



Direction Home (Area Agency on Aging 10B) — Help for Seniors Online

Area Agency on Aging 10B Finding help for seniors online

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1766 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Here is the whole guide in a nutshell. Portage County's local help for older adults comes from the Area Agency on Aging 10B, which now goes by Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities. Its website is dhad.org, and its toll-free number is 1-800-421-7277. The Ohio Department of Aging, at aging.ohio.gov, is the state office with information and statewide programs such as PASSPORT and the Golden Buckeye Card. The Eldercare Locator at eldercare.acl.gov, or 1-800-677-1116, can connect you to your local agency from anywhere. Always type the address yourself, look for dot gov on the state site, and remember that a real agency never asks for gift cards, your password, or a one-time code by phone. You can ask questions without being in a crisis. If any of this feels tangled, give me a call and we will sort it out together.

1. Who Helps Older Adults in Portage County

Two names to know: the local agency and the state department.

When you or a parent starts needing a little help at home, it is hard to know where to begin. The good news is that Ohio has a network built for exactly this question. It has two main pieces, and once you can tell them apart, the whole thing gets much less confusing.

The first piece is your local Area Agency on Aging. For Portage County that is Area Agency on Aging 10B, which now goes by the name Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities. The second piece is the Ohio Department of Aging, the state office that sets direction for the whole network and runs statewide programs and information.

- Local agency: your first call for services, assessments, and questions.
- State department: statewide information, program rules, and tools you can browse.
- National helper: the Eldercare Locator, a nationwide phone and web service that points you to your local agency.

Nobody expects you to understand all of this in one sitting. I wrote this guide so you can see where each website fits, what you will see on the screen, and which steps are safe to take on your own.

GOOD TO KNOW

You do not need to be in a crisis to call or visit these sites. Many people simply ask questions early so they know their options ahead of time.

2. The Name Changed: 10B and Direction Home

Same agency, newer name, which can confuse a search.

Older papers, magnets, and directories may still say Area Agency on Aging 10B, Inc. The agency serving Portage County today presents itself as Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities. Its own website describes it as a private, non-profit organization that helps older adults and people with disabilities live where they want to call home.

You may also see the older website name, services4aging.org, in printed lists. Because names and addresses on old lists can go out of date, I always suggest starting from the agency's current address and checking it against what you find.

- Look for the words Direction Home Akron Canton.
- The agency's website address is dhad.org.
- The office is at 1949 Town Park Boulevard in Uniontown, Ohio.
- The toll-free line is 1-800-421-7277, and a local line is 330-896-9172.

If a page uses the 10B name but asks you for personal details right away, slow down and use the steps in this guide to reach the real site instead.

Take your time with this part. You do not need to remember any of it, because the agency's own site shows its name, address, and phone numbers near the bottom of nearly every page.

TIP

If a printed phone list looks old, compare the number with the Contact Us page on the agency's own website before you rely on it.

3. Getting to the Real Local Agency Site

Type the address yourself and look at the page first.

The most important habit in this whole guide is starting at the right address. The agency's website is dhad.org. Type it into the address bar at the top of your browser yourself rather than clicking a link in an email or a text message.

When the page opens, you should see the name Direction Home Akron Canton near the top and a large headline about focusing on the person. Just below, you will see several big buttons. They are labeled things like I Need Help, I'm a Caregiver, and Make a Referral.

Those are good signs you are in the right place.

- 1 Open your web browser.
- 2 Click in the long box at the top and type dhad.org.
- 3 Press Enter.
- 4 Look for the Direction Home Akron Canton name and the big help buttons.
- 5 Scroll to the bottom and confirm the Uniontown, Ohio address.

A search engine can also work, but search results sometimes put paid ads at the very top. Those ads are not always the real agency.

WATCH OUT

The agency is a non-profit and does not end in dot gov, so check carefully that the spelling is exactly dhad.org. Never enter personal details on a page you reached from a message you did not expect.

4. Getting to the Ohio Department of Aging

The state site ends in dot gov, which is a helpful clue.

The Ohio Department of Aging has its own website at aging.ohio.gov. This one ends in dot gov, which is reserved for real government offices. That ending is one of the quickest ways to tell a genuine state page from an imitation.

