



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

One Natural Resources Way, Suite 100, Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
Phone: 800-252-8966 • 888-206-1327 (TTY) • Fax: 217-785-4477

August 21, 2020

Dear Aging Network:

Today is National Senior Citizen's Day! This observance was first established in 1988 as a day to recognize the wisdom, leadership, and achievements of our senior citizens. Today serves as a gentle reminder to do something special for your older family member, friend, or neighbor - especially in these unprecedented times. Spread the word to let our seniors know they are appreciated and loved. Encourage everyone to share their smile with those who may not otherwise get a visitor today. I would like to remind you about the [opportunities on our website](#) that engage our older adults during these times of social distancing, and I encourage you to use #SeniorCitizensDay when posting on social media.

Through coordination with IEMA, to date IDoA has provided close to 1 million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment to our Aging Network. As you may know, IDoA is also providing PPE off-set payments to our Aging Network to ensure access to PPE for both providers and recipients of services. The most recent delivery to IDoA included face shields, masks, N95 respirators, gowns and temporal thermometers. We will continue to do everything we can to get you the supplies you need to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our providers and participants.

As of today, almost a quarter of our Adult Day Service providers have re-opened! I am extremely grateful to the centers who have submitted their plans for re-opening and have done so safely - adhering to guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. I am also proud of our providers who have resumed services for our older Illinoisans in [innovative ways](#).

Over the past several weeks, Ombudsmen across the state have been conducting outdoor visits and window visits to be able to meet with residents face to face. While not the same as walking through a facility, these visits have allowed the Ombudsmen to make observations about the care and environment our seniors live in, that just are not possible during a virtual visit or phone call. IDPH recently released the [Re-Opening Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities](#) which became effective on August 14, 2020. This guidance included an important clarification that Ombudsmen are not considered "visitors" and should be allowed to enter facilities to meet with residents. Our office is currently developing our own guidance for our State Ombudsmen, and a self-assessment and other screening tools are completed prior to each visit to ensure the safety of the residents and the Ombudsman.

As the populations that Adult Protective Services serves are at the highest risk for morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 infection, IDoA has worked closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) in developing guidance to safely return our APS caseworkers to face-to-face visits for our highest risk clients yet mindful of the risk to our extremely vulnerable adults. The guidance prioritizes those individuals with the greatest potential needs and allows for some flexibility for APS PA to see any individual they deem clinically necessary. We will continue to review and update the guidance as necessary. Additionally, I would like to remind all of you about our [Engage2Change](#) public and professional APS awareness campaign. The timing of the recent launch couldn't be more important. We cannot assume that someone else will report suspected abuses. We need every Illinois resident to engage to make the change.

As a reminder, IDoA, along with the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP), and IDHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Rehabilitation Services has launched Illinois Care Connections. Illinois Care Connections provides technology devices such as iPads or Tablets to older adults and persons with disabilities who are socially isolated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, to help facilitate social connections with family and friends. Your organizations know the needs of our older adults best, and the individuals who may benefit from a device. Eligible recipients are those 60 and older, who are enrolled in the Community Care Program (CCP) or receive services from an Area Agency on Aging (AAA), or an associated provider. Referrals for devices must be made by an AAA or CCU. Please visit the [Illinois Care Connections website](#) to find additional FAQ, referral instructions and the referral form.

Respect for yesterday. Support for today. Planning for tomorrow.
www.illinois.gov/aging



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I appreciate the Aging Network's flexibility and creativity during these challenging times. Please do not hesitate to contact your IDoA program coordinator, or my office if you have any questions, or need any kind of assistance. I encourage all of you to take a look at the links provided above; **and continue to conduct any necessary programming outdoors where possible.** Thank you all for your continued dedication as together we do what we can **to support today, while planning for tomorrow.**

Sincerely,

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

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)