

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Department of Aging Releases
COVID-19 Guidance for Senior Centers

Harrisburg, PA - The Pennsylvania Department of Aging has released COVID-19 guidance to the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) related to the operations of over 500 affiliated senior community centers operating statewide. This temporary guidance provides operational flexibility to help meet the needs of older adults who use the centers, while ensuring their safety.

“The Wolf administration is committed to protecting Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens, and during this COVID-19 outbreak, older adults and especially those with underlying medical conditions are the most vulnerable,” said Aging Secretary Robert Torres. “We have been in regular communications with the Area Agencies on Aging relating to operation of their affiliated senior community centers, and we will continue to engage with them to meet their informational needs, receive input and offer guidance.”

AAAs make the determination to temporarily close a senior community center in their planning and service area due to COVID-19 unless specifically directed by the Governor's Office. The COVID-19 guidance requests that the AAAs planning to close senior centers have a contingency plan for how essential nutrition services will be provided; how referrals to other community resources will be established; how outreach efforts to isolated senior center participants will be conducted and how the AAA will communicate information about the closure and service options to senior center participants.

A central activity at many centers is the offering of congregate meals. During the COVID-19 emergency, the Department is offering flexibility as to how a AAA and senior center can meet the nutritional needs of its members. The options include:

- Offering meals as a take-out meal that participants can pick up.
- Packaging and delivering meals to participants' homes.
- Offering shelf-stable, frozen and grab-and-go meals.
- Enrolling participant in the OPTIONS Program for in-home meal service.

“Participants are to be offered an alternative means to receive a meal and be provided information about contacting the center or the AAA if they need additional assistance or services,” said Secretary Torres. “We are committed to ensuring that the delivery of services to older adults, particularly in the vital area of meals, continues unabated, while protecting the health and safety of older adults who utilize the centers, and the center staff who interact with them.”

The Department has also provided guidance to AAAs and Senior Centers for sanitary practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

These recommendations will be updated on a recurring basis, if needed, as new information becomes available.

Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated Coronavirus webpage [here](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

Learn more about the various programs offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging [here](#).