



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

April 13, 2020

Dear Aging Network:

I hope this finds you, your staff, friends and family healthy and safe. I would like to thank each of you for your dedication and collaboration during this ongoing situation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of older adults. We have all had to “think outside of the box” and I appreciate the Aging Network’s ability to be creative and work together to respond to older adult’s needs during this very challenging time.

We know that older adults are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 - more than the general population because of their underlying medical conditions. During this unprecedented time, the Aging Network continues to be strong and resilient; conducting outreach through telephone reassurance calls, expanding the delivery of home delivered meals, continuing to provide in-home services, and building a volunteer network across the state. I am proud to be affiliated with the Aging Network, and I’m honored to work in partnership with you.

It has been a month since we made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend services at our 72 Adult Day Service (ADS) Programs and 399 congregate meal sites. This action was necessary in order to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 and community spreading of the virus. ADS’ and congregate meals sites are often the only place where older adults congregate for social interaction and meals. One of the Department’s main priorities is to ensure ongoing access to meals and food. We’ve addressed the increased demand by distributing emergency funding to the Area Agencies on Aging and utilizing flexibilities under the Older Americans Act to increase the availability of home-delivered and shelf stable meals. We’ve also provided Emergency Assistance Service grants to Care Coordination Units to address the unanticipated needs of older adults and people with disabilities as a result of COVID-19.

Another priority of the Department is to sustain the Aging network post COVID-19. We have heard from you about the need for flexibility during this time to sustain ADS programs, to ensure adequate capacity of in-home staff, and to conduct assessments over the phone. We are working in collaboration with our sister agencies and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to streamline processes, while making sure services are not interrupted.

I know that the last few weeks have not been easy for you. We know the challenges of available PPE, and I want you to know we are working in very close partnership with the Governor’s office, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Illinois Department of Public Health to secure more PPE for the people on the front lines who need it right now. The Governor, his staff, and his cabinet team, including me, will not stop working until we get the supplies and equipment that we need.

We will get through this and I’m confident the Aging network will be stronger for it! We will continue to take guidance from IDPH and communicate with all IDoA partner organizations, as appropriate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your IDoA program coordinator, or my office.

Thank you all for your dedication as we continue to ***support today, while planning for tomorrow.***

Sincerely,

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

Respect for yesterday. Support for today. Planning for tomorrow.
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