

State Bar Member Survey Responses

General Satisfaction, Room for Growth

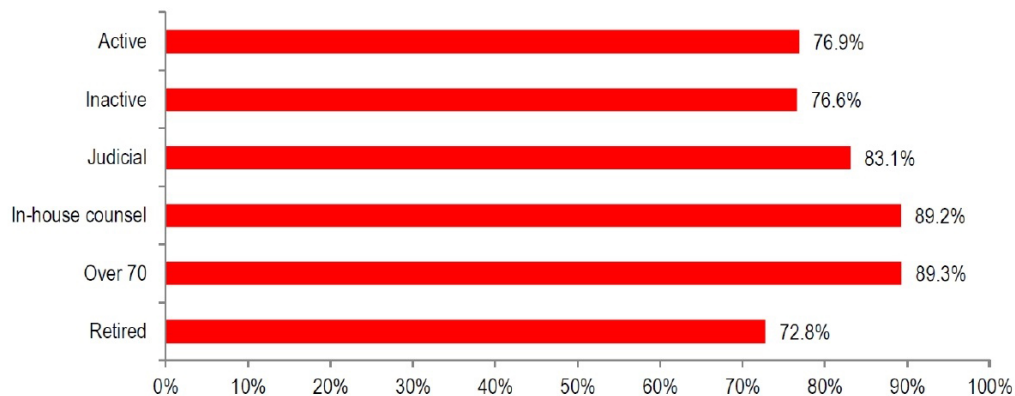
BY CAROL ROSE



Every three years, the State Bar of Arizona asks its members how satisfied they are with their Bar membership and their profession. The survey seeks to know if members feel like they're getting what they pay for—and if not, why not. A link to an online questionnaire was distributed in September 2020 to all 24,775 members. More than 18 percent responded, a record number and far beyond what's needed for it to be considered a statistically valid satisfaction barometer. Research USA conducted the survey, and it says the results are projectable to within plus or minus 1.5 percent. So, let's get to the numbers!

TABLE 1

Percentage "Very" or "Generally" Satisfied With Their SBA Membership by Current Status



- Membership benefits don't justify the cost.
- Abolition of Rule 5.4 by the Arizona Supreme Court—allowing nonattorneys to own law practices and practice law—was a mistake.

Members also were asked about their experience contacting the State Bar during the year. Were they satisfied with the response they received? Eighty-eight percent reported yes, they were generally or very satisfied—a slight increase over

2017's 87.5 percent. Twelve percent say they dialed up dissatisfaction. **Table 4** shows that a robust 91.6 percent of respondents said that the Bar responded very or somewhat promptly to their request. And **Table 4B** shows that 88 percent were either very satisfied or generally satisfied with the substance of the response they received.

Member Satisfaction

Overall, 77.2 percent report being "very" or "generally satisfied" with their membership in the Bar. That's virtually the same percentage of members who checked the satisfied box in 2017 (77.3 percent).

So who are the most satisfied? **Table 1** shows among in-house counsel and attorneys over the age of 70, 89 percent indicated satisfaction, and more than 83 percent of judicial members agreed. About 77 percent of active and inactive members also checked generally satisfied.

Years in practice does not seem to correlate with satisfaction with the Bar, as seen in **Table 2**.

Table 3 shows the overall satisfaction picture across all member categories.

Of the nearly 23 percent who indicated they were dissatisfied, discontent overwhelmingly hit on four themes:

- Bar dues are too high.
- CLE requirements are tedious and too expensive.

TABLE 2

Overall, how satisfied are you with your State Bar of Arizona membership?

	NUMBER OF YEARS AS A MEMBER OF SBA						
	Total	Less than 5	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35 or more
Very satisfied	19.9%	31.9%	16.9%	18.0%	18.5%	17.4%	19.3%
Generally satisfied	57.3%	56.8%	60.0%	56.1%	56.2%	56.9%	58.3%
Not very satisfied	16.3%	7.5%	16.3%	18.2%	18.3%	19.4%	15.7%
Not at all satisfied	6.5%	3.8%	6.8%	7.7%	7.0%	6.3%	6.7%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Very/generally satisfied	77.2%	88.7%	76.9%	74.1%	74.7%	74.3%	77.6%
Base:	4,424	576	635	594	991	805	823

Member Benefits

Active members were asked to rate the value of 24 member benefits. Not too surprising, satisfied members were significantly more likely to know what benefits are available and to rate them as valuable, compared to those who were less satisfied.

