



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

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June 17, 2020

Dear Aging Network:

As Illinois moves forward with the implementation of the plan to *Restore Illinois*, many stakeholders, including all of you, have naturally asked about when IDoA's programs will re-open. During these unprecedented times, I want to re-emphasize the Department's main priority; to ensure the health, welfare and safety of our collective older adults. The Department plans to take its time in the development of the re-opening guidance, as we intend to rely on the science and further direction from the experts in the field.

IDoA is closely collaborating with Governor Pritzker's administration, the Department of Public Health, our federal partners, sister agencies, and stakeholders on the development of the re-opening guidance for the programs administered by the Aging Network. To ensure coordination, the Department has formed seven workgroups in partnership with our stakeholders. The workgroups are each focusing on specific programs within the Aging Network, however, we anticipate much overlap in the guidance to ensure the safety of our older adults and staff, e.g. access to PPE, utilization of a screening tool, and social distancing requirements to name a few. The seven workgroups include: Adult Day Services, Adult Protective Services, Care Coordination, Congregate Dining / Senior Centers, EHRS / AMD, In-Home Services, and Long-Term Care / Ombudsman. This collaborative approach is inclusive and if you are interested in participating in one of the workgroups please contact IDoA at Aging.Occs@Illinois.gov.

Another priority is to continually evaluate our training to ensure that our workforce has the tools it needs in this ever-changing environment resulting from COVID-19. We have been hearing from all of you that our older adults are understandably fearful about individuals coming into their home and they have legitimate concerns about re-engaging with service providers. Additionally, we've heard that mental health related symptoms and anxiety levels are at an all-time high and they will most likely continue to remain high as the uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic remains. I'm pleased to share that IDoA has held [three quality webinars](#) that have focused on responding to the mental health needs of our population. We have another webinar scheduled for this Thursday, June 18, with Dr. Judith Cook, focusing on Wellness, Recovery, Action, Plan (WRAP) services. I strongly encourage all of you to check out our quality webinars and to share the links with your staff.

Again, the Department understands the pressure to re-open services. We take our role as advocates very seriously, and we must balance the health and safety of our seniors who are in the highest risk category for COVID-19, with the societal pressures to re-open. **To reiterate, the Department's re-opening guidance needs to be reviewed and approved by the Governor Pritzker's administration and the Department of Public Health prior to any re-opening of Aging services.**

As always, please know that we are grateful for all of the work you are doing as we continue to **support today, while planning for tomorrow**. Please stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paula A. Basta'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

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

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