



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF AGING

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 1, 2020**

## **Departments of Health and Aging Highlight Efforts to Protect Seniors, Vulnerable Pennsylvanians**

**Harrisburg, PA** – At today’s daily COVID-19 press conference at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Sec. of Health Dr. Rachel Levine and Sec. of Aging Robert Torres highlighted efforts to protect seniors and other vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

“Because long-term care is a part of so many Pennsylvanians’ lives, we have steadfastly sought to make this care the best it possibly can be. That’s why we’ve implemented recommendations from the Auditor General and are in the process of rewriting regulations based on a report from the Nursing Home Task Force and, that’s why we’ve enforced our existing policies,” Dr. Levine said.

She advised that the majority of Pennsylvania’s long-term care facilities are strictly following existing policies and have successfully prevented COVID-19 from becoming widespread, but in some facilities COVID-19 was harder to contain.

Whenever a long-term care facility in Pennsylvania reports just a single case of COVID-19, the Department of Health reaches out to conduct an assessment of the situation and offers a number of resources to the facility, as needed. Those resources could include having the facility work with ECRI, our infection control consultant, with our internal infection control teams, with the Patient Safety Authority, or deploying the Pennsylvania National Guard to assist with staffing.

Sec. Torres outlined the Department of Aging’s work to prepare for safely reopening operations of older adult services located in counties that are moving into the Green Phase, as well as initiatives to combat social isolation among older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

“In preparation for Pennsylvania’s phased-in reopening, the Department of Aging, in collaboration with representatives of Area Agencies on Aging and adult day centers, has developed procedures and best practices for resuming operations of adult day centers, senior community centers, aging services that involve in-person consumer contacts and in-home visits, and protective services,” said Aging Secretary Robert Torres. “This has all been done with the overriding objective of ensuring the health and safety of both participants and staff. The process of reopening will be conducted gradually,

strategically and cautiously, while allowing flexibility at the local level to keep older adults and staff safe.”

Recognizing that seniors may have ongoing concerns and fears, alternative services and practices implemented as a result of this pandemic, such as maintaining different modes of getting meals to seniors, will continue for some time. Older adults needing a meal or in-home support can still call their local AAA. Questions regarding available aging services and resources can be directed to the PA Link at 1-800-753-8827.

Sec. Torres also noted that the Department of Aging’s Protective Services Office has continued to operate throughout the pandemic, with face-to-face safety measures in place to protect older adults and investigative staff. Anyone suspecting elder abuse should call the statewide reporting hotline at 1-800-490-8505. This hotline is answered by a live person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.