The benefits that members rated as most valuable by the largest percentage continued to include azbar.org (82.2 percent),

AZCLE programs

(77.7 percent), the Ethics Hotline (74.4 percent), ARIZONA ATTORNEY MAGAZINE (73.5 percent), and AZCLE publications (62.8 percent). See **Table 5**.

But compared to the 2017 survey, each of those benefits saw a decline in satisfaction, as **Table 6** shows.

Though it might be comforting to think that 2020 sentiment is uniformly down, it wasn't. In another important area—"opportunities delivered very or somewhat well by the Bar"—the responses went up over the same period, as seen in **Table 7**. Those offerings include networking, service opportunities and professional development.

A bright spot among cloudy trend lines is the significant increase in satisfaction with the Bar's e-newsletters, each of which saw a substantial refresh since the 2017 survey. Apparently, readers noticed that and liked it. The responses in 2017 and 2020 for *eLegal Tech* are shown as an example in **Table 8**, but similar increases were seen in all e-newsletters, also including *eLegal*, *eLegal Solo*, *Bar Track* and the *Daily 5*.

Despite that trend, the gap in satisfaction between the response to traditional benefit products and to the Bar's e-newsletters and its creation of interactive opportunities bears consideration by Bar leaders. That gap

could signify a need to refresh product offerings, a growing preference of lawyers to participate in the legal profession rather than be an audience for others—or both.

Interestingly, women attorneys rated Bar benefits much higher than did men. For instance, **Table 9** shows that nearly 88 percent of women rated azbar.org as very or somewhat valuable, compared to just under 80 percent of men. And while nearly 60 percent of women consider the *Daily 5* e-newsletter a value, just 43 percent of men do.

Table 10 shows topics lawyers identified as being areas of needed focus.

There are several member benefits, as mentioned, that many members don't know anything about. For example, Fastcase is a free legal research tool available to all members that Bar leaders would expect attorneys to use often and find extremely valuable. And yet 27 percent of those surveyed rated it as not valuable,

and nearly 32 percent said they weren't aware of it.

As for the Bar's Fee Arbitration Program, more than half the attorneys who have been

