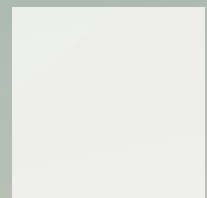
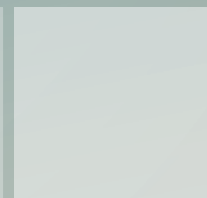


# OUR

## HOUSTON - GALVESTON REGION

### COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE



# purpose of the guide

Staying informed about our communities is important for maintaining our quality of life and the efficient use of resources. The purpose of this Resource Guide is to connect residents with state and local programs and resources available within the 13-county Houston-Galveston area. Here you will find the “who, what, and where” to answer everyday questions about your home, neighborhood or business and to explore new opportunities to enjoy what the region offers. The content in this guide ranges from general information on services provided to all residents to specific programs for groups such as children and senior citizens. Use the guide to find out more about a particular interest or learn about the many different partners that make up our region.

# how to use the guide

The Guide has two parts:

**Part 1** explains the responsibilities of different state and local public agencies and departments working in your community. You can use the information in this section to learn more about what state, regional, county and city governments do and where to direct questions and input.

**Part 2** includes specific topics organized around a series of “How do I ....” questions. You can use the suggested information sources in these sections to get help with individual needs or issues, to find out more about what is going on in your community and to get more involved as a resident.

The guide is meant to be a living resource that is updated periodically to reflect changes in contact information or the programs and services that are available. Please continue to visit the guide to find out the latest information. This listing does not represent all service providers or programs in our community. If you have suggestions for other organizations, programs or sources to be included, please visit [www.ourregion.org](http://www.ourregion.org) and select “Contact Us.”

The guide was developed as part of the Houston-Galveston Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. You can find out more information about the Regional Plan at [www.ourregion.org](http://www.ourregion.org).

# Part 1 who is responsible for delivering different services?

## City

### Administrator or Manager

- Generally responsible for oversight of all city departments on behalf of a council or mayor
- Acts as a liaison between the department directors and the council, thus providing a direct link and advocate for both groups
- Sometimes directly responsible for the finance department
- Appointed in a council-manager form of city government
- Oversight of all hiring, firing, disciplining and suspensions
- Preparation, monitoring, and execution of the city budget, which includes submitting each year to the council a proposed budget package with options and recommendations for its consideration and possible approval
- Main technical advisor to the council on overall governmental operations
- Public relations, such as meeting with citizens, citizen groups, businesses, and other stakeholders (the presence of a mayor may alter this function somewhat)
- Operating the city with a professional understanding of how all city functions operate together to their best effect
- Attends all council meetings, but does not have any voting rights
- Additional duties that may be assigned by the council

### Public Works

- Provides many of the basic services that affect the daily lives of everyone who lives and works in the city
- Responsible for managing the many different projects and facilities funded by the city
  - The administration, planning, maintenance, construction management and technical engineering of the city's infrastructure
- Broad category of infrastructure projects, financed and constructed by the government, for recreational, employment, and health and safety uses in the greater community
  - Public buildings (*municipal buildings, schools, hospitals*)
  - Transportation infrastructure (*roads, railroads, bridges, pipelines, canals, ports, airports*)
  - Public spaces (*public squares, parks, beaches*)
  - Public services (water supply, sewage, electrical grid, dams)
  - Parks (*if the city does not have a parks department*)
  - Water quality maintenance
  - Coordinates utility capacity
  - Fleet Maintenance
  - Stormwater Management
  - Streets and Drainage
  - Wastewater Collection
  - Water Distribution
  - Water / Sewer Maintenance
  - Sanitation
  - Traffic Division
  - Building, Plumbing, Electrical and Mechanical Permit and Inspections
  - Code Enforcement
  - Animal Control
  - Engineering
  - Floodplain Management
  - Maintains the city's Infrastructure Design Manual
  - Mosquito spraying

## Traffic and Transportation

- Responsible for overseeing the transportation infrastructure
  - Installation, operation and maintenance of traffic signs, signalized intersections, school zone flashers, streetlights, freeway lights, pavement markings, under bridge lights, etc.
- Responsible for performing engineering studies, plan reviews, and field investigations related to traffic counts, street lighting, school zones, speed humps, railroad safety and quiet zones, view obstructions, neighborhood cut-through traffic, and Capital Improvement Plans (*CIP*)
- Manages street and lane closure permits, develops general speed and school zone ordinances, and coordinates with the local police department to help alleviate traffic congestion hot spots

## Parks

- Responsible for installation, operation and maintenance of all city owned recreational centers, parks, ball fields, swimming pools and other city owned athletic facilities
- Develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities
- Some parks departments are in charge of facility rentals by the general public
  - Please see your cities policies on reservations for indoor and outdoor facilities
- Some cities have their parks department within their public works and engineering department. Please see you specific city's website to determine this.

## Planning

- Responsible for the implementation of a variety of ordinances, policies, contracts, programs and studies
- Provides the general public and the city with the information and guidance, in order to lead to effective future land development and economic growth, through long range and comprehensive planning
- Provides quality customer service to residents, businesses, organizations, neighborhoods and decision-makers through research, data, mapping and analysis
- Provides tools and resources to strengthen and increase the long-term viability of neighborhoods
- Regulates land development in the city and the extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ)
- Reviews, investigates and promotes land regulation policies for the changing demands to the city's growth and quality of life
- Guides land development inside the city and the city's ETJ by using several city ordinances such as;
  - Subdivision Ordinances
  - Zoning Ordinances
  - Off-Street Parking Ordinances
  - Landscaping Ordinances
  - Sign Ordinances
  - Cell Phone Tower Ordinances
  - Park Ordinances
- Some cities have their planning department within their public works and engineering department. Please see you specific city's website to determine this.