The top of the page says it is an official State of Ohio site, and the menu across the top includes items such as Learn About Us, Explore Care and Living, Find Services, and Help Center. Under the main heading you will find a short line saying that Ohio is working to be the best place to age.

- Type aging.ohio.gov yourself into the address bar.
- Look for the official State of Ohio notice at the top.
- Use Find Services when you are looking for help.
- Use Contact Us when you want a person.

The department itself is a state office, so it points you to your local agency for most hands-on help. Think of it as the library and the local agency as the person at the front desk.

TIP

Add aging.ohio.gov and dhad.org to your browser bookmarks once you have reached them. Then you can get back in one click without typing.

5. What the Local Agency Does

A plain-language tour of the programs on the site.

The local agency's website groups its work under a few headings: Care Services, Elder Rights, and Resources and Education. Under Care Services you will find the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Pre-Admission Review, congregate meal sites and senior centers, Staying Home, and Transitioning Home.

In simple terms, the agency helps people learn what in-home and community help exists, helps them apply for programs they may qualify for, and watches out for the rights of people living in care facilities. The staff are there to explain choices, not to push one.

- Care Services: assessments, in-home support, and moving back home after a stay elsewhere.
- Elder Rights: the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and the MyCare Ohio Ombudsman.
- Resources and Education: Medicare education, health and wellness education, and the Home Energy Assistance Program.

Not every program is for every person. Some have age limits, income limits, or health-related requirements that the agency itself explains. I describe what the programs do; the agency decides who qualifies.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menu names on websites can be reorganized from time to time. If a heading in this guide is not where I say, use the site's Search link near the top.

6. The Aging and Disability Resource Center

The front door to long-term care information.

The agency calls its Aging and Disability Resource Center the front door to long-term care. It exists so you have one place to ask your questions instead of calling a dozen offices. The agency's website says it offers a free in-home assessment by an expert.

An assessment is a conversation about what daily tasks feel hard and what help might fit. It is not a test you can fail. The result helps the staff point you toward programs and providers that match your situation.

- It is a starting point, not a commitment.
- Family members can usually be part of the conversation.

- You can ask questions about choices and costs in plain words.
- You decide what, if anything, to do next.

On the website, open Care Services, then choose Aging and Disability Resource Center to read how the process works and how to reach the team. If reading feels like too much, the phone number on the page is often quicker.

TIP

Before a call, jot down a few notes: which tasks are getting harder, who lives with the person, and the best phone number to reach them. It makes the call go smoothly.

7. Using the I Need Help Button

The big button on the home page, step by step.

On the agency's home page, the I Need Help button is the simplest place for most people to begin. It leads to a page written for people seeking help for themselves or someone close to them.

The page layout can change over time, so I describe the general path and not every word you will see. You should find explanations, a way to contact the team, and links to related programs.

- 1 Go to dhad.org by typing it yourself.
- 2 Click the I Need Help button on the home page.
- 3 Read the choices on the next page slowly.
- 4 Pick the topic closest to your situation.
- 5 Follow the instructions for contacting the agency, whether that is a form, a phone number, or both.

If a form asks for details such as your name, phone number, and a short note about what you need, that is normal for an agency intake. Give only what the form actually asks for.

WATCH OUT

Never type a Social Security number or bank details into a general contact form. Genuine intake staff will explain by phone what they need and why.

8. If You Are a Caregiver

A different button for people helping someone else.

Many visitors to the site are not asking for themselves. They are daughters, sons, spouses, or neighbors looking after someone. The agency home page has an I'm a Caregiver button just for them.

Caregiving can be tiring, and the site is designed to remind you that support exists for you as well. Behind that button you can expect information about caregiver resources and ways to reach the agency's staff.

- Learn what kinds of in-home help can lighten the load.
- Ask about programs for family caregivers.
- Find out how to arrange an assessment for the person you care for.
- Look for education offered through the agency.

The Ohio Department of Aging also has a section called Caring for Someone on its home page. It brings together state information for caregivers and is another good place to read at your own pace.

Caregivers often tell me the hardest part was simply asking. A short call or message to the agency can open the door to information you did not know existed, and nobody will judge you for needing it.