TABLE 3

Overall Satisfaction with State Bar of Arizona Membership

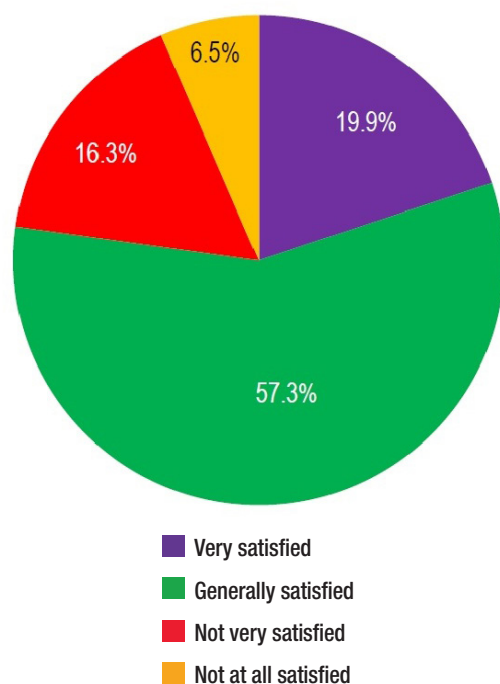


TABLE 4

How Promptly Did the State Bar of Arizona Respond to Your Requests

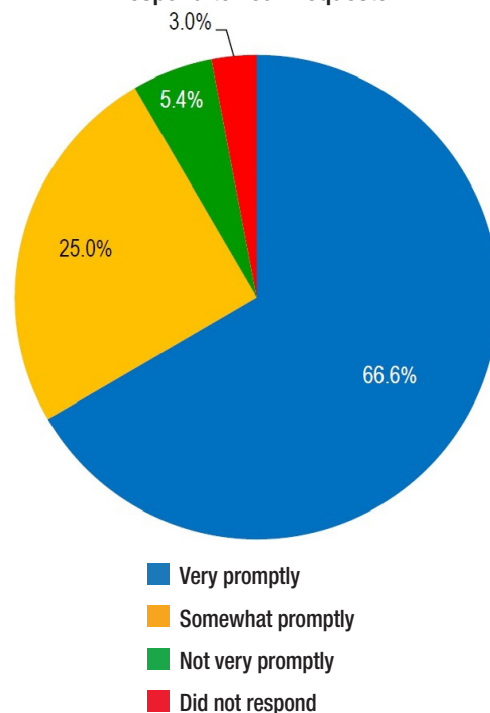


TABLE 4B

How Satisfied Were You with the Response from the State Bar of Arizona?

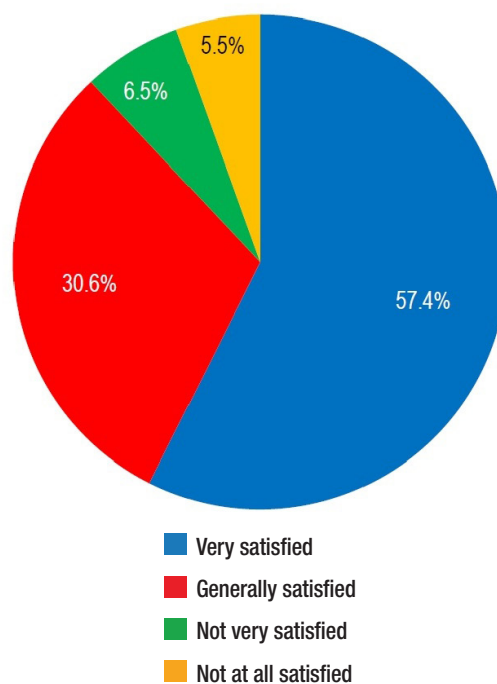
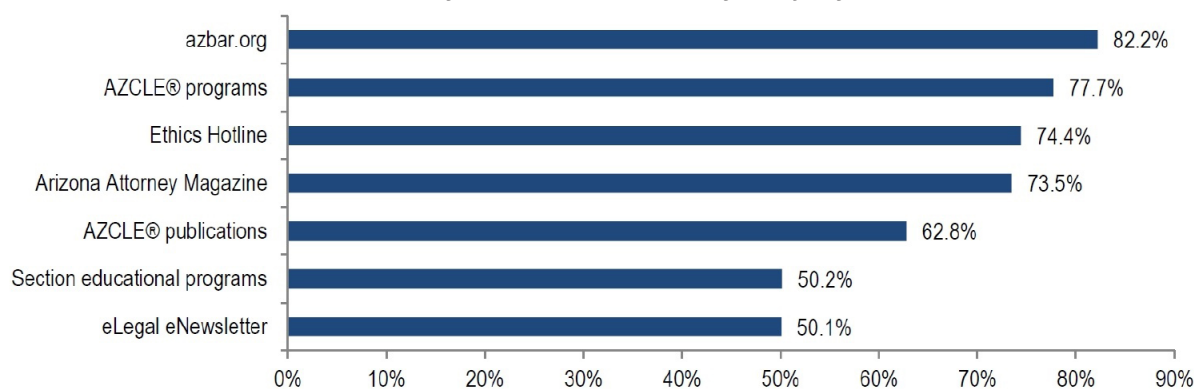


TABLE 5
Member Benefits Rated “Very” or “Somewhat Value” by a Majority of Active Members


Bar members fewer than five years responded that they don’t know about the program. The online subpoena tool netted a similar response: 47 percent indicate they’re unaware of it.

Even for the highly rated e-newsletter *eLegal Tech*, nearly 47 percent said they were unaware of its existence. The response was similar for Practice 2.0 resources and its Advice Hotline and the Mentor Program—nearly half the members had no knowledge of the offerings.

State Bar Opportunities

The survey also asked members to rate the importance of four opportunities the Bar offers and how well it delivers on them:

- Networking
- Service opportunities to benefit the community, legal system and profession
- Participation in the improvement of the law

**Lawyers say
COVID closures
led them to read
more books and
embrace the
outdoors.**

- Professional development and resources

Members of fewer than five years tended to rate these opportunities as more important than their veteran counterparts. More than 85 percent of the less-than-fives rated professional development as important. It

noted, **Table 7** shows that members rated the Bar highly on delivering professional development and related resources (74 percent) and networking (66 percent).