## Finance

- General responsibility for the financial administration of the city
- Provides managerial, analytical, and administrative support for all the departments of the city
- Provides financial leadership and expertise to enable compliance with legal and policy requirements and support strategic decisions for the city's initiatives to proactively ensure that all resources are managed and accounted for in an effective and efficient manner
- Accountable to manage the city's finances in a responsible manner
- Produce an accurate and timely financial report
- Develop and implement the financial policies of the city
- Its functions include:
  - Budget preparation, coordination, and monitoring for compliance
  - Payment of all invoices
  - Providing for centralized cash receipts and accounts receivable
  - Purchasing goods and services on behalf of the city
  - Recording and documenting all financial transactions, fund investments, and debt management
  - Risk management
  - Tax collection

# Water District

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- Government entity that provides limited services to its customers and residents depending on the district's type
- A district may be created by the TCEQ or the county commissioners court for "general law" districts
- If a district must be created or altered by an act of Legislature, it is a "special law" district
- For more information on Texas Water Districts, please visit the TCEQ General Guide at [http://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-043.html/at\\_download/file](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-043.html/at_download/file) or <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/utilities/ud.html> for further information

# Municipal Utility District (MUD)

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- Engages in the supply of water, conservation, irrigation, drainage, fire fighting, solid waste (garbage) collection and disposal (including recycling activities), wastewater (sewage) treatment and recreational facilities
- Prohibited from issuing bonds to pay for parks or recreational facilities but they can develop, maintain and acquire parks or recreational facilities and charge a user fee
- For more information on Texas Water Districts, please visit the TCEQ General Guide at [http://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-043.html/at\\_download/file](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-043.html/at_download/file) or <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/utilities/ud.html> for further information

# Independent School District (ISD)

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- Implementing the state's system of public education and ensuring student performance in accordance with the state's education code
  - For more information regarding the Texas Education Code please visit <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.11.htm>

# Management District

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- Special districts created by the Texas legislature
- Empowered to promote, develop, encourage and maintain employment, commerce, transportation, housing, tourism, recreation, arts, entertainment, economic development, safety and the public welfare
- Given the power to finance their operations by issuing bonds or other obligations, payable in whole or in part from ad valorem taxes, assessments, impact fees, or other funds of the District to provide improvements and services
- Districts may not levy a tax or assessment on single-family detached residences
- Districts may levy a tax only after holding an election within the district
- Districts are intended to supplement, not supplant, existing public services
- For more information regarding MDs please visit the Texas Local Government Code Chapter 375 at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.375.htm>

## Community Development Corporation (CDC)

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- Typically non-profit organizations
- Builds a community-based strategic plan to set goals of development within a specific community
- Creates innovative, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible housing
- Promotes economic growth that complements the needs of the neighborhood's residents
- Assists specific areas in reaching specific economic and community goals to serve the best interest of its citizens and guests
- Responsible for promoting the economic growth and diversification

## Economic Development Corporation (CDC)

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- Responsible for attracting businesses and creating job opportunities in cities
- For more information regarding EDCs, sales tax for ED, tax incentives, hotel occupancy tax (HOT), 4A and 4B ED sales tax and other ED tools, please see the ED Handbook from the Attorney General's office at [https://www.oag.state.tx.us/ag\\_publications/pdfs/econdevhb2008.pdf](https://www.oag.state.tx.us/ag_publications/pdfs/econdevhb2008.pdf)
- You may also visit the **Texas Ahead** website for additional tax programs and incentives
  - [http://www.texasahead.org/tax\\_programs/typeab/](http://www.texasahead.org/tax_programs/typeab/)
- Chapter 501 in the Texas Local Government Code
  - <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.501.htm>



# Law Enforcement

## Sheriff

- Chief law enforcement officer for the county and is elected every four years
- Responsible for the operation of the county correctional center, but must consult with the director of the community supervision and corrections department serving the county about issues relating to probationers participating in county correctional center programs
- Countywide jurisdiction, but in practice, most sheriffs' offices concentrate their activities outside city limits where municipal officers cannot operate
- Provides law enforcement services to residents
- Responsible for operating the county jails, investigating crimes, making arrests, enforcing traffic regulations on county roads and maintaining security in both the county and district courts
- Independent and not responsible to other agencies except in the matter of an operating budget, which must be approved by the Commissioner's Court
- Performs such varied duties as enforcing estray laws, collecting fines and court costs, conducting court-ordered sales of real estate or other items, providing security of the district and county courts, serving of civil and criminal process such as subpoenas, warrants, *capias* and various writs such as writs of attachment in child custody cases
- Communications (*dispatch*) and 911 operations are also the responsibility of the Sheriff in most counties in Texas

## Constable

- Have all the enforcement powers of any other peace officers and often participate actively in criminal investigations
- Typically one per precinct per county and elected every four years
- Duties generally include;
  - Providing bailiffs for the justice of the peace court(s) within his/her precinct and serving process issued there and from any other court
  - Focus on truancy cases
  - Serves as bailiff for the justice courts, serves subpoenas and other process and plays an important role in making sure the judgments rendered in civil cases are satisfied
- Duties related to keeping accounts of the financial transactions of the office and is responsible for property seized or money collected by court order
- For more information regarding constable duties, please see Chapter 86 of the Local Government Code at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.86.htm>

## Police Officer

- Enforces federal and state laws and local ordinances in their specific jurisdiction / city
- Performs a variety of duties relative to assigned area of responsibility such as;
  - Identifying and apprehending criminal violators
  - Ensuring the free flow of traffic
  - Executing warrants of arrest and assisting in serving warrants
  - Ensuring the safe and legal operation of jail
  - Presenting crime prevention programs
  - Patrol an assigned area by car, motorcycle, bicycle, or on foot to discourage crime, maintaining responsibility and accountability for assigned geographic area
  - Build and maintain effective partnerships with community groups and members and respond to requests and inquiries from citizens concerning laws and city ordinances

# County

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## County Judge

- Under Texas law, the County Judge serves as chief executive officer of the county
- Involved in almost all aspects of county government, including preparing the county budget and presiding over Commissioners Court

## Community/Social Services

- Provides short-term assistance for emergency needs such as utilities, groceries, medications, and rental/mortgage assistance
- Provides for the general relief of indigents
- Provides burial of paupers

## Emergency Management

- Regulates burn bans in unincorporated areas
- Develop, maintain and coordinate a comprehensive emergency management plan
- Implements programs to increase public awareness about threats and hazards
- Coordinates emergency planning
- Provides an extensive array of specialized training for emergency responders and local officials
- Administers disaster recovery and hazard mitigation programs

## Engineering

- Constructs, maintains and repairs county roadways and bridges
- Inspects/permits construction projects of all kind in the unincorporated areas within a county
  - Development inspections
  - Right-of-way inspections
  - Electrical utility permit
  - Gas utility permit
  - Water utility permit
  - Subdivision platting
  - Driveway permitting and construction
- Provides project engineering services for county projects
- Performs commercial building and site permitting and review for the unincorporated areas within a county
- Performs residential permitting and review for the unincorporated areas within a county
- Performs storm water quality and wastewater permitting and review for the unincorporated areas within a county
- Provides watershed protection inspections for the unincorporated areas within a county
- Also responsible for:
  - county road drainage
  - Herbicide treatment
  - Right-of-way mowing
  - Street sweeping
  - Culvert/pipe installation
  - Installation, maintenance and repair of county street signs and barricades
  - county road striping

