

Memorandum



Date: June 10, 2021

To: Honorable Chairman Jose “Pepe” Diaz
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava".

Subject: Report Regarding Establishing a Plan to Reopen Senior Centers Operated by
Miami-Dade County– Directive 210814

The following report is in response to Resolution No. R-466-21, sponsored by Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado and co-sponsored by Commissioner Rene Garcia, and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on May 4, 2021, which directed the County Mayor or Mayor’s Designee to establish a plan to reopen senior centers operated by Miami-Dade County. At a minimum, the plan identifies methods to: expand the County’s current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) homebound vaccination program to every person over 60 residing in the County (seniors); measure the number of seniors at County operated senior centers who have received the COVID-19 vaccination; minimize exposure to COVID-19 while transporting seniors to senior centers; configure senior centers to minimize senior’s exposure to COVID-19 while at said centers; and set benchmarks and parameters for reopening senior centers which comply with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 quarantine recommendations.

As of June 7, 2021, fifteen Community Action and Human Services Department (CAHSD) senior centers have reopened (serving residents from seventeen centers) and eight of the sites have resumed the hot meals service. Additional sites are scheduled to reopen this month with all centers providing full-day programming, including hot meals, by the end of the month. The Culmer Senior Center will remain closed through July for renovations.

Congregate meal sites (senior centers) provide life-sustaining services and community support to the elderly by providing nutritious hot meals, recreational programming, transportation services, case management, and opportunities for social connection. CAHSD operates nineteen senior centers. Each center is different, and pre-pandemic capacity ranged from 15 to 185 constituents per site. The Department implemented its reopening strategy for the County-operated senior centers on May 3, 2021 with a focus on several factors, including transportation to and from the centers, physical distancing in accordance with evolving CDC guidelines, the facilities’ availability, the number of residents to be served, types of activities to be offered, and overall health and safety. The centers were opened with an augmented schedule that allows voluntary participation, offers group activities, and positions CAHSD to maintain a dual operation of center-based programming and home delivered meals to all enrolled seniors, ensuring that the nutritional health of residents who are not ready to return will not be impacted. This includes the provision of additional meals to residents assessed as being at risk of malnutrition.

Safety is paramount to reopening all centers and keeping them open. CAHSD has reconfigured centers to ensure physical distancing to serve a blended group of vaccinated and unvaccinated clients. Of the nineteen CAHSD centers, fourteen are operated in County-owned buildings. The Department continues to work with its municipal and community partners to accelerate the

reopening of centers safely. CAHSD also updated its transportation policies and has resumed transporting residents to designated centers. The full transportation schedule will be implemented this month as the hot meal service resumes at more locations and enrollment for home-delivered meals decreases. Additionally, all non-medical staff, including the transportation staff, have been trained on universal precautions, activities have been augmented, and cleaning frequency and strategy have been enhanced to ensure safety.

Every week enrolled clients are reassessed to gauge their interest and readiness to return to center-based programming, assess their transportation needs, and provide continued support with vaccination information and registration. At the onset of the pandemic, CAHSD activated its Continuity of Operations Plan, and employees have delivered more than 1.3 million meals to 2,700 residents weekly through an expanded meals on wheels program. This strategy allowed CAHSD to maintain a weekly in-person connection with the residents that were previously being served in a center.

While 84 percent of Miami-Dade residents 65 and older have received at least one vaccine, 72 percent of the 2,700 elderly residents receiving services through the various longstanding CAHSD programs for the elderly have self-identified as receiving at least one vaccine. The percentage of vaccinated residents who are enrolled at individual senior centers ranges from a high of 98 percent to a low of 31 percent. This disparity underscores that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Under the recommendation of medical experts, including Dr. Peter Paige, Chief Medical Officer, CAHSD will continue to reopen centers for full-day programming safely, with a keen focus on each individual center. Additionally, the positivity rate of less than five percent over a 14-day period is the recommended benchmark for reopening fully with the flexibility to consider additional measures if the rate exceeds seven percent. As of this writing, the 14-day average is under three percent.

In preparation for reopening the senior centers and since the reopening of centers, CAHSD has encumbered \$163,000 in non-budgeted expenses to ensure the safe delivery of services and anticipates further encumbering \$425,000 through December 2021. Expenses include PPEs for staff and clients, temperature scanners, electrostatic sprayers and disinfectant, air purifying systems and filters, signage, and contracted cleaning services during all program hours. Now that the 2021 hurricane season has begun, CAHSD is actively preparing enrolled residents by ensuring that they will have enough shelf-stable food and water for a minimum of three days, and individual emergency and evacuation plans have been updated.

CAHSD also administers three federally-funded volunteer-based programs that engage more than 700 elderly residents in community activities annually. On July 6, the Department will resume services via the Senior Companion, Relief for Caregivers, and Foster Grandparent programs. Throughout the pandemic, senior volunteers have been very instrumental in providing telephone reassurance to other seniors. The reactivation of in-person volunteer services will support caretakers, provide in-home companionship to homebound seniors, and support children and teachers in classrooms across Miami-Dade County.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue (MDFR) has supported Public Housing and Community Development and CAHSD in getting homebound residents vaccinated. The two MDFR COVID-19 Homebound teams administer approximately 20 vaccines per day to homebound residents and have administered more than 3,500 vaccines since launching the program on December 31, 2020. The County’s Office of Emergency Management continues to coordinate new homebound vaccine requests through the state’s Emergency Management Homebound program and has vaccinated more than 3,000 Miami-Dade residents.

The County continues to provide guidance to the Alliance for Aging (AFA) network of providers on its reopening strategy to support other providers in reopening their centers. Providers in the network, including CAHSD, operate seventy-four senior centers across Miami-Dade County through U.S Department of Health and Human Services Older Americans Act funding via a pass-through to the state Department of Elder Affairs. All senior centers in the AFA network transitioned to a home-delivery strategy in March 2020 with additional allocated funding via non-County CARES Act and Families First Coronavirus Response Act. With the initial eight CAHSD centers resuming hot meal service, 12 of the 74 centers in the AFA network have returned to their pre-pandemic operation. My administration is committed to supporting the AFA and its network with their reopening strategy, recognizing providers should be afforded the discretion to determine their readiness, capacity, and the timing for resuming services in order to best preserve the safety and well-being of senior clients.

Additionally, separate from the above-mentioned CAHSD programs, the County continues to provide home-delivered meals to 35,069 elderly residents through the County Emergency Meal Service (CEMS) for seniors funded through FEMA reimbursement. At the program’s highest peak in May 2020, more than 85,000 seniors were enrolled. Since March 16, 2020, 23.8 million meals have been delivered to residents enrolled in CEMS. In late April, vaccination information was provided to all enrolled residents with their home-delivered meals, and CAHSD continues to work with state and local partners to transition residents to alternative programs, including Medicaid Long Term Care. Lastly, every day residents are also electing to discontinue the emergency meal service. Since May 1, 2021, enrollment has decreased by more than 1,900 elderly residents.

My administration continues to work diligently to lead and support efforts that focus on the recovery of our County, including our residents return to social programs.

Per ordinance No. 14-65, this report shall be placed on the next available Board meeting agenda.

Should you require additional information, please contact Annika S. Holder, CAHSD Interim Director, at Annika.Holder@miamidade.gov.

- c: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney
- Gerald Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney
- Jess McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney
- Office of the Mayor Senior Staff
- Morris Copeland, Chief Community Services Officer, Office of the Mayor

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