Career Satisfaction and Challenges

Members also were asked to rate how content they are being a lawyer. Eight-six percent said they are satisfied. As seen in **Table 11**, the older the respondent, the more satisfactory members found the practice of law. While 81.5 percent of lawyers younger than 40 reported being satisfied, nearly 93 percent of those age 60 to 69 checked the satisfied box.

The 14 percent of members in active practice who say they’re not content cited the adversarial nature of the job, high stress level, work/life imbalance, burnout and the inability to make enough money to pay student loans. It’s not unexpected then that

was similar for service opportunities (75 percent), networking (75 percent), and opportunities to participate in the improvement of the law (73 percent).

Where did the Bar deliver value the most effectively? As

when members were asked to select the three most significant challenges/concerns they personally face as an attorney, those are the same issues they listed.

Attorneys also indicated their biggest challenges as individual lawyers and those facing the profession.

Leading member benefits rated very or somewhat important:

	2020	2017
Azbar.org	82.2%	82.0%
AZCLE programs	77.7%	79.7%
Ethics Hotline	74.4%	78.6%
Arizona Attorney magazine	73.5%	78.2%
AZCLE publications	62.8%	70.0%
Section education programs	50.2%	63.7%
eLegal eNewsletter	50.1%	60.1%

TABLE 6
Opportunities delivered very or somewhat well by the SBA:

	2020	2017
Networking	65.9%	53.8%
Service opportunities to benefit the community, the legal system, the profession	65.4%	61.9%
Opportunities to participate in the improvement of the law	64.2%	58.5%
Professional development and resources	74.1%	67.8%

TABLE 7

As individuals, lawyers identified stress as their number-one professional barrier, followed by balancing family and work. Student loans rounded out the top four. These are consistent with how members felt in 2017, except in 2020, 46 percent of respondents named stress as their biggest challenge compared to

39 percent in 2017.

When asked about the most serious problems the profession faces, respondents named lack of ethics and professionalism as number one, as they did three years ago.

But two issues that saw a big jump were difficult economic times (20 percent in 2020 vs. 13 percent in 2017) and unnecessary litigation. Nineteen percent saw it as a serious challenge, compared to just 11 percent in 2017.

Despite indicating that stress-reduction programs would benefit them, lawyers are not seeking out Bar wellness programs in big numbers. Only 14 percent of respondents said they had participated in such programs or CLE. The biggest reason they gave was being unaware of them. Nearly 27 percent said they had no interest, and another 23 percent said the topics weren't relevant to them or their practice. However, the majority of respondents continued to say they'd like to see offerings like stress reduction, balancing work and life,

TABLE 8

Percentage rating *eLegal Tech* e-newsletter excellent or good (4 or 5) for the following attributes:

	2020	2017
Quality of information provided	65.8%	37.8%
Relevance of information	61.7%	35.0%
Organization/ease of navigation	64.7%	45.0%
Design/aesthetic appeal	62.5%	39.4%

TABLE 9

Member Benefits Rated "Very" or "Somewhat Valuable"	Females	Males
azbar.org	87.9%	79.5%
Ethics Hotline	80.1%	70.7%
Arizona Attorney Daily 5 eNewsletter	59.4%	43.1%
Member Assistance Program	56.8%	44.7%
Section Educational Meetings	56.7%	45.6%
eLegal eNewsletter	56.1%	45.9%
Annual Convention	55.6%	43.5%
Bar Track legislative Tracking eNewsletter	54.1%	44.9%
Practice 2.0 Advice Hotline	42.2%	31.7%
Member Discounts on Commercial Products and Services	41.4%	35.4%
Section Online Communities	40.5%	31.8%
Practice 2.0 Resources	37.1%	29.8%
Online Career Center	32.8%	22.8%