## Health System

- Provides health care services to eligible residents through the counties, hospital districts and public hospitals
- Provides services for the deaf and hard of hearing
- Provides indigent burials
- Promotes health, prevent disease and protect communities
- Seeks to help residents live long and healthy lives through the assurance of environmental quality, the access to personal health services and the dissemination of information to make wise health decisions

## Housing

- Promotes innovative housing communities and encourage our clients
- to achieve self-sufficiency
- Provides communities with jobs
- Helps to establish neighborhoods
- Promotes balance and stability for families and individuals who might otherwise not have access to these services

## Parks and Recreation

- Develops and maintains active parks, leased parks and community centers in the county
- Preserves natural and historic resources in the county
- Provides appropriate recreation programs and activities for youth, adults, and senior citizens in accordance with the adopted master plan and needs assessment in the county
- Provides building and lawn maintenance for all county structures and facilities

# Regional

## Council of Government (COG)

- Defined to serve an area of several counties; the COG addresses issues such as regional and municipal planning, economic and community development, cartography and GIS, hazard mitigation and emergency planning, aging services, water use, pollution control, transit administration, and transportation planning
- Many COGs establish and host region-wide geographical information systems (GIS) as well as databases on regional population, economic, and land-use patterns
- COGs are voluntary associations that represent member local governments, mainly cities and counties, that seek to provide cooperative planning, coordination, and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines
- Plans and implements regional homeland security strategies
- Operates law enforcement training academies
- Promotes regional municipal solid waste and environmental quality planning
- Provides cooperative purchasing options for governments
- Manages region-wide services to the elderly
- Maintains and improves regional 9-1-1 systems
- Promotes regional economic development
- Operates specialized transit systems
- Provides management services for member governments
- Responsible for regional planning activities that may differ from region to region, but typically include planning for economic growth, water supply and water quality, air quality, transportation, emergency preparedness, and the coordinated delivery of various social services

## Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

- A federally mandated and federally funded transportation policy-making organization in the United States that is made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities
- Allocates federal and other transportation funding resources appropriately, according to the region's shared vision for its future and a comprehensive examination of the region's future and investment alternatives
- Facilitates collaboration of governments, interested parties, and residents in the planning process
- Establishes a setting
  - Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision-making in the metropolitan area
- Evaluates alternatives
  - Evaluate transportation alternatives, scaled to the size and complexity of the region, to the nature of its transportation issues, and to realistically available options
- Maintains a long-range transportation plan (*LRTP*)
  - Develop and update a fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters
    - Mobility and access for people and goods,
    - Efficient system performance and preservation, and
    - Quality of life
- Develops a transportation improvement program (*TIP*)
  - Develop a fiscally constrained program based on the long-range transportation plan and designed to serve the metropolitan area's goals while using spending, regulating, operating, management, and financial tools

# Regional continued

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- Involves the public
  - Involve the general public and all the significantly affected sub-groups in the four essential functions listed above.
- Protects air quality
  - Transportation plans, programs, and projects must conform with the air quality plan, known as the “state implementation plan” (SIP), for the state within which the metropolitan area lies
- Has no authority to raise revenues such as to levy taxes on their own
- Funding for the operations of an MPO comes from a combination of federal transportation funds and required matching funds from state and local governments

## **Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC)**

- H-GAC is the Council of Governments and Metropolitan Planning Organization for the 13-county region that includes these counties:
  - Austin
  - Brazoria
  - Chambers
  - Colorado
  - Fort Bend
  - Galveston
  - Harris
  - Liberty
  - Matagorda
  - Montgomery
  - Walker
  - Waller
  - Wharton
- It is a voluntary association of local governments and is governed by a Board of Directors that consists of local elected officials from member governments
- H-GAC provides technical assistance to communities to address issues that go beyond individual city boundaries and offers services to help use resources more efficiently and improve the region’s quality of life and economic competitiveness
- Key services include transportation planning, cooperative purchasing, homeland security, air and water quality planning, population forecasting, and workforce development
- For more information regarding H-GAC, please visit their website at <http://www.h-gac.com/home/>

# State Agencies

## Texas Department of Transportation

- Plans and makes policies for the location, construction and maintenance of state highways
- Oversees the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the state highway system
- Develops a statewide transportation plan that contains all modes of transportation, including highways and turnpikes, aviation, mass transportation, railroads, high-speed railroads and water traffic
- Awards contracts for the improvement of the state highway system
- Encourages, fosters and assists in the development of public and mass transportation in the state
  - Oversees highway, aviation, rail and public transportation systems in the state
  - Builds and maintains interstate, US, and state highways, as well as farm-to-market roads throughout the state
- Adopts rules for the operation of the department
- <http://www.txdot.gov/>

## Texas Department of Public Safety

- Responsible for statewide law enforcement and vehicle regulation
  - Driver License/ID Card Renewal
  - Driver License Address Change
  - Driver License Reinstatement and Status
  - Driver Record
  - Driver Responsibility Program
  - Track Driver License/ID Card
  - Administers the Concealed Handgun Licensing Program
    - Obtaining a concealed hand gun, hunting and/or fishing license
    - Please see the concealed handgun licensing program at <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/rsd/chl/index.htm> to find information on laws and regulations, licensing and registration, reports and statistics, frequently asked questions and downloadable forms
  - <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/>

## Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

- Vehicle Registration
- Oversize and Overweight Load Permits
- Order Specialty License Plate
- Vehicle Transit Permit
- Vehicle Transfer Notification
- Vehicle Registration Renewal
- <http://www.txdmv.gov/>

## Texas Parks and Wildlife

- Oversees and protects wildlife and their habitats
- Responsible for managing the state's parks and historical areas
- Provides hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities
- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>

# State Agencies continued

## Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)

- Enforces environmental regulations
- Responds to emergencies and natural disasters that threaten human health
- Oversees dam safety
- Monitors air quality within Texas
- Oversees all of our air permitting activities
- Implements plans to protect and restore air quality in cooperation with local, regional, state, and federal stakeholders
- Tracks progress toward environmental goals, adapting plans
- Implements federal and state laws related to the regulation of aboveground and underground petroleum storage tanks (PSTs)
- Generation, treatment, storage, and disposal of municipal, industrial, low-level radioactive, and hazardous wastes
- Recovery and processing of uranium and disposal of byproduct
- Oversees state cleanup of contaminated sites
- Responsible for all aspects of planning, permitting, and monitoring to protect the state's water resources
- Issues air and water operating permits to businesses operating in Texas
- Responsible for the general supervision and oversight of districts and utilities, including the processing of petitions to create districts and applications to approve utility service areas
- Maintains approval authority over many utility matters including the review of most district bond issues and of the rates charged by privately owned and member-owned utilities
- <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/>