GOOD TO KNOW

You are allowed to ask for help even if you feel you are managing. Reaching out early often keeps small problems from becoming big ones.

9. What PASSPORT Is

Ohio's program for services that help people stay at home.

PASSPORT is a program run by the Ohio Department of Aging. It is a Medicaid waiver, which means it lets Medicaid pay for certain home and community services instead of only paying for a nursing home. It began in the 1980s and operates across the state.

The services it can include are personal care, homemaker help, home-delivered meals, an emergency response system, non-medical transportation, and adult day services. Which services a person receives depends on an assessment and a care plan.

- It is for older adults who meet the program's eligibility rules.
- Local Area Agencies on Aging handle assessments and case management.

- You can usually choose between agency-provided services and some options where individuals provide care.
- Eligibility has financial and need-based parts the agency explains.

I cannot tell you whether you qualify. That is decided through the assessment and the state's rules, and the people at the agency can walk you through it.

Because PASSPORT is tied to Medicaid, there are also financial rules. The agency explains those during the process, so you do not have to work them out alone or in advance.

TIP

On the agency's site, look for the PASSPORT pages and Medicaid information. They also offer translated pages in several languages.

10. Applying or Asking About PASSPORT

How the first contact usually goes.

For PASSPORT, the first move is nearly always a conversation with your local agency. You do not fill out a big application online by yourself and wait. Instead, you reach out, and the agency arranges the assessment that begins the process.

Because rules and forms can change, I keep this chapter general. The agency explains the current steps, and the Ohio Department of Aging's website gives the statewide picture.

- 1 Gather the person's full name, address, and best phone number.
- 2 Reach the agency through its website or by phone.
- 3 Say you would like to learn about PASSPORT and an assessment.
- 4 Answer the staff's questions as honestly as you can.
- 5 Ask what documents to have ready and what happens next.

It is perfectly fine to ask the same question twice. Staff expect it, and writing down the answers helps.

Many families find it helpful to have one person act as the note taker during these conversations. That person can keep a simple list of questions and answers so nothing is forgotten once the call ends.

WATCH OUT

Nobody should charge you a fee to apply for PASSPORT or to help you reach the agency. If a stranger offers to do it for payment, be cautious and call the agency directly.

11. Home-Delivered and Group Meals

Finding meal programs through the agency.

Meals are one of the most common reasons people contact the agency. The website lists Congregate Meal Sites and Senior Centers under Care Services. Congregate simply means a group setting, where people gather to eat together.

Home-delivered meals are also part of the picture for people who qualify, and programs such as PASSPORT can include them. The agency can tell you which option fits and how to sign up.

- Look under Care Services for Congregate Meal Sites and Senior Centers.
- Ask the agency about home-delivered meals.
- Ask about days, times, and how to reserve a spot.
- Ask about transportation to a meal site if that is a worry.

Senior centers often offer more than lunch. Many have activities and a chance to meet neighbors, which matters as much as the food for some people.

A call to the agency is usually the quickest way to learn which meal program serves your street. Have your address and a phone number ready, and ask whether there is a waiting list or an application.

TIP

Locations and schedules change. Always confirm by phone before you head out for a first visit.

12. Rides and Getting Around

Transportation help, described generally.

Getting to appointments and the grocery store can be a real obstacle when driving is no longer comfortable. Some programs in the aging network include non-medical transportation, and PASSPORT lists it among its possible services.

The agency can explain what exists for Portage County residents and who is eligible. I do not list specific rides here, because routes, hours, and rules are set by the providers and can change.

- Ask the agency what transportation options fit your situation.
- Ask whether a ride must be booked in advance.

- Ask about rules for walkers or wheelchairs.
- Ask whether a family member may ride along.

You can also try the Eldercare Locator, covered later in this guide, which connects people with local resources such as transportation.

If you are the one who drives a loved one, ask the agency about caregiver support too. Knowing there is a backup plan for getting to appointments can take real pressure off the whole family.

GOOD TO KNOW

Writing down the date, time, and place of your appointment before calling makes a ride request much easier for the person helping you.

13. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman

A voice for people who live in care facilities.

