance Use and Disorder Issues Referral and Treatment Hotline:

1-800-662-HELP (4357) or send a Text to 988

Suicide and Crisis Hotlines by County and Tribal Nation

Apache, Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Santa Cruz, or Yuma County: 1-866-495-6735

Coconino, Navajo, Mohave, or Yavapai County: 1-877-756-4090

Maricopa, Gila, or Pinal County: 1-800-631-1314

Ak-Chin Indian Community: 1-800-259-3449

Gila River Indian Community: 1-800-259-3449

Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: 480-850-9230

Tohono O'odham Nation: 1-844-423-8759

Councils and Committees

The Division of Developmental Disabilities welcomes input from people with disabilities, their families, providers, advocates, community partners, and other stakeholders as we improve our services and supports.

Volunteers are needed to support all of DDD's councils and committees. Contact the DDD Volunteer Coordinator by email at dddvolunteers@azdes.gov if you are interested in learning more.

For more information on these councils and committees, go to bit.ly/ddd_volunteer.



DDD CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER



To file a **grievance/complaint** or if you are looking for general resources, call the DDD Customer Service Center at 844-770-9500, Option 1.

GET NEWS FROM DDD.

Get monthly updates and news emailed to you. Sign up at:

<https://azdes-community.my.salesforce-sites.com/subscribe/>

CAN'T FIND SOMETHING ON OUR WEBSITE?

Call the DDD Customer Service Center at 844-770-9500, Option 1.

DDD POLICY

If you would like to be notified of Division policy updates, **send an email** with contact information to DDDpolicy@azdes.gov

RESOURCES for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and their families can be found on the DES/DDD website at <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/current-member-resources>

Follow DDD on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/OfficialArizonaDDD>

FRAUD PREVENTION



REPORT FRAUD, WASTE OR ABUSE: SUSPECT IT, REPORT IT!

Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse (FWA) are crimes. Report fraud, waste, and abuse right away. Reporters will not get in trouble or lose services for making a report of any suspected fraud, waste, or abuse.

You can report fraud, waste or abuse to DDD:

- **Calling DDD at 1-877-822-5799**
- Sending an email to dddfwa@azdes.gov
- Sending a letter to DES/DDD,
Attn: Corporate Compliance Unit,
1789 W Jefferson St.
Mail Drop 2HA1, Phoenix, AZ 85007
- Completing the online form at:
<https://www.azahcccs.gov/Fraud/ReportFraud/onlineform.aspx>

You can also report FWA to AHCCCS:

- **Provider Fraud:**
 - In Arizona: 602-417-4045
 - Outside Arizona: 888-ITS-NOT-OK (888-487-6686)
- **Member Fraud:**
 - In Arizona: 602-417-4193
 - Outside Arizona: 888-ITS-NOT-OK (888-487-6686)

If you have questions about AHCCCS fraud, abuse of the program, or abuse of a member, email the AHCCCS Office of Inspector General (OIG) at AHCCCSFraud@azahcccs.gov

ARIZONA LONG TERM CARE (ALTCS) MEMBER HANDBOOK

Members eligible for DDD/ALTCS can review a copy of the ALTCS Member Handbook online, visit: <https://bit.ly/DDD-ALTCS-Handbook>

They may also call their Support Coordinator or the DDD Customer Service Center at 1-844-770-9500, Option 1, to request a printed copy at no cost.



Division of Developmental Disabilities
Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS)

Member Handbook 2025-2026

Revision Date: October 2025

The information in this document is continually updated. Covered services are funded under contract with AHCCCS. For the latest revisions, please visit the Member Resources page on the Division of Developmental Disabilities' website at des.az.gov/ddd



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**Customer Service
1-844-770-9500**

Equal Opportunity Employer / Program • Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities • To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy, contact the Division of Developmental Disabilities ADA Coordinator at 602-771-2893; TTY/TDD Services: 7-1-1 • Disponible en español en línea o en la oficina local.