## Texas Department of Agriculture

- Promotes production agriculture, consumer protection, economic development and healthy living
- Responsible for matters pertaining to agriculture, rural community affairs, and related matters
- <http://www.texasagriculture.gov/Home.aspx>

## Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission

- Regulates all phases of the alcoholic beverage industry in Texas
- Duties of the commission include regulating sales, taxation, importation, manufacturing, transporting, and advertising of alcoholic beverages
- TABC agents are fully empowered state police officers with state-wide criminal jurisdiction and may make arrests for any offense
- <http://www.tabc.state.tx.us/>

# State Agencies continued

## Texas Attorney General

- Charged by the state constitution to defend the laws and constitution of Texas, represent the state in litigation, and approve public bond issues
- Serves as legal counsel to all boards and agencies of state government, issues legal opinions when requested by the governor, heads of state agencies and other officials and commissions, and defends challenges to state laws and suits against both state agencies and individual employees of the state
- Represents the Director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in appeals from criminal convictions in federal courts
- Responsible for ensuring that Texas government is open and accessible to all citizens
- Provides protection for consumers
  - Car buying, car repairs, catalog and online sales,, charitable giving, charitable raffles, credit cards, credit repair, debt collection, debt management, disaster scams, health care, home buying, home remodeling / repair, identity theft, insurance, internet, investments and securities, loans, lotteries and sweepstakes, Medicaid fraud, mortgage fraud, moving and travel, nursing homes, prescription drugs, price gouging, product safety, rebates, spam, telemarketers, tenant rights, utilities, etc.
- Assists victims of violent crimes by administering the Crime Victims' Compensation Program and victim service-related grants and contracts, in addition to offering training and outreach programs
- Charged with proceedings to secure child support through its Child Support Division
  - Provides services for parents who wish to obtain or provide support for their children
  - <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/index.shtml>
- <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/>

## Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

- Responsible for investigating charges of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, elderly adults and adults with disabilities
- Protects children and adults who are elderly or have disabilities
- Regulates child care
- Protects the health and safety of children in daycare, as well as foster care and other types of 24-hour care
- <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>

## Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

- Responsible for homeownership, affordable rental housing, community and energy assistance programs, and colonia activities serving primarily low income Texans
- Headquartered at 221 East 11th Street in Austin
- Acts as a conduit for federal grant funds for housing and community services
- Operates as a housing finance agency
- Serves as a financial and administrative resource that helps provide essential services and affordable housing opportunities to Texans who qualify for this assistance based on their income level
- A resource for educational materials and technical assistance for housing, housing related, and community services matters
- <http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/>



# State Agencies continued

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## Texas General Land Office (GLO)

- Manages state-controlled lands and mineral rights properties
- Leases the state's vast land and mineral holdings for energy and mineral development with the proceeds going into the Permanent School Fund (PSF) to help finance K-12 education in Texas
- Archives and Records is home to more than 35.5 million documents and 80,000 maps, dating back to the year 1720, tracing the history of Texas' public lands
- <http://www.glo.texas.gov/>

## Texas Health and Human Services Commission

- Oversees the operations of the health and human services system
- Provides administrative oversight of Texas health and human services programs
- Provides direct administration of some programs
- Programs administered by HHSC
  - Medicaid
  - Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
  - Texas Women's Health Program
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - SNAP Food Benefits and Nutritional Programs
  - Family Violence Services
  - Refugee Services
  - Disaster Assistance
- <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/>

## Texas Railroad Commission

- Regulates the oil and gas industry, gas utilities, pipeline safety, safety in the liquefied petroleum gas industry, and surface coal and uranium mining
- <http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/>

# Texas Court System

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## Supreme Court

- Hears appeals involving civil matters and does not hear any appeals involving criminal matters except when the defendant is a juvenile
- Maintains responsibility for attorney licensing and discipline

## Court of Criminal Appeals

- Hears appeals on criminal cases excluding those involving juvenile proceedings
- Cases in which the death penalty was imposed are directly and automatically appealed to this court, bypassing the lower Courts of Appeals

## Court of Appeals

- Has intermediate appellate jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases
- Death penalty cases are automatically appealed to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and bypass this level

## District

- Exclusive jurisdiction on felony cases, cases involving title to land, and election contest cases
- Shares jurisdiction with the county courts, and in some case justice of the peace courts, for civil cases (*its lowest limit for hearing a case is a mere \$200 in controversy, while JP courts can hear cases up to \$10,000*)
- Shares jurisdiction over divorces, child custody and support matters, adoptions and child welfare cases with county courts at law
- District court judges are required to be licensed attorneys

## Probate

- Handles matters of probate, guardianship, trust, and mental health
- Hears condemnation cases
- There are no jurisdictional monetary limits on the types of lawsuits that a statutory probate court may hear
- Their jurisdiction at times overlaps that of the district court

## County

- Has appellate jurisdiction over JP and municipal court cases (*for municipal court cases, this may involve a trial de novo if the lower court is not a "court of record"*), exclusive jurisdiction over "Class A" and "Class B" misdemeanors (*these offenses can involve jail time*), and concurrent jurisdiction over civil cases where the amount in controversy is moderately sized
- Unlike the County Judge, judges of the county courts of law are required to be attorneys

# Texas Court System continued

## Municipal

- Comes into contact with more defendants than all other Texas courts combined
- The subject matter of municipal courts relates to crimes relating to public safety and quality of life issues
- Primary venue for acts of misconduct committed by children
- Within the city limits, these courts have shared jurisdiction with the JP courts on Class C criminal misdemeanor cases, and have exclusive jurisdiction on cases involving city ordinances
- Has limited civil jurisdiction over public matters relating to public safety (e.g., *dangerous dog determinations*)
- Not a “courts of record” (i.e., *no written transcript of the proceedings was taken*), and thus an appeal to the county level would require a whole new trial (i.e., *a trial de novo*)
- Generally appealed to the county court level, but cannot be appealed beyond that level unless the fine is more than \$100 or a constitutional matter is asserted

