

PROGRAM MEMO

TO: Area Agencies on Aging

NO: PM 20-16

DATE ISSUED: 7.21.20

EXPIRES: NA

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Supportive Services (Title IIIB), Nutrition (Title IIIC), Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Title IIID), and Family Caregiver Support (IIIE)

SUPERSEDES:

SUBJECT: Guidance for Temporary Alternative Service Delivery of Older Americans Act Programs Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Purpose

This Program Memo (PM) provides guidance on temporary alternative service delivery of the Older Americans Act (OAA) programs during the COVID-19 pandemic as it correlates with the State of California's [Resilience Roadmap](#) which is the overarching plan for California. Suggested activities through the *Resilience Roadmap* stages are provided for the OAA programs including Supportive Services (Title IIIB), Nutrition (Title IIIC), Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Title IIID), and Family Caregiver Support (IIIE) in Appendices A through C.

General Guidance

The guidance provided is subject to change based on Federal and/or State guidance which may result in the decrease and/or conclusion of flexibilities to program requirements.

Most recently, on July 13, 2020, California closed some indoor business operations statewide and additional indoor operations in designated counties. For the latest State public health guidance, consult <https://covid19.ca.gov>

Advancing through Stages of the *Resilience Roadmap*

The State's *Resilience Roadmap* allows for county variance based on State and local public health guidance and on meeting readiness criteria and metrics. 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 programs will be made at the local level and should be based on state and local public health guidance, along with consideration to the readiness of the older adults in the community. County-specific information is provided on the State's COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap-counties/>.

General Program Guidance

Suggested strategies are provided for each of the OAA programs aligning with the four stages of the *Resilience Roadmap*. Since the State's *Resilience Roadmap* advises higher risk individuals to stay at home until Stage Four, the guidance for each OAA program defers non-essential in-home services and in-person group programs or activities until Stage Four, unless they can be delivered remotely. Refer to the Appendices for program-specific guidance.

A critical aspect of service delivery for OAA programs will be following recommended safety precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. AAAs and their service providers should take steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 and create a safe environment for staff, volunteers, and clients. The following resources provide information and tools for reducing the risk of COVID-19.

- Understand how COVID-19 spreads and the necessary precautions, including wearing face coverings, handwashing, and physical distancing to prevent the spread of the virus. Refer to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
- Follow *Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings*, which requires the use of face coverings in California when in public or common spaces. Refer to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance, including a listing of individuals who are exempt from wearing face coverings: [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#).
- Utilize print resources to support COVID-19 recommendations. Refer to CDC resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
- Clean and disinfect. Refer to CDC guidance to ensure program sites are appropriately cleaned and disinfected: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/cleaning-disinfecting-decision-tool.html>

Addressing Social Isolation

Addressing social isolation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, is essential to the well-being of older adults. AAAs should continue to address social isolation in all stages of the *Resilience Roadmap*. Some strategies to engage older adults virtually include:

- Establish or expand virtual visiting programs by engaging staff and volunteers to make daily phone calls to older adults.
- Leverage social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to share content and to stay connected with others.
- Offer computer-friendly services to support new users of electronic devices.
- Share links to virtual events, such as concerts, museum tours, amusement park rides, and aquarium visits with clients.
- Find more tools for virtual connections:
 - [Addressing Social Isolation for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)
 - [Engage CA](#)
 - [Senior Centers Connect](#)

Background

Guidance for service delivery has been provided at the Federal and the State level and both are summarized below as it relates the population served by the OAA programs.

The Federal government has released [Guidelines for Opening America Up Again](#) which is a three-phased approach to guide state and local officials when reopening their economies. During phases one and two, all vulnerable individuals are recommended to shelter in place. During phase three, vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions, but should practice social distancing, minimizing exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical, unless precautionary measures are observed. Vulnerable individuals are defined as “elderly individuals and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy”.

The State of California has released the *Resilience Roadmap* which outlines four stages for reopening:

- Stage 1 - Safety and Preparedness: Making essential workforce environment as safe as possible.
- Stage 2 - Lower Risk Workplaces: Creating opportunities for lower risk sectors to adapt and reopen.
- Stage 3 - Higher Risk Workplaces: Creating opportunities for higher risk sectors to adapt and reopen).
- Stage 4 - End of Stay-At-Home Order: Return to expanded workforce in highest risk workplaces.

The State’s *Resilience Roadmap* advises that higher risk individuals should stay at home until Stage Four. Higher risk individuals are defined as “over 65 or with serious medical conditions”.

The guidance for OAA programs aligns with the four stages of the State’s *Resilience Roadmap* to remain consistent with State and local government guidance for counties. The guidance for OAA programs refers to higher risk individuals as those age 60 and older in order to align with the population served by the OAA programs of age 60 and older and to support consistency in services offered to clients. AAAs may choose to utilize the *Resilience Roadmap* definition of higher risk individuals (those over 65 or with serious medical conditions); however, this may result in the need for more complex programming to address program operations for clients under 65 and clients over 65.

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

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