



Area Agency on Aging
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Coronavirus Update– A Message from Executive Director Doug McGarry

I write in the midst of difficult times and with hope that all is well with you and your loved ones. As an Agency we are doing well but are extremely challenged by the deadly assault that this virus has placed upon our consumers, providers, employees, families, friends and communities.

Our Agency staff have stepped up with high and focused commitment. The challenge is to keep momentum moving forward, as we are only in the first leg of an unwelcomed marathon. We are grateful to all community partners who join us in this effort to continue serving seniors, disabled adults, and their caregivers throughout our nine-county region.

Transition to Work from Home

- On March 17 we began converting to a "work from home" mode with all 140 employees fully transitioned to home by March 19. Our three-person IT staff are doing an incredible job in keeping our remote status operational.
- All administrative operations are functional with no interruption to consumer and administrative support. We are able to respond to all contacts and issue all payments as planned and scheduled.
- Screeners continue to provide "Answers on Aging" to those who reach out to our agency for information and assistance.
- Assessors determine level of care and program eligibility by phone until such time as it is safe to visit our consumers in their home.
- Care managers remain in contact with consumers by phone using established frequency protocols.
- We are working closely with providers to ensure that services are delivered as appropriate to consumers.

Older Americans Act Title III Services

- With relief from the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) policies, all congregate meals have been converted to alternative meal delivery methods. Those alternatives include shelf-stable, frozen, grab-and-go, drive-up, and drive-through meals.
- For those without transportation, home-delivered meals have been expanded through transfer of funds. Service eligibility requirements have been waived (homebound) and relaxed (in-person assessment).
- Supplemental ODA dollars from the first Corona Response Act will further expand services.
- All community-based, in-person wellness programs are cancelled and scheduling is suspended. As an alternative, we are offering our popular Healthy U disease self-management workshop in an approved temporary format where participants receive a kit at their home and participate in six weekly, 30-minute, small-group conference calls to reinforce workshop tools and share information. We are also working on alternate formats to offer the Aging Mastery Program until we can resume our in-person workshops.

Clinical Services

- The top request we are receiving in our Intake department remains meals. We are also continuing to see existing consumers ask that their services be stopped temporarily for fear of exposure and choosing to decrease or limit their in-person contacts.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) remains scarce and is a real concern for our provider network, staff and consumers.
- We are receiving guidance routinely from the Ohio Department of Aging, the Ohio Department of Medicaid, and our MyCare partners on case management and provider network emergency protocols. Included is how to assist individuals who are either symptomatic of, being tested for, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- We are moving ahead with the launch of our new caregiver software (Trualta). Consumers and their caregivers displaced by the closure of all adult daycare facilities are our first priority for the new service.

We continue to monitor the news and follow state-wide orders from Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio Director of Public Health Dr. Amy Acton. We work toward the continued and future safety and health of those who rely on our services as well as our staff and communities. I sincerely hope that we soon see a marked decrease in the grief, anxiety and uncertainty resulting from the pandemic. Know that the Agency is doing all it can to ensure that older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers in our region receive the services and support they need to remain safe and well in their homes, now and always.