## Justice of the Peace

- Lowest court level in Texas
- Original jurisdiction in “criminal matters of misdemeanor cases punishable by fine only” (called “Class C” misdemeanor cases under the Texas Penal Code)
- Exclusive jurisdiction in “civil matters where the amount in controversy is \$200 or less”
- Top limit on civil matters are up to \$10,000
- Right to hear cases involving eviction as well as cases involving foreclosure and liens against personal property where the amount falls within the (revised) JP Court’s jurisdiction
- JP cases are appealed to the county court level where the case results in a trial de novo
- In criminal cases, cases beginning in justice court cannot be appealed beyond the county level court unless the fine is more than \$100 or a constitutional matter is asserted

## Family

- Decide on matters and render judgments relating to families and children
- Types of cases heard in family courts include divorce, child custody, child support, visitation rights, protective orders and the emancipation of minors

## Juvenile

- Decide on matters involving adolescents who have not attained the age of majority
- Types handled by the juvenile courts include criminal misconduct, juvenile delinquency and issues of neglect

# My Community

## ➤ Citizenship and Voting

### Register to vote?

You can register to vote in [Texas at the Texas Secretary of State](#) website

WEB

<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml>

### Find my polling place?

Contact your county's Voter Registration Official to locate your election polling place. [The Texas Secretary of State](#) website identifies all of the county Voter Registration Officials.

WEB

<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/county.shtml>

### Contact my elected officials?

To identify and look up your state elected officials, such as Texas U.S. Senators, Texas U.S. Representatives, Texas State Senators, Texas State Representatives, and Texas State Board of Education Members, you may enter your address on the [Texas Legislature Online](#) website.

WEB

<http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>

- You can also browse the [Texas State Directory](#) website to identify each elected representative in your city. This website allows one free search per day.

### Find volunteer opportunities?

Many volunteer opportunities exist in the Houston area. Website such as [Volunteer Match](#) and [United We Serve](#) allow you to enter you current location by city or zip code and the type of volunteer work you are interested in and identifies organizations looking for volunteers.

WEB

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

WEB

<http://www.serve.gov/>

The [Idealist](#) website allows you to enter you current location by city or zip code and the type of volunteer work you are interested in and identifies organizations looking for volunteers. This website also allows you to search for jobs, organizations, internships, events and resources within your community.

WEB

<http://www.idealists.org/>

# My Community

## ➤ Community and Environment

### Learn more about recycling?

Houston-Galveston Area Council's website offers a regional recycling guide for Houston area residents, including information about items and materials can be recycled.

WEB

<http://www.recycleinfo.org/>

Additionally, **Green Houston's** website allows you to look up curbside recycling pick-up days, find recycling center locations, and learn more about recycling in the Houston area.

WEB

<http://www.greenhoustontx.gov/recycling.html>

### Find or start a recycling program in my neighborhood?

The **City of Houston's** website allows households to request curbside recycling bins for residences located within the City of Houston and offers guidance for City of Houston neighborhoods wishing to seek neighborhood recycling programs.

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/recycling-faq.html>

The **Earth 911** and **United States Environmental Protection Agency** websites also offer steps on how to start a recycling program in your city or community.

WEB

<http://earth911.com/how-to/how-to-start-a-recycling-program/>

WEB

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/wycd/settingupprogramsr.htm>

Recycling programs and resources are also available for under-served and/or rural communities. **The State of Texas Alliance for Recycling (STAR)** website offers difference programs for underserved or rural communities across Texas. The website also provides additional links for other recycling programs.

WEB

<http://recyclingstar.org/>

# My Community

## ➤ Community and Environment continued

### Participate in clean-up days in my community?

The Houston-Galveston Area Council hosts an annual **Trash Bash** along waterways in the Houston area. Visit the Trash Bash website to find clean-up site locations and registration information.

WEB

<http://www.trashbash.org/>

Several not-for-profit organizations in the region also organize clean-up events and activities. Visit Keep Houston Beautiful at

WEB

<http://www.houstonbeautiful.org>

to find a Clean Neighborhoods Handbook or a Toolbox for Community Change. You can also find regional volunteer opportunities at organizations such as the **Galveston Bay Foundation**.

WEB

<http://galvbay.org/volunteer>

### Find more information on water quality in my community?

H-GAC operates several water resources programs and initiatives in cooperation with local communities and state and federal agencies. You can find out more information about water quality, flood management and water planning at H-GAC's website. Information on regional water resource plans and initiatives can be found through H-GAC's website.

WEB

<http://www.h-gac.com/community/water/>

WEB

<http://www.h-gac.com/community/water/default.aspx>

### Find more information on air quality in my community?

The H-GAC Transportation Department helps the region meet federal Clean Air Act air quality standards. You can learn more about our clean air initiatives at:

WEB

<http://www.h-gac.com/taq/airquality/default.aspx>

HOW DO I?

# My Community

## ➤ Community and Environment continued

### Learn about energy efficiency and water conservation techniques like rainwater recycling?

Houston area residents who meet outlined income criteria can participate in the City of Houston's **Residential Energy Efficiency Program** to implement home energy efficiency and weatherization measures.

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/reep/index.html>

Households interested in learning more about home water and energy efficiency strategies can visit **100 Ways to Conserve** and the **US Environmental Protection Agency** websites. These sites offer tips and advice on measures you can take in your home to reduce energy and water consumption.

WEB

<http://wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/>

WEB

<http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/chap3.cfm>

Both private and public entities can learn more about state energy conservation programs through the **State Energy Conservation Office** website, which lists different programs and funding opportunities for consumers.

WEB

<http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us/programs/>

WEB

<http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us/funding/>

### Find local clubs and organizations in my neighborhood?

The Houston-Galveston Region has a wide range of national or international organizations. Check websites for your city, local chamber of commerce, MUD or not-for-profit organization to learn more about local organizations. Also, check your library, the city hall or county courthouse for flyers. Other regional websites that may help you locate local clubs and organizations include H-GAC's and Houston's visitor website events page.

WEB

[www.h-gac.com](http://www.h-gac.com)

WEB

<http://www.visithoustontexas.com/travel-tools/events/>

# My Community

## ➤ Community and Environment continued

Also check out not for profit associations, such as [United Way](#) and Houston area [Neighborhood Centers](#) to learn more about opportunities to become involved with local clubs and organizations.

WEB

[www.unitedwayhouston.org](http://www.unitedwayhouston.org)

WEB

[www.neighborhood-centers.org](http://www.neighborhood-centers.org)

### Learn about home gardening?

Check out your county Office of the [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Cooperative Extension Program](#). You can find out information about Master Gardener Classes and a wide range of other programs. The [City of Houston](#) website also contains information about gardening classes through the [Garden Program Series](#).

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/health/Community/gardenprogram.html>

### Learn about composting?

Check out the City of Houston's composting website to learn more about composting in the Houston area and tips on what to compost and what to avoid.