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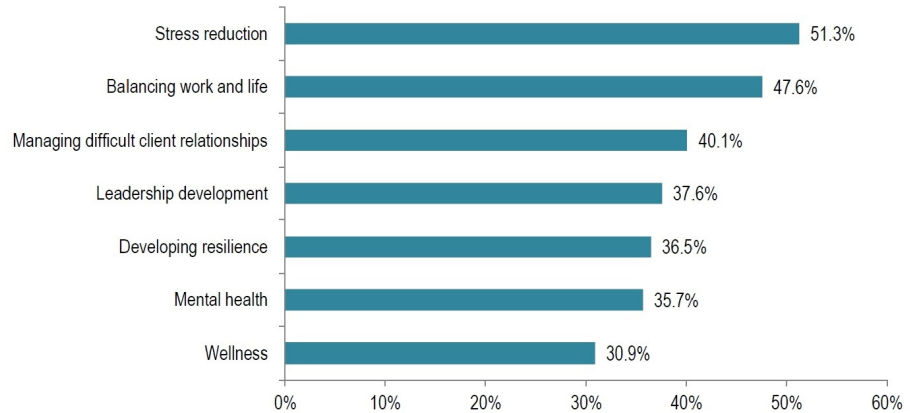
Cody Vandewerker

*Including cases filed under the Small Business Reorganization Act (commonly known as Subchapter V of Chapter 11)

**This plan confirmation rate is based on Allen Barnes & Jones's current attorneys' success in bankruptcy cases filed by the firm from January 1999 through October 2019 (only including closed cases and only the lead case in jointly administered cases). The 28% national average referred to above is for Chapter 11 cases from 2008-15 and is the most recent period in which a study of national Chapter 11 plan confirmations rates is available. See Ed Flynn, "Chapter 11 Is for Individuals and Small Business?," American Bankruptcy Institute (December 2018). Please see our firm website for more information. Past results are not a guarantee of future success.

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Leading Topics That Would Help Members Thrive and Function Most Optimally



and managing difficult client relationships.

The COVID-19 Effect

Perhaps the biggest change between the surveys in 2020 and 2017 is the global pandemic. The State Bar asked how members were dealing with it, and many expressed frustration at the usual suspects—balancing work and kids' education, a lack of socializing, and missing seeing colleagues. Others expressed appreciation for Netflix, Hulu and takeout, or frustration that they're wearing masks and socially distancing while others are not.

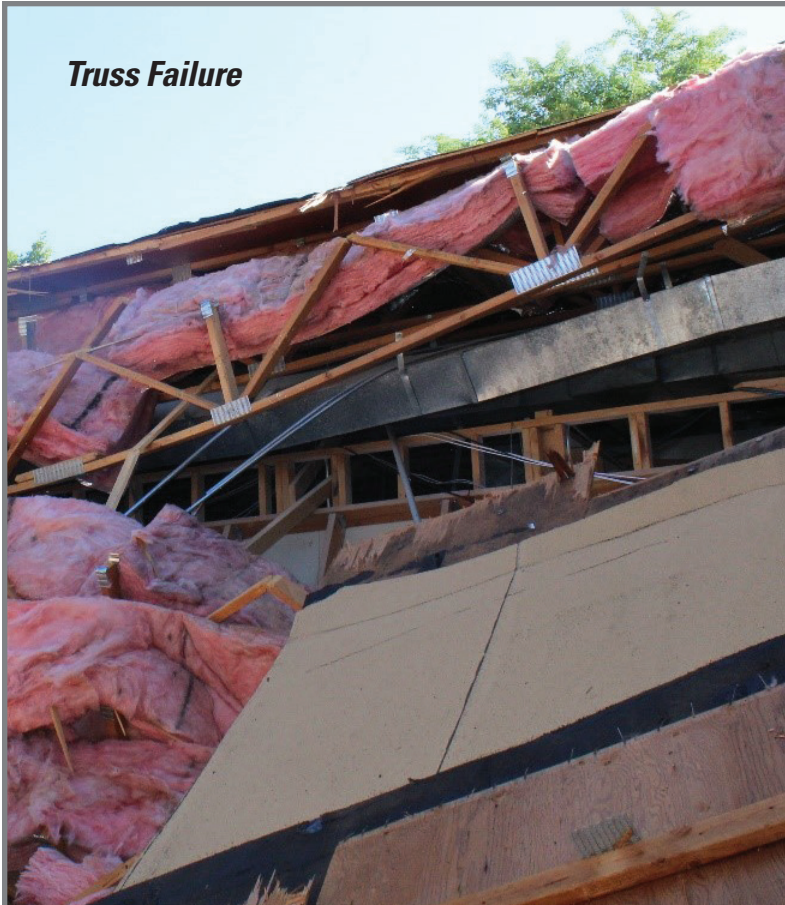
More than a few respondents say COVID-19 has been detrimental to their health, not because they caught the virus but because of depression, anxiety and weight gain wrought by self-isolating, working from home and worry.

