

TCOG Counselors Now Certified to Prepare Advance Directives

SHERMAN, April 20, 2014 – Dr. Susan Thomas, Executive Director of Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG) announced today that Area Agency on Aging's Benefits Counselors have received certification through the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services in accordance with Texas Government Code 18.1011 and are authorized to prepare Advance Medical Directives on behalf of Texoma seniors. The Benefits Counseling Program provides assistance to individuals age 60 and over, and persons under 60 who are enrolled in Medicare, with legal assistance. Benefits Counselors provide advocacy, counseling, education and referrals for various issues related to public and private benefits at no cost.

Dr. Thomas said, "Those who have completed Advance Medical Directives when healthy often spare families the uncertainty that arises when they become seriously ill or incapacitated and unable to make important health care decisions for themselves." Advance Medical Directives include the Medical Power of Attorney, Directive to Physician, Out-of-Hospital Do-not Resuscitate Order and Designation of Guardian before Need Arises.

By providing personalized assistance, Benefits Counselors often dispel confusion and frustration experienced by seniors attempting to navigate the complexities of public and private benefits. Benefits Counselors establish long-term relationships with clients who are able to call whenever the need arises. For example, Benefits Counselors assist many Texoma seniors on an annual basis with the selection of their Medicare Part D plans during Medicare's Open Enrollment Period. Additionally, Benefits Counselors invite opportunities to provide educational presentations at various venues throughout the community, including city councils, employers, non-profits and faith-based organizations.

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.

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