An ombudsman is a person who listens to concerns and works to resolve them. The agency's Elder Rights section includes a Long-Term Care Ombudsman and a MyCare Ohio Ombudsman. The Ohio Department of Aging also has an Ombudsman Support in Long-Term Care page.

In plain terms, the ombudsman program helps residents of nursing homes and similar settings, and their families, raise concerns about rights and quality of life. The agency's site says its elder rights team protects your rights throughout the long-term care process.

- Find it on the agency's site under Elder Rights.
- The state department has a matching page called Ombudsman Support in Long-Term Care.
- You can ask questions about a resident's rights.
- Concerns can be raised by residents or their families.

This is an information and advocacy service. I describe what the program does; it is not legal advice, and the ombudsman staff can explain what they can and cannot do.

Residents and families can also look at the state's Long-Term Care Quality Navigator on aging.ohio.gov when comparing facilities. It is meant to be an easy, accessible dashboard for people choosing a nursing home or assisted living.

TIP

Keep notes of dates, names, and what was said when you have a concern. Clear notes help whoever you call understand the situation quickly.

14. Medicare Education Through the Agency

Learning how Medicare works, from a local source.

The agency's site lists Medicare Education under Resources and Education. Medicare can be bewildering, with plans, deadlines, and many mailings, so a local source of plain explanations is valuable.

I am not able to recommend a plan or tell you what to choose, and neither does this guide. What I can say is that the agency's education pages are a place to learn what questions to ask, and to find out how to reach someone who can help you understand your options.

- Open Resources and Education, then Medicare Education.
- Read the explanation of the services offered.
- Note any events or classes listed.
- Call to ask how to set up one-on-one help.

Bring your Medicare card and any letters you have received. Having them on the table makes a conversation more concrete.

Take a notebook to any education session. Writing down the names of the programs you hear about, and the questions you still have, makes the next conversation with a counselor far more productive.

WATCH OUT

Be wary of anyone who phones out of the blue offering a free Medicare gift or demanding your Medicare number. Real help is something you ask for, not something that chases you.

15. Help With Heating Bills: HEAP

An energy assistance program listed on the agency site.

The agency's site lists the Home Energy Assistance Program, usually called HEAP, under Resources and Education. HEAP is a program that helps eligible households with energy costs. A news item on the agency's home page mentions a summer crisis program that starts on a set date each year.

Eligibility rules and sign-up details are set by the program, so I keep this chapter general. The agency page explains how to apply and whom to contact.

- 1 Go to dhad.org and open Resources and Education.
- 2 Choose Home Energy Assistance Program.
- 3 Read how to apply and what to have ready.
- 4 Gather recent utility bills and basic household information.
- 5 Follow the instructions to apply or call the number listed.

If you have a shutoff notice or an urgent situation, say so when you call. Staff can tell you what options exist.

Gathering bills and household information ahead of time is the part most people find most helpful. A small folder of recent statements means you will not be hunting for paper while someone waits on the phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your utility company can also explain payment arrangements. See my separate guides on paying utility bills and on budget billing.

16. Golden Buckeye and Other State Programs

What the Ohio Department of Aging offers beyond local help.

The Ohio Department of Aging's home page highlights several things. One is the Golden Buckeye program, which connects businesses with older adults and people with disabilities, often through discounts. I have a separate guide on the Golden Buckeye Card.

The department also offers the Ohio Aging Compass, the Long-Term Care Quality Navigator, and the State Plan on Aging. The Navigator is described as a dashboard to help Ohioans find a nursing home or assisted living facility.

- Golden Buckeye: discounts and a connection to participating businesses.
- Ohio Aging Compass: a search tool for care and living information.
- Long-Term Care Quality Navigator: a dashboard for comparing facilities.
- State Plan on Aging: a planning report for the state's aging network.

You are not expected to use all of these. Most people need only one or two, and the Find Services link is a good place to start.

Remember that this guide only describes what the programs do. Ask the department or your local agency about any rules, and rely on their official pages rather than a friend's

memory of how it used to work.

TIP

If a tool on the state site asks you to sign in, make sure the address ends in ohio.gov before typing a password.

17. Using Find Services on the State Site

A way to look for help without knowing program names.