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/compost.html>

The Environmental Protection Agency also offers information on composting at

WEB

<http://epa.gov/recycle/composting.html>

### Find or start a community garden?

The City of Houston's website offers information on [Houston's Community Garden Program](#). From here you can locate existing community gardens, farmers markets, and facts about community gardening in the Houston area.

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/health/Community/garden.html>

For more general information about urban gardening, visit [Urban Harvest's](#) website.

WEB

<http://www.urbanharvest.org/cgardens>



# My Community

## ➤ Community and Environment continued

### Find or start a farmers market?

You can find information about farmers markets in the Houston area at many locations. Check the City of Houston's website to locate existing farmers markets or Houston's official visitor's website to find farmers market dates and times. Also check your local chamber of commerce and/or city's website for farmers market times and locations in your area.

WEB <http://www.houstontx.gov/health/Community/farmersmarket.html>

WEB <http://www.visithoustontexas.com/shopping/farmers-markets/>

You can research tips on starting a farmers market in your neighborhood at the Urban Harvest website.

WEB <http://www.urbanharvest.org/farmmarket/market/howtostartafarmersmarket.html>

## ➤ Jobs and Business

### Get assistance starting a new business?

Check out the [Texas.gov](http://www.texas.gov) and [Texas Secretary of State's](http://www.sos.state.tx.us) websites, where you will find a wealth of information about starting a business in Texas.

WEB [www.Texas.gov](http://www.Texas.gov)

WEB <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/index.shtml>

You can also explore additional information on starting a business at the [Texas Wide Open for Business](http://www.texaswideopenforbusiness.com) website at

WEB <http://www.texaswideopenforbusiness.com/index.php>

Your local Chamber of Commerce is also an invaluable resource and can assist you in opening your business and identifying financing opportunities in your area. Most of the Chamber of Commerce organizations in the H-GAC region are created around geographic areas. Contact your local city hall to inquire about the chamber in your area.

# My Community

## ➤ Jobs and Business continued

### Obtain a business license?

The State of Texas does not require a general “business” license. However, there are a number of regulatory agencies that have licensing and permitting requirements based on the type of service, or products associated with your business. To ensure that all permitting requirements are met, you should contact the local county and/or city government in which you plan to conduct business to determine if there are any additional requirements.

### Search local job listings?

Job postings are placed in multiple locations, including city and county websites, newspapers, chamber of commerce websites and professional business journals.

You can also visit the [Texas Workforce Commission](#) website to search job listings throughout the state.

WEB

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>

### Apply for unemployment benefits?

Visit the [Texas Workforce Commission](#) website for information regarding Unemployment Benefits Services.

WEB

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>

## ➤ Recreation and Attractions

### Find parks in my neighborhood?

The Houston-Galveston Region has a wealth of local, county, state and federal parks. Since our region is so large, it is best to contact your city or county website to review the local parks and trails that closest to your home or place of work. Virtually every community or county website showcases their parks and local programs.

Also, sites such as H-GAC’s website also provide information about recreation and parks programs throughout the region.

WEB

<http://www.h-gac.com/community/qualityplaces/parks/default.aspx>

In addition, there is a 24-county organization known as [Houston Wilderness](#), which also provides information on the region’s parks and natural resources.

WEB

<http://www.houstonwilderness.org/>

# My Community

## ➤ Recreation and Attractions continued

### Learn about upcoming community events and festivals?

The Houston-Galveston Region is large and many events and festivals are happening weekly. Check websites for your city, local chamber of commerce, MUD or not-for-profit organization. Also, check your library, the city hall or county courthouse for flyers. Other websites, such as Houston's official visitor's website, list events occurring throughout the region.

WEB

<http://www.visithoustontexas.com/travel-tools/events/>

Also check the [Houston Neighborhood Centers](#) websites for events happening in your neighborhood.

WEB

[www.neighborhood-centers.org](http://www.neighborhood-centers.org)

### Sign my child up for youth recreation leagues?

Check your local school office, as well as the local city hall or county youth program. The region has many levels of youth recreation, including local church programs and other religious affiliated recreation programs. Remember to check your local library for information on local youth activities.

Also check out Houston's Neighborhood Centers website and your local YMCA for other youth recreation activities.

WEB

[www.neighborhood-centers.org](http://www.neighborhood-centers.org)

WEB

[www.ymcahouston.org/youth-sports](http://www.ymcahouston.org/youth-sports)

HOW DO I?

# Family and Teens

## Find after school and other youth programs?

Visit your local [YMCA](#), [Boys and Girls Club](#) or other not-for-profit organizations, such as [Neighborhood Centers, Inc.](#) or [United Way](#), for information on after school and other youth programs

The [Texas Department of State Health Services' Emergency Preparedness](#) website has links to resources to help your family create an emergency plan, including a supply list and evacuation checklist, information about special needs assistance, and also links to local emergency preparedness websites throughout Texas.

## Find my local Boys and Girls Club?

The [Boys & Girls Clubs of America](#) allows you to search their website for the nearest location by zip code.

WEB

<http://www.bgca.org/whoweare/Pages/FindaClub.aspx>

## Find my local YMCA?

The [YMCA](#) allows you to search their website for the nearest location by city, State, or Zip.

WEB

<http://www.ymca.net/join>

## Contact Family and Child Services?

The [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](#) allows you to contact them by phone 1-800-252-5400, e-mail <https://www.txabusehotline.org> or on-line.

WEB

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact\\_Us/Default.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_Us/Default.asp)

## Sign my child up for Head Start?

The [Texas Head Start Association](#) provides you with the 3 steps to enroll your child into Head Start, including the link to search your nearest Head Start Center by city, Zip, or State.

WEB

<http://www.txhsa.org/Enrollment.html>

## Find more information about local child care facilities?

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services allows you to search for child care options..

WEB

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Care/Search\\_Texas\\_Child\\_Care/ppFacilitySearchDayCare.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care/ppFacilitySearchDayCare.asp)

# Family and Teens

## Learn about childhood health and nutrition?

The Texas Department of State Health Services provides a developmental resource guide that is only available free of charge to prenatal care providers, including hospitals, birthing centers, physicians, nurse midwives, and midwives, who provide prenatal care or deliver an infant of a pregnant woman enrolled in Medicaid. The resource is available for ordering through Best Press.

WEB

[www.ebestpress.com](http://www.ebestpress.com)

WEB

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mch/>

## Learn about foster care and adoption?

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services offers information on becoming a foster or adoptive parent.

