



**JB Pritzker, Governor**  
**Paula A. Basta, M.Div., Director**

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*Respect for Yesterday*  
*Support for Today*  
*Plan for Tomorrow*

[Click here to visit our website for an accessible version of this letter.](#)

**Find A Vaccine  
Location**

**IDoA COVID-19 Resources**



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**#VaccineReady | April 2021**

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[Click Here for a Summary of COVID Updates for the Aging Network - Week of 4/11/2021](#)

April 16, 2021

Dear Aging Network:

April is [National Minority Health Month](#), which is especially important this year as we collectively focus on the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on racial and ethnic minorities, American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This year's theme is **#VaccineReady**, which encourages the empowerment of communities to get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines, share accurate vaccine information, get vaccinated, and practice COVID-19 safety measures. I invite our Aging Network to join the [HHS Office of Minority Health \(OMH\)](#) and partners as we encourage individuals and communities to share why they are **#VaccineReady**.

Over [7.6 million vaccinations](#) have been administered in the State of Illinois so far, which amounts to about a quarter of the population in Illinois being fully vaccinated. Additionally, almost [76% of older adults](#) 65 years of age or older in Illinois have now received the vaccine! These numbers continue to steadily increase every single day, which is a testament to the vaccination clinics initiated by the Aging Network in partnership with community providers and community members. COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool to help us get back to normal, and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to bring this pandemic to an end. Your relentlessness and ingenuity in pursuit of a solution is a shining example of why the Aging Network matters. You can see some of our older Illinoisans [as they #VaxUp here](#). Please, keep up the incredible work!

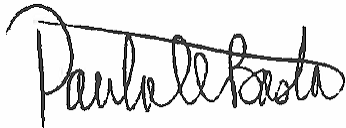
With May and [Older Americans Month](#) quickly approaching, I encourage our Aging Network to focus on the power of connection and engagement in building strong communities. Not too long ago, cellphones were the size of a small bag (and very impractical), and tablets and video calling didn't even exist. But now more than ever, we rely on technology to connect us nearly every day. The telegraph, developed in the late 1830s, was the first electrical telecommunications system. Since then, many types of communication have come and gone, all designed to connect people across long distances. In 2020, the way we connect with one another on a daily basis transitioned

almost entirely to phone calls, text messaging, emails, conference calls and video calls. Wi-Fi speeds became more important than ever. Even 5-year-olds are using video calls to talk to their teachers, classmates, and grandparents; and patients of all ages are connecting to doctors through virtual visits. Although it's been difficult, some positive changes ([like embracing virtual visits and telehealth](#)) have been mixed in. I believe that many of us take our connectivity for granted, and we sometimes forget that our older Illinoisans can be left behind in the technological world. Take a moment and read some of the [heartfelt thank you notes](#) that IDoA received after recently [providing new technologies](#) to many of our older Illinoisans who could not afford these devices, in order to maintain their physical, social, and mental health.

In closing, I would like to remind you of IDOA's Joint Summit with AARP of Illinois and RRF Foundation for Aging entitled, [Disrupt Disparities: Advancing Racial Equity in Aging](#) on April 26 and 27. I also would like to highlight the [4<sup>th</sup> Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium](#) which will be held on Thursday, May 6. This event is sponsored by the National Council on Aging, Administration for Community Living and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Registration is free and includes a full day of sessions on how to best meet the mental health needs of older adults. I hope you will all consider registering for these events.

We have come a long way since April of last year - and I have written at least one of these letters every month, updating you with information, and resources that I hope you use and share. I know that I continue to say it, but we have an incredible Aging Network that has continued to rise and overcome challenges that are in front of us. Thank you for setting the bar and inspiring others, and for being [All In for Illinois](#) so that together we may all **support today and plan for tomorrow**. Please continue to stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,



Paula Basta, M.Div.  
Director, Illinois Department on Aging

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