The state site has a menu item called Find Services. It exists for the person who does not know program names and only knows what they need. It is a good option if the local agency is closed or you want to read first.

The exact layout can be updated by the state, so look for the general shape: a list of service types or a search field, followed by pages that explain each service and who to contact.

- 1 Type aging.ohio.gov into your browser.
- 2 Click Find Services in the top menu.
- 3 Choose the kind of help that matches your need.
- 4 Read the page, including any notes about who can use it.
- 5 Follow the contact information to your local agency.

If nothing seems to fit, the Contact Us link on the same menu gives ways to reach the department. Describe your situation in a sentence or two.

Bookmark the pages that help you most. Once you find a clear page on a service, saving it means you can return directly, instead of searching through menus each time you need it.

GOOD TO KNOW

The state site is information-focused. Actual services usually come from your local agency or a provider the agency connects you with.

18. The Eldercare Locator

A national phone line and website that finds your local agency.

The Eldercare Locator is a free nationwide service. Its website is eldercare.acl.gov, and its toll-free number is 1-800-677-1116. It was established by the federal Administration on Aging and is administered by USAging, the national association of area agencies on aging.

Its purpose is simple. You tell it where you live, and it connects you with your local Area Agency on Aging and other resources, such as help with meals, home care, transportation, caregiver training, and respite.

- The website lists weekday phone and online chat hours; its page has said 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern.
- Calls outside those hours may be answered with the number of a local agency.
- There is no fee to use it.
- Callers using TTY can connect through a relay operator.

This is a useful backup if you are away from Portage County, helping a relative who lives in another state, or simply cannot reach the local agency.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you are arranging help for a parent in another state, the Eldercare Locator can point you to that area's agency. Keep a note of their zip code handy.

19. Safe Ways to Contact the Agency

Phone, web, or in person: your choice.

You do not have to use the internet to reach the agency. Phone and mail work too, and some people prefer to talk to a person. The website lists a toll-free number, 1-800-421-7277, and a local number, 330-896-9172. The Contact Us page is the place to confirm both.

Use whichever feels most comfortable. If you are using the website, look for a contact form or an email option on the Contact Us page, and read what it says about response times.

- Phone: often the fastest way to reach a real person.
- Website form: handy after hours.
- Mail or visit: the office address is 1949 Town Park Boulevard in Uniontown.
- Family helper: a relative can call with you on the line.

If you call on behalf of someone else, the agency may need that person's permission before sharing details. That is a privacy protection, not a roadblock.

Many people feel more comfortable after a first call than they expected. The person on the line has likely answered questions just like yours before, and they are used to going at your pace.

TIP

Call from a quiet room with a pen and paper. Write down the name of the person you speak with and the date.

20. Making a Referral for Someone Else

When a neighbor, doctor, or family member wants to connect a person.

The agency's home page has a Make a Referral button. A referral is when someone tells the agency about a person who may benefit from help, so staff can follow up. Doctors, social workers, family members, and friends all make them.

The page explains what the agency needs and how the referral is handled. Because it involves another person's information, take care to share only what is needed and, wherever possible, tell the person you are doing it.

- 1 Go to dhad.org and click Make a Referral.
- 2 Read the instructions on who may refer.
- 3 Gather the person's name, contact information, and a short description of the concern.
- 4 Complete the form or call the number provided.
- 5 Let the person know the agency may reach out.

Respecting the person's wishes matters. Older adults have the right to make their own decisions, and a referral works best when they agree to it.

Keep a note of the date you made the referral and what you told the agency. If you do not hear anything for a while, you can call and ask politely whether it was received.

GOOD TO KNOW

If someone is in immediate danger, call 911 first. A website form is not an emergency line.

21. Reading the Site on a Phone

Making the pages comfortable on a small screen.

Many people look up services on a phone or tablet. Both sites you will use here are built to work on small screens, but the menu may be collapsed into a small icon of three lines in a corner. Tapping that icon opens the same menu you see on a computer.

If the text feels tiny, you have several easy options. You can spread two fingers apart on the screen to enlarge a page, or turn the phone sideways for a wider view.

- Tap the three-line menu icon to see the main sections.
- Pinch outward with two fingers to enlarge text.
- Turn the phone sideways for a wider screen.
- Use your phone's display settings to make all text larger.