WEB

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption\\_and\\_Foster\\_Care/Get\\_Started/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care/Get_Started/default.asp)

## Learn about parenting classes?

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services allows you to search for parenting classes near you. See the Find Help section.

WEB

[www.HelpandHope.org](http://www.HelpandHope.org)

## Adopt a pet?

The SPCA of Texas puts together all of the available pets online so that you can search before you come meet them in person.

WEB

<http://spcafindapet.com/>

# Health

## Contact my local health department?

The [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) website refers you to check with your city and/or county health department for information on where you can take your child to get immunizations, or you can call 2-1-1 Texas. 2-1-1 Texas is a three digit toll free number that provides information on health and social services for your area. You may also call us toll free at: 1.800.252.9152 or e-mail. Please, provide your zip code, as well as the city, in your email and we'll give you the closest clinics in your area.

WEB

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/parents.shtm>

## Contact Family and Children Services?

You can find out information on family and child services at the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](#) website. Also check your county website for information on child services.

WEB

<http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/default.asp>

## Contact mental health, alcohol, and drug services?

The [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) allows you to search for mental health services in your area, by visiting there mental health services overview page. Once you are on the web page you can search for your services by entering the county, city, or Zip. To find substance abuse treatment services in your area, please call, toll free, 1-877-9-NO DRUG (1-877-966-3784) for immediate and confidential help, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or contact the Outreach, Screening, Assessment and Referral Center (OSAR) in your region. OSARs are the first point of contact for those seeking substance abuse treatment services. You may search online for the nearest substance abuse treatment program; however to access services you will need to first contact the OSAR in your region.

## Learn more about immunizations?

The [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) has a webpage that gives you information to register for e-mail reminders for immunizations, printable calendar to keep schedule of your child's immunization. The webpage also offers, tools, Videos and immunization information.

WEB

<http://2008.immunizetexas.org/immInfo-schedule-eng.php>

# Home and Neighborhood Services

## Request recycling bins?

If you are within the city limits and your city offers recycling in your area, you should contact your solid waste department. If your trash is collected by a utility district, you should contact your specific trash company or your utility district. Please note, recycling must be available in your area in order to participate in a recycling program.

## Explore water conservation techniques and incentives?

The Texas Water Development Board provides services that help Texans establish effective water conservation programs by implementing best management practices. The Texas Water Development Board offers ongoing programs for conservation education and public outreach to promote water conservation and develop water resource educational programs.

WEB

<https://www.twdb.state.tx.us/conservation/index.asp>

## Find out more information about green building practices?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides basic information on green building best practices, including frequently asked questions.

WEB

<http://www.epa.gov/greenbuilding/index.htm>

## Find renewable energy options in my neighborhood?

Green-e is the nation's leading independent certification and verification program for renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission reductions in the retail market. Green-e offers three certification and verification programs: Green-e Climate, Green-e Energy, and Green-e Marketplace. Green-e's website can help you find certified renewable energy products for your home or organization.

WEB

<http://www.green-e.org>

## Learn more local neighborhood associations?

Neighborhood associations have different levels of participation within the neighborhood. Some are more active than others. A majority of large neighborhood associations have a webpage that allows you to view, register and obtain information regarding the community. Some neighborhood associations are not active at all. If you have association fees, you should contact your neighborhood association to obtain information.

## Report a stray or dead animal?

For stray animals, you should call your local animal control/service office.

To report dead animals located on freeways and feeder roads are handled by the Texas Department of Transportation. Under these circumstances, please contact your local TxDOT office directly or submit a request at TxDOT's website.

<http://www.txdot.gov/contact-us/form.html>

To report dead animals on the curb or in the street within the city limits, contact your city's solid waste or sanitation department. If your city has a 311 service, you may report a dead animal by calling 311. Dead animals on the curb or in the street within the county and outside of city limits should be reported to your county precinct.

# Property

## Obtain a building permit?

To obtain a building permit you can call or visit your local county or city's website.

## Report an overgrown or unmaintained lot in my neighborhood?

Call or visit your local county or city's website.

## Learn more about flood zones in my neighborhood?

**FEMA** allows you to search for flood zones in your neighborhood by entering your address.

WEB

<https://msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/FemaWelcomeView?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=-1>

## Learn about my property taxes?

To learn about your property taxes you will need to contact your local Tax Assessor -Collector office.

HOW DO I?



# Safety and Emergencies

## Learn more about emergency preparedness and hurricane preparedness?

Most emergency incidents will be broadcast with instructions for shelter in place or full scale evacuation depending on your location in the Gulf Coast Region and the event. Emergency preparedness an important responsibility of every resident living in the Gulf Coast Region. Each resident or family should create a standard Emergency Preparedness Plan.

The Texas Department of State Health Services' Emergency Preparedness website has links to resources to help your family create an emergency plan, including a supply list and evacuation checklist, information about special needs assistance, and also links to local emergency preparedness websites throughout Texas.

WEB

[http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/preparedness/e-prep\\_public.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/preparedness/e-prep_public.shtm)

Families and businesses can also find more information on emergency preparedness at FEMA's "**Ready**" website:

WEB

<http://www.ready.gov/>

## Sign up for local emergency alerts?

Houston area residents can visit the City of Houston's emergency notification website to check for emergency alerts or sign up for the "AlertHouston" notification program, which is the City of Houston's email notification system. AlertHouston will email participants in the event of large-scale emergencies, such as severe weather events.

WEB

<http://www.houstonoem.net/go/maillinglist/4027/>

Houston area residents can also sign up for Greater Harris County's 911 Emergency Network to receive text message and telephone alerts if a law enforcement or fire emergency is occurring in your neighborhood.

WEB

<https://ghcens.onthealert.com/Terms/Index/?ReturnUrl=%2f>

## Find information on fire emergencies?

Houston area residents can learn about residential fire safety and prevention measures at the Houston Fire Department's website. You can also learn how to get a smoke alarm for yourself or someone else through the "Get Alarmed Houston" program.

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/fire/>

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/fire/community/getalarmed.html>

# Safety and Emergency Preparedness

## Find information on Firewise Program?

- 

## Report a water leak?

- If you are inside the city, you should contact your city's public works department or utility department
- You can also check your city's website or call your city secretary and/or city's customer service department
- Most major cities have a "311" number that allows you to call for reporting water leaks if you are inside of the city limits
- Some smaller cities request that you call your local police department's non-emergency number if it is after hours or on the weekend
- If you receive service from a utility district, you will need to contact that specific utility district
  - The phone number can be found on your water bill
- Your city or utility district is responsible for maintaining the service line leading to your home or business's meter and the meter itself
- The property owner is responsible for the service line behind the meter and the rest of the property's plumbing

## Report a power outage?

- Houston and Surrounding Areas
  - CenterPoint Energy 713-207-2222 or 800-332-7143

HOW DO I?

