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PROGRAM MEMO

TO: Area Agencies on Aging, Independent Living Center Connected with an Aging and Disability Resource Connection programs, and Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Programs

NO: PM 21-10

DATE ISSUED: May 6, 2021

EXPIRES: NA

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Supportive Services (Title IIIB), Nutrition (Title IIIC), Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Title IIID), Family Caregiver Support (IIIE), Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP), and Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) program

SUPERSEDES: PM 20-18

SUBJECT: Updated Guidance for Resuming In-Person Service Delivery of Older Americans Act, Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program, and Aging and Disability Resource Connection Program

Purpose

This Program Memo (PM) provides updated guidance on resuming in-person service delivery for the Older Americans Act (OAA), Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy (HICAP), and Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) programs during the COVID-19 pandemic as California moves beyond the [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). On June 15, 2021, the tier-based approach of the *Blueprint* will no longer be in place and California will fully open its economy, if certain criteria are met regarding vaccinations and hospitalizations. This memo contains guidance for resuming in-home services and in-person group programs or activities for OAA programs after June 15, 2021, including Supportive Services (Title IIIB), Nutrition (Title IIIC), Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Title IIID), and Family Caregiver Support (IIIE), HICAP and ADRC programs.

Background

In March 2020, when older adults and the public were asked to stay home to save lives from COVID-19, many aging services in the community, such as meals, as well as aging program worksites, went to remote services. In the fourteen months since Californians begin to stay home to stay safe from the pandemic, aging services have continued to serve Older Californians through home deliveries, virtual connections, telephone calls, and more, and have delivered services at unprecedented levels to meet unprecedented needs. Now, with vaccination rates increasing and cases decreasing, many sectors are in the process of re-opening for in-person services, including aging and disability networks. In-person services can combat isolation and address health and well-being needs that worsened during

the months of staying home. Nonetheless, the risk of COVID-19 causing serious disease and death for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and the aging and disability workforce will remain a primary concern until all are vaccinated.

CDA's reopening guidance for the aging network is linked to the States' overall guidance on reopening the economy and protecting public health: *The Blueprint for a Safer Economy*, issued August 28, 2020.

The *Blueprint* outlined the four Tiers for the opening of business and activities, replacing the four Stages of the *Resilience Roadmap*. Every county in California is assigned to a tier based on its COVID-19 test positivity and adjusted case rate. Tier status is updated weekly. The Tiers are based on the risk of community disease transmission as follows:

- Tier 1: Widespread
- Tier 2: Substantial
- Tier 3: Moderate
- Tier 4: Minimal

Most recently, on April 6, 2021, the Governor outlined the State's next step in the COVID-19 pandemic recovery, [Moving Beyond the Blueprint](#). On June 15, 2021, California will fully open its economy if vaccine supply is sufficient, and hospitalizations are stable and low.

General COVID-19 Re-Opening Guidance

The guidance provided is subject to change based on updated Federal and/or State public health guidance.

Current Guidance – *Blueprint for a Safer Economy*

Until the Governor announces that the State has met the criteria to move beyond the tier system of the *Blueprint*, the AAAs should continue to follow the current guidance.

The current guidance based on the *Blueprint* is for the AAAs to defer non-essential in-home services and in-person group programs or activities including public/community events until after a county reaches Tier 4 (the yellow tier) and, ideally, until a county remains in the yellow tier for several weeks. Additionally, AAAs should continue to monitor State and local county public health guidance and follow their county public health recommendations. The decision to adjust service delivery of OAA, ADRC, and HICAP programs will be made at the local level and should be based on state and local public health guidance, along with an assessment of the readiness of the program staff and older adults in the community to resume in-person activities.

Guidance Post-June 15, 2021 - *Moving Beyond the Blueprint for a Safer Economy*

With the administration of vaccines and the decrease in COVID-19 case rates and hospitalizations, California will be moving beyond the tier-based approach of the State's *Blueprint*. The State will move beyond the *Blueprint* to fully reopen the economy on June 15th provided the following criteria is met:

1. There is enough vaccine supply for Californians 16 years and older to be vaccinated.
2. Hospitalizations are stable and low, and specifically, hospitalizations among fully vaccinated individuals are low.

Once the State meets the criteria and all industries can resume usual operations, on June 15th or later, it will be at the AAAs, ADRCs, and HICAPs discretion to resume in-person group programs or activities including public/community events. The decision to resume in-person services will be made at the local level and should be based on state and local public health guidance, along with an assessment of the readiness of the program staff and older adults and people with disabilities at each site where OAA, ADRC, and HICAP services are provided. Risk reduction measures should be continued, including masking, handwashing, and physical distancing.

Participants who have not received vaccinations should be referred to vaccination sites. Vaccine information can be found at <https://myturn.ca.gov/> and <https://aging.ca.gov/covid19/>. Guidance on new federal resources for aging and disability networks to assist with vaccine access will be issued shortly. AAAs and service providers should consult their own outside legal counsel for guidance on risk assessment and regarding questions about requiring proof of vaccinations or use of liability waivers.

AAAs and their service providers should continue to take steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and create a safe environment for staff, volunteers, and clients. The following resources provide information and tools for reducing the risk of COVID-19.

- Your Guide to Masks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>
- Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>
- How to Protect Yourself & Others: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/cleaning-disinfecting-decision-tool.html>
- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.n4a.org/covid19>

AAA Services' Transitions

OAA Program Flexibilities

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, both ACL and CDA have allowed program flexibilities due to the need for safety precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The program flexibilities are detailed in the [Frequently Asked Questions - Guidance for AAAs for COVID-19](#). The reversing of the program flexibilities will be tied to the ending of the Major Disaster Declaration (MDD). CDA will inform the AAAs once the MDD ends and the six-month transition period to reverse the flexibilities begins.

Refer to the updated Appendices for program-specific guidance to assist the AAAs in resuming in-person services.

CDA Technical Assistance to AAAs with Resuming In-Person Services

On April 7, 2021, CDA sent a survey to all AAAs inquiring about their status of resuming in-person services. Twenty-eight AAAs responded to the survey. Three AAAs indicated that they have partially or fully resumed in-person services; six AAAs have established a timeframe to resume in-person services; six AAAs are currently planning and/or awaiting guidance to resume in-person services; and one AAA

is following local public health guidance to wait until their region is has higher immunity before services are resumed. CDA will continue to track the status of AAAs resuming in-person services so that CDA can provide additional assistance as needed.

CDA will also be convening and facilitating a workgroup of AAA leaders to share resources, ideas, and plans to assist AAAs with navigating this transition to in-person services. Michelle Davis, CDA Chief, Older Adults Programs (michelle.davis@aging.ca.gov) will be sending out an invitation to all AAA directors in May 2021 to convene this workgroup and the Branch will share the workgroup's resources with all.

Updated Appendices

Appendix A: Nutrition Program (Title IIIC)

Appendix B: Supportive Services (Title IIIB) and Family Caregiver Support (IIIE) Programs

Appendix C: Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Program (Title IIID)

Inquiries

For Title IIIB program inquiries, email: CDASupportiveServices@aging.ca.gov

For Title IIIC and IIID program inquiries, email: CDANutritionandHealthPromotion@aging.ca.gov

For Title IIIE program inquiries, email: CDAFamilyCaregiver@aging.ca.gov

For HICAP program inquiries, email: CDA.HICAP.Team@aging.ca.gov



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