Phone numbers on web pages are often tappable. Touching one may begin a call, so make sure you mean it before tapping.

One more small tip: if a page seems to keep jumping around, wait a few seconds for it to finish loading. Phones can be slow to draw a whole page, especially on a weak signal.

TIP

If you are using a computer, hold the Control key and press the plus key to make the page larger. On a Mac, use the Command key.

22. Using the Library or a Borrowed Computer

You do not need a computer at home.

If you do not have a computer or internet at home, public libraries in Portage County provide computers and often have staff who can show you how to use a website. This is a perfectly good way to look up the agency and the Ohio Department of Aging.

Reading information on these sites does not require signing in, which makes shared computers a reasonable choice. Simply be careful about anything personal you type on a machine other than your own.

- Type the website addresses yourself.
- Do not save passwords on the shared computer.
- Close the browser when you finish.
- Take your printed notes and leave nothing behind at the printer.

You may also bring a family member or friend for support. Two people looking at one screen often spot things one person misses.

Librarians are used to questions from people of every comfort level. Asking for help finding a website is one of the most common things they do, and no question is too small to ask.

WATCH OUT

If a shared computer asks to remember your password or sign in automatically, choose no. That feature is meant for your own device.

23. Printing and Saving What You Find

Keeping the facts you need close at hand.

Programs and phone numbers are easier to use when they are on paper beside the phone. Most browsers let you print a page with a few clicks, and you can save a copy as a file too.

A short binder or folder for aging-related papers is a gift to your future self and your family. It means that when a question comes up, the answer is not buried in a drawer or a browser history.

- 1 Open the page you want to keep.
- 2 Use the browser's Print option, often found under a three-dot or three-line menu.
- 3 Choose a printer, or choose Save as PDF as the destination.
- 4 Click Print or Save.
- 5 Write the date on the page, since web pages change.

Include in your folder the agency's phone number, the name of anyone you spoke with, and a few notes about each call.

If you do not own a printer, a library can print pages for a small fee. You can also copy the phone numbers by hand onto a card, which is just as good and costs nothing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Web pages can change without notice. A printout shows what the page said on the day you read it, which can help if you later have a question.

24. Scams That Target Older Adults

What to watch for around aging services.

Because these programs deal with health, money, and home care, scammers like to imitate them. The common thread is pressure. You are told to act at once, pay quickly, or reveal something private.

A real agency explains things, gives you time, and lets you call back on a number you looked up yourself. A scammer does the opposite. Knowing the pattern is the best protection you have.

- A caller who says you have won a free medical device or service and needs your Medicare number.
- A message that says your benefits will be cut unless you click a link.
- Anyone who asks for gift cards, wire transfers, or payment apps as payment.

- A stranger at the door offering free help with enrollment.
- A page that looks like the agency but has a slightly different address.

If something feels wrong, hang up, close the page, and call the agency on the number you found yourself.

It is perfectly polite to end a suspicious call. You owe a stranger nothing, and you can always check with the agency afterward. Telling a trusted family member also helps you stay calm and think clearly.

WATCH OUT

The real agency never demands gift cards and never asks for your password or a one-time code by phone. If someone does, it is not them.

25. Protecting Your Private Information

What is fine to share and what is not.

When you contact an aging agency, you will sometimes share personal details so staff can help. That is normal. The trick is knowing what is reasonable to share, with whom, and when.

Your name, phone number, general address, and a description of what you need are usually enough for a first contact. More sensitive details, such as insurance information, may come up during an assessment, and you can ask why each item is needed.

- Share the minimum needed at each step.
- Ask why a piece of information is being requested.
- Prefer phone calls you start over unexpected calls.
- Do not post personal details on social media pages.

The agency's website includes a HIPAA notice at the bottom of the page, which describes how health information is handled. Reading it is a good way to learn your rights.

If you ever share something private by mistake, do not panic. Call the real agency and your bank or insurer using numbers from official sources, and ask what to do next. Acting calmly and early helps.

TIP

You are always allowed to say, Let me call you back at the number on your website. Honest staff will understand.

26. Helping a Parent or Spouse Online

Sit beside them, not in their place.