# Seniors

## Find senior transportation services?

To find your local senior transportation you will need to call the county or city that you live in. You can also access information about transportation services through the [Texas Health and Human Services Commission \(HHSC\)](#) website. The website has information about arranging for a ride to medical appointments and other related services. You can [call 211](#) or visit their website to search for transportation resources in your area.

WEB

[http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/QuickAnswers/index.shtml#Get\\_Ride](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/QuickAnswers/index.shtml#Get_Ride)

The [American Public Transportation Association](#) website contains links to transit agencies for cities, towns and counties across the United States. You can use this site to find bus, rail or ferry services in Texas.

WEB

<http://www.apta.com/resources/links/unitedstates/Pages/TexasTransitLinks.aspx>

## Learn about in-home support services?

The [Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services](#) allows you to search for your nearest in-home support service center by entering your city, county, or zip.

WEB

<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/services/accessiblehome.html>

Also considering exploring the Houston area's [Meals on Wheels Program](#). The Greater-Houston area's Meals on Wheels program provides home delivered meals to home-bound seniors over 60. Individuals can learn more about volunteering or donating to the program at the Meals on Wheels website and seniors over 60 can sign up by contacting 713-533-4978.

WEB

<https://www.imgh.org/meals-on-wheels>

## Find local senior centers?

The [Care Planning Council of Texas](#) allows you search for your local Senior Centers by city.

WEB

[http://caretexas.net/list11\\_Texas\\_senior\\_centers.htm](http://caretexas.net/list11_Texas_senior_centers.htm)

## Contact my local Area Agency on Aging?

The [Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services](#) allows you to search for your nearest service center by entering your city, county, or zip.

WEB

<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/services/contact.cfm>

# Transportation

## Find out about transit routes, schedules, and paratransit services?

Residents traveling within Harris County and the City of Houston can look up METRO schedules and route maps at the METRO's website

WEB <http://ridemetro.org/>

Residents traveling within Austin, Colorado, Waller, or Wharton Counties can find information about Colorado Valley Transit schedules and route maps at the Colorado Valley Transit District (CVTD) website.

WEB <http://www.gotransit.org/>

The United Way offers a help line for transportation assistance. Call 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for referrals to transportation information and assistance. Calls are answered 24 hrs/7 days a week. Bilingual operators are available to take your call. Just dial 2-1-1. The H-GAC website provides a wealth of information on the various agencies that provide transit services for every geographic part of our region.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council works with regional stakeholders to address the unmet transportation needs of the elderly and those with disabilities in the 13-county Gulf Coast region. To learn more about the regional public transportation coordination plan call (713) 627-3200 or visit

WEB [www.ridethegulfcoast.com](http://www.ridethegulfcoast.com)

## Park and Ride Transit Services?

H-GAC's transit planning page contains links to transit services throughout the Houston region.

WEB [http://www.h-gac.com/taq/transit\\_planning/default.aspx](http://www.h-gac.com/taq/transit_planning/default.aspx)

The METRO website also contains locations and schedules for regional park and ride locations.

WEB <http://www.ridemetro.org/SchedulesMaps/ParkRide.aspx>

## Find or start a carpool system within my community?

Residents seeking carpool options can call the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for assistance or research carpool and vanpool opportunities through the METRO.

WEB <http://www.ridemetro.org/Services/CarVanPool/Van.aspx>

# Transportation

## Report a tree or other obstruction in the roadway?

If the tree is within the city limits, contact the city in the jurisdiction where the tree is blocking the roadway. If you are in a rural area of the region, contact the county offices. On larger, state-owned highways, contact the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) or visit TxDOT's website to fill out a road obstruction notice.

WEB <http://www.txdot.gov/contact-us/form.html>

## Start a Safe Routes to School Program in my neighborhood?

To learn more about Safe Routes to School, visit TxDOT's Safe Routes Texas website. The website provides resources and information on developing a Safe Routes to School Program in your community.

WEB <http://www.saferoutestx.org/>

## Register my car?

You can register your car at your local county tax office, in the county of your residence. The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles website allows you to navigate to your local county office.

WEB <http://www.txdmv.gov/vehicles/registration/register.htm>

## Find alternative fueling stations?

The U.S. Department of Energy website offers an **Alternative Fueling Station Locator** that allows you to search for fueling stations by zip code and also plan a route with stations along the way.

WEB <http://www.afdc.energy.gov/locator/stations/>

## Electric charging stations?

**Green Houston's** website allows you to locate electric vehicle charging stations on a map.

WEB <http://www.greenhoustontx.gov/ev/findastation.html>

## Freight and Railroad Safety- Quiet Zones?

The City of Houston Public Works & Engineering Department operates a Quiet Zone Program to address train horn noise near neighborhoods. Contact the Department of Public Works & Engineering for more information at (713) 837-7280.

# Utilities

## Find an electricity service provider?

The Texas Electric Choice website allows you to search for electric service providers by your zip code, read customer reviews, and compare rates.

WEB

[http://www.powertochoose.com/\\_content/\\_compare/compare.aspx](http://www.powertochoose.com/_content/_compare/compare.aspx)

## Report a water leak?

If you are inside the city, you should contact your city's public works department or utility department. You can also check your city's website or call your city secretary and/or city's customer service department. Most major cities have a "311" number that allows you to call for reporting water leaks if you are inside of the city limits. If you receive service from a utility district, you will need to contact that specific utility district and the phone number can be found on your water bill.

Your city or utility district is responsible for maintaining the service line leading to your home or business's meter and the meter itself. The property owner is responsible for the service line behind the meter and the rest of the property's plumbing.

## Learn about energy efficiency and water conservation techniques like rainwater recycling?

Houston area residents who meet outlined income criteria can participate in the City of Houston's [Residential Energy Efficiency Program](#) to implement home energy efficiency and weatherization measures.

WEB

<http://www.houstontx.gov/reep/index.html>

Households interested in learning more about home water and energy efficiency strategies can visit [100 Ways to Conserve](#) and the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) websites. These sites offer tips and advice on measures you can take in your home to reduce energy and water consumption.

WEB

<http://wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/>

WEB

<http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/chap3.cfm>

Both private and public entities can learn more about state energy conservation programs through the [State Energy Conservation Office](#) website, which lists different programs and funding opportunities for consumers.

WEB

<http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us/programs/>

WEB

<http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us/funding/>