In their individual lives, some say their mental and physical health improved as COVID closures forced them to read more books, embrace the outdoors and take up new hobbies.

A few respondents say COVID-19 gave them a bit of an existential crisis. They reflected on the world's state of affairs and didn't like what they saw, blaming cultural and constitutional crises, environmental issues, and the presidential election for stressing them out even more.

So how did COVID-19 affect members' work practices? Nine out of 10 Bar members masked up, 86 percent socially distanced, and close to 70 percent reduced face-to-face contact with clients. Nearly 70 percent say they used hand-sanitizer more. And 65 percent to 70 percent of those who have been members for 24 years or less reported working more hours from home. That's compared to 44 percent to 51 percent among those who have been Bar members 25 or more years.

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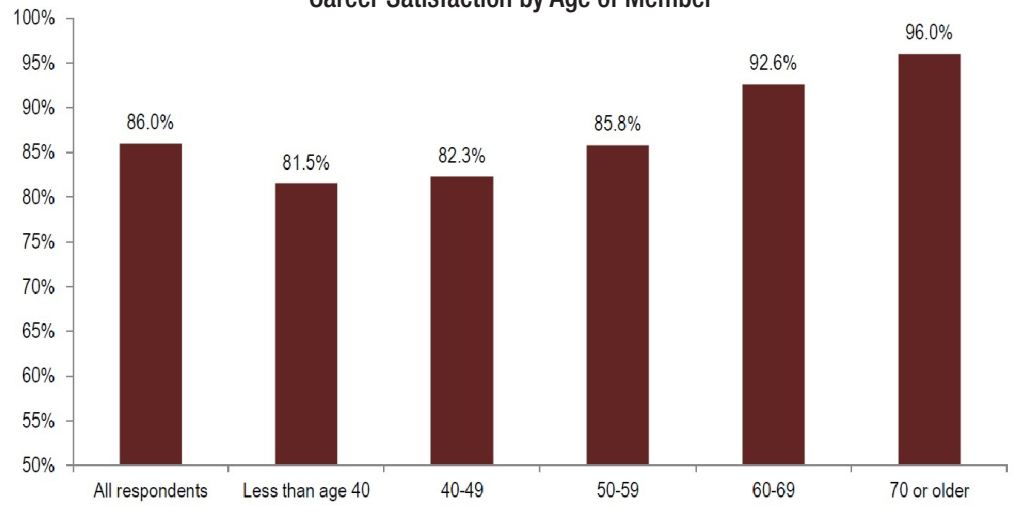


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Career Satisfaction by Age of Member



Drilling Down

Attorneys were asked the question “If the SBA could provide you with additional resources or services that currently are not offered, what would they be?” Perhaps not surprising, it yielded almost as many answers as there were respondents.

There were several calls for the return of a printed directory of members. Many asked for free or reduced CLE in exchange for doing pro bono legal work or for members older than 68—and a lot of calls for cheaper CLE all around. Another proposed a law library onsite at the Bar offices. Several suggested offering additional resources for mental health and substance abuse, while a number pushed for affordable health insurance and group retirement savings for solo practitioners. One member proposed assistance

and networking for mothers to re-enter the legal industry after taking time off to raise children. Not to mention these two suggestions: “Two paralegals and a masseuse” and “a dating app that works.”

Conclusion

What’s apparent from the comments and survey results is that the pandemic and world events have left members feeling a bit

bruised, but resilience and determination to muscle through are winning the day for most. The personal challenges and barriers attorneys face are fairly constant but do not nullify the satisfaction they get practicing law. But numerous things lawyers ask for already exist as member benefits. The Bar must do more to bring members into the loop about the opportunities, assistance and benefits available to them. **AZ**



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