Many readers of this guide are adult children helping a parent. Doing research together is often the kindest approach. You can read the pages aloud, take notes, and still let your parent steer the decisions.

When it is time to call the agency, put the call on speaker if your parent is comfortable. That way, they hear the answers directly and you can follow along. Staff often prefer to hear from the older adult first.

- Ask your parent what they want before you search.
- Take turns typing and reading.
- Write down questions in advance.
- Keep a shared folder of notes and phone numbers.

If you have legal authority such as a power of attorney, bring the paperwork when the agency requests it. Do not share passwords or accounts instead of using proper authorizations.

If your parent is hard of hearing or tires easily, shorter sessions help. Stop before anyone is frustrated and pick the conversation up again after a rest, a meal, or the next morning.

GOOD TO KNOW

Respecting your parent's choices builds trust, even when you would decide differently. The goal is help they will actually accept.

27. Planning Ahead Before a Crisis

Looking around early makes later choices calmer.

It is far easier to learn about programs when no one is in the hospital and no deadline is looming. A quiet afternoon spent browsing the two websites can save a lot of stress later.

Planning does not mean deciding. It means learning what exists, where the phone numbers are, and who in the family would help. You can change your mind at any point.

- 1 Bookmark dhad.org and aging.ohio.gov.
- 2 Read the Care Services and Find Services pages.
- 3 Write the agency's phone number on a card near the phone.
- 4 Talk with family about wishes and who to call first.
- 5 Keep important papers in one labeled place.

The agency also lists Pre-Admission Review under Care Services. It is a process tied to entering certain long-term care settings, and the agency can explain it if you ask.

Families who plan together often find the hardest part is starting. A small first step, like writing down one phone number, is enough. Each small step makes the next one easier when you are ready.

TIP

A family conversation over coffee often works better than a formal meeting. Keep it short, and plan to continue it another day.

28. When the Website Will Not Cooperate

Simple fixes for common problems.

Sometimes a page will not load, a button does nothing, or text looks scrambled. This is almost never your fault. Websites have bad days, and a few steps usually solve the problem.

Work from simplest to most involved, and take your time. If one fix does not help, move to the next.

- Check the address for typing mistakes.
- Refresh the page using the circular arrow near the address bar.
- Close the browser completely and open it again.
- Try a different browser or your phone.
- Come back later, since sites sometimes undergo maintenance.

If a page is simply missing, the organization may have rearranged it. Use the Search link on the site or call the phone number instead.

Browsers also keep old copies of pages. If a site looks odd, a fresh start often helps. Closing every browser window and reopening just one clears up more problems than people expect, and it costs nothing.

If a page asks you to download something just to read it, stop. These sites should let you read plain pages without installing anything.

GOOD TO KNOW

Write down exactly what a message on screen says before you ask for help. The exact wording lets a helper solve it much faster.

29. Questions Neighbors Ask Me

Short answers to common questions.

Q: Is the Area Agency on Aging 10B the same as Direction Home? A: Yes, as far as the agency's materials show, Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities is the agency formerly known by the 10B name.

Q: Does it cost anything to ask questions? A: Contacting the agency to ask about options is not something you should be charged for, and the agency's site describes its in-home assessment as free.

Q: Do I need a computer? A: No. The phone works fine, and a family member or librarian can help with the web.

Q: Which site should I start with? A: Start with your local agency at dhad.org, because that is where services are arranged. Use aging.ohio.gov for statewide information.

Q: Can the agency help someone who is not a senior? A: The agency describes itself as serving older adults and people with disabilities, so it can be worth a call to ask what fits your situation.

TIP

If your question is not listed, call the agency or call me. Asking is always better than guessing.

30. What These Sites Cannot Do

Knowing the limits saves frustration.

It helps to be realistic. These websites are information and doorways. They do not give medical advice, they do not decide anything on their own, and reading a page does not enroll you in a program.

The agency's website explains services and how to reach staff, but a person still needs to talk with you about your situation. The state site describes programs and tools, but local agencies carry out much of the hands-on work.

- They do not diagnose or recommend treatment.
- They do not approve you for programs just because you visited.
- They do not replace a conversation with the agency.

