

Aging in Place

Innovative Options for Dual-Eligible Austin Seniors



Project Overview

We've set out to answer the question, what is the best approach to comprehensive* senior care in a multi-ethnic city like Austin?

Our goal is to explore the opportunities and challenges inherent in providing community care for Austin's most vulnerable. We hope to identify how experiments in community-based long-term care like the PACE model could be introduced in the City of Austin.

Problem

Austin has a rapidly growing population of low income seniors who would benefit from comprehensive care. A large majority of these individuals live in Southeast Austin, and many live in housing centers such as the Rebekah Baines Johnson Center.

So the question is, why now? With the coming "silver tsunami" (Baby boomers aging into retirement), there's no better time to address how to care for our aging population. Austin is a city that prides itself on being innovative and socially responsible, so we felt it was fitting to address the needs of Austin's dual-eligible** seniors first.

*Comprehensive here means integrated, community-based care for the consumer rather than nursing home-based care.

**Dual-eligible simply means the individual qualifies for both Medicaid and Medicare. This is typically a very frail and low-income population, often lacking the resources necessary to receive the care they need.

Solution

Analysis

We've identified two innovative forms of comprehensive senior care— PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) and STAR +PLUS.

PACE is available to individuals 55+, who are dual-eligible, nursing home eligible, and able to live safely in the community. You must live in a county where it is provided — it is currently available in Amarillo/Canyon, El Paso, and Lubbock. The sites are capped at 150 and typically have a waitlist. Three further sites are in the early stages of development.

STAR+PLUS provides Medicaid for all Texans, but for the purposes of our research we've focused on the services STAR+PLUS provides for dual-eligible seniors. To get STAR+PLUS you must apply, and there is currently no waitlist. It provides service coordination (so someone to help you navigate the system) and many services similar to PACE.