- They do not require you to sign up for anything to read.

When a question is about health, speak with your own doctor. When it is about what help exists and how to apply, the agency is the right place.

Keeping expectations realistic actually makes the process less stressful. You know the agency is the place where real conversations happen, and the websites are there to get you pointed in the right direction.

WATCH OUT

Any website that promises guaranteed approval for benefits, or charges a fee to find you free programs, is not the real agency.

31. Your Portage County Cheat List

The addresses and numbers in one place.

Here is everything from this guide on one page. Confirm each item on the agency's official site, since contact details can change. Copy it onto an index card and keep it by your phone.

- Local agency: Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities, formerly Area Agency on Aging 10B.
- Website: dhad.org.
- Office: 1949 Town Park Boulevard, Uniontown, Ohio 44685.
- Phone: 1-800-421-7277 toll-free, or 330-896-9172 locally.
- State: Ohio Department of Aging at aging.ohio.gov.
- National: Eldercare Locator at eldercare.acl.gov or 1-800-677-1116.

Portage County also publishes a senior resource guide through its Job and Family Services office on the county website, portagecounty-oh.gov. It is another way to find local help, including numbers for local organizations.

Updating the card is easy. If a number ever stops working, cross it out, check the agency's Contact Us page, and write the new one beside it. A tidy card is one you will actually use.

Share a copy with a trusted family member too, so someone else knows where to look if you need help.

TIP

If you would like a hand setting up bookmarks or printing this list, call Bill's Home Tech at (330) 200-8042. I am glad to help.

32. Your First Contact, Start to Finish

Pulling the guide together into a simple plan.

Let us put the pieces in order. You do not have to do all of this in one day. Take it one small step at a time, and stop whenever you need a break.

- 1 Decide what you are looking for: meals, a ride, help at home, or just information.
- 2 Type dhad.org into your browser and read the home page.
- 3 Click I Need Help or I'm a Caregiver, whichever fits.
- 4 Call the toll-free or local number if you prefer to speak with a person.
- 5 Ask about a free assessment through the Aging and Disability Resource Center.
- 6 Visit aging.ohio.gov for statewide information.
- 7 Write down names, dates, and next steps in your folder.

If the local agency is unreachable, try the Eldercare Locator. If you ever feel unsure whether a message or call is real, stop and verify it using the addresses in this guide.

Nothing here has to be done in this order or all at once. If you only manage the first two items today, that is a real start, and the rest of the plan will still be waiting for you tomorrow.

GOOD TO KNOW

Most people make the first call feeling nervous and hang up feeling relieved. The staff answer these questions every day.

33. Reaching Help for Different Kinds of Needs

A quick map of who to ask for what.

Different needs point to different doors. This chapter works like a simple map so you can get to the right place faster.

- Help at home or a care assessment: the local agency's Aging and Disability Resource Center.
- Meals and senior centers: Care Services on the agency's site.
- Concerns about a care facility: the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.
- Medicare questions: Medicare Education on the agency's site.
- Energy bills: the Home Energy Assistance Program page.
- Discounts for older Ohioans: the Golden Buckeye program.
- Nationwide help finding an agency: the Eldercare Locator.

If your need does not appear here, call the agency and describe it. Staff are used to unusual situations and can redirect you if they are not the right office.

Remember that the agency works with people of many ages who have disabilities, not only seniors. If you are a younger adult with a disability, the same front door may still be useful for you.

Whatever the need, you are not bothering anyone by asking. Helping people find the right door is exactly the job of the people behind these numbers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Mark this chapter with a sticky note. When a new worry arises, you will already know which line to follow.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the computer. I want to... Reach the local agency: type dhad.org, or call 1-800-421-7277 or 330-896-9172. Ask for help: click I Need Help. Help a loved one: click I'm a Caregiver. Learn about PASSPORT: ask the local agency for an assessment. Read state information: type aging.ohio.gov and use Find Services. Find an agency anywhere: eldercare.acl.gov or 1-800-677-1116. Spot a scam: no gift cards, no passwords, no codes. Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

From Question to Answer

A simple path to older-adult help.



Phone works just as well as the website.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Who Helps With What

Three places, three jobs.



Start local, then use the others as backup.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.