

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Thank you!

On behalf of the entire Ohio Department of Aging, I thank all of you in Ohio's aging network for your unwavering dedication to protecting the older adults you serve at all times but especially during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This pandemic has been challenging and tragic for older Ohioans, but I am certain things would have been much worse were it not for all of you.

COVID-19 is still among us, and older adults remain among those Ohioans at the highest risk for complications from the virus. Our dedication to keeping them – and you – safe and happy, has not changed. Over the past few months, we have used weekly webinars to communicate important policy changes and opportunities with you. We've also benefitted from the feedback we receive from you as we continue to shape Ohio's response to this unprecedented time. More than 360 individuals, representing Ohio's aging network and our state agency partners, have signed on for these webinars each week.

As we enter into the fourth month of the pandemic, we want to make the most of our time and yours so that we can all focus on what matters most: the safety and well-being of those we serve and care for. **Webinars** will resume on Friday, July 10, and will be held every other Friday. You can [register here](#). To ensure we're staying in constant contact with you and providing as much information as we can, we are introducing this monthly newsletter. Look for future issues around the first of each month. We will highlight the latest developments, resources, and tools, as well as remind you of recent updates and where to find them.

I look forward to our continued partnership as we move into this next phase of Ohio's response to COVID-19. Thank you.

Ursel J. McElroy
Director, Ohio Department of Aging

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Helping older Ohioans stay connected



This month, the Ohio Department of Aging launched an expansion of its new Staying Connected Program – the Friendly Chat. The Friendly Chat feature is available to all participants enrolled in the Staying Connected program.

Staying Connected began in May for Ohioans age 60 and older who have access to a landline or mobile phone. The program features a daily check in call (by pressing #1), access to services by being directly connected to the area agency on aging in their county (by pressing #3), and now the option of engaging in a live conversation (by pressing #9).

"The Staying Connected Program is being offered to older Ohioans as a result of COVID-19," said ODA Director Ursel McElroy.

"Coronavirus has been especially challenging for those over age 60, not just medically and for those in congregate living situations, but also ensuring they are safe, getting the services they need, and addressing isolation concerns."

To help minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Ohio, visitation has been restricted in congregate housing facilities such as nursing homes, assisted living, and intermediate care facilities. In addition, adult day and senior centers remain closed and there are still recommendations to stay at home for those living independently.

Health Risks Associated with Isolation

- Physical, mental, cognitive
- Poor sleep quality
- Coronary and heart disease
- Impaired immune system
- Obesity
- Depression
- Cognitive decline
- Premature death

McElroy expressed gratitude for those who have found creative ways to stay in touch with those who have had limited opportunities to visit with their loved ones. "However, the negative impacts on people's health because of isolation are very real," McElroy added. "The Friendly Chat service is designed to address that concern." Feedback from those participating in the chat so far has been very positive. More than 85 percent of the respondents give it a favorable rating. The Friendly Chat line operates Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Employees from the Department of Aging and the Ohio Bureau of Worker's Compensation have been staffing the Friendly Chat line while also performing their regular work duties. "Interestingly, these conversations can be uplifting for employees, too," said Pete Tamburro who was one of the first employees to answer the calls. "Our seniors can tell some inspiring stories about their lives and history. We all benefit from engaging in a healthy, upbeat

conversation during this time – even employees.

It's a wonderful way to connect and do something worthwhile for our constituents."

To learn more about the Staying Connected Program, please visit www.aging.ohio.gov/stayingconnected.

ADVOCACY

Ohio Advisory Council for Aging holds June meeting

On Wednesday, June 10, the Ohio Advisory Council for Aging met virtually to receive updates from the Ohio Department of Aging. Director McElroy led discussions of how the COVID-19 emergency is impacting the aging network. She also provided information on the department's role in Ohio's Responsible Restart initiatives, saying that the Governor's administration and stakeholders are striking a balance between preserving life and maintaining quality of life for older Ohioans. Council members also received updates on new department initiatives, such as the Staying Connected program, a legislative update, and reports from each of the department's program divisions.

All 12 of the members appointed by the governor joined the meeting. Members spoke about what they want the advisory council to address moving forward. Ideas included a review of kinship caregiving and available supports to older adults who are again fulfilling a parenting role. The group also discussed issues of ageism and its effect on society. Another issue raised was the importance of increasing broadband access in rural Ohio.

Joining the meeting were members of the Ohio General Assembly, Senator Steve Wilson and Representative Thomas West. Senator Hearcel Craig was represented by his staff. Representatives from other state agencies in the health and human services fields, as well as representatives of Ohio's aging network also participated.

The next meeting of the advisory council will be held on August 12, 2020, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. At that time, the council will elect a chair and vice chair.

The Ohio Advisory Council for Aging was established by ORC 173.03 in 2000 to provide guidance to the director of the Department of Aging on matters impacting older adults. Appointed members come from broad and diverse backgrounds to substantively represent the needs of Ohio's aging population.

Ohio Advisory Council for Aging Appointed Members:

- **John Begala**, lecturer and retired executive director of the Center for Community Solutions
- **Louis Borowicz**, lawyer and member of the Central Ohio Geriatric Social Workers Association
- **Semanthie Brooks**, community volunteer and retired director of community advocacy for the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging
- **John Corlett**, executive director of the Center for Community Solutions and former state Medicaid director
- **Misty Crosby**, executive director of the Buckeye Hills Regional Council and former president of the Development District Association of Appalachia



- **Stephanie Garrett**, vice president of the Preble County Board of Developmental Disabilities and president of the Preble County Convention & Visitors Bureau Board

- **Diane Redden**, administrative director of the Hamilton County Municipal League and PPE director for Lion Group, Inc.

- **Marian Schuda, M.D.**, medical director of patient services at Riverside Methodist Hospital and a member of the State of Ohio Medical Quality Board

- **Denise Shockley**, superintendent of the Gallipolis-Vinton Educational Service Center and director of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers

- **Manish Srivastava, M.D.**, medical director of the Palliative Care Program at Good Samaritan Hospital and Bethesda North Hospital

- **Philip Walton**, retired district manager for the Social Security Administration and chair of the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio Board of Directors

- **Lori Wengerd**, president and owner of Home Care Assistance and member of the National Parkinson's Foundation of Ohio Board of Trustees

The Advisory Council is also represented by ex-officio members

who are appointed by the Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives and the President of the Ohio Senate:

- **Senator Hearcel Craig (D)**, representing the 15th Senate District, which includes portions of Franklin County.

- **Representative Tim Ginter (R)**, representing the 5th House District, which encompasses Columbiana County.

- **Representative Thomas West (D)**, representing the 49th House District, which includes portions of Stark County.

- **Senator Steve Wilson (R)**, representing the 7th Senate District, which encompasses Warren County and portions of Butler and Hamilton Counties.

Five additional seats are reserved for the directors, or their designees, of the following health and human services departments:

- **The Ohio Department of Medicaid**

- **The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

- **The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities**

- **The Ohio Department of Health**

- **The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Donated equipment and supplies will help protect older Ohioans



Governor Mike DeWine

created the Ohio Manufacturing Alliance to Fight COVID-19 early in the Coronavirus public health emergency to coordinate efforts among Ohio's manufacturing community to provide essential personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers and first responders.

In May, the Ohio Department of Aging began working with the alliance to secure 13 pallets of non-medical dust masks and 42 pallets of hand sanitizer and bottling supplies for distribution to Ohio's 12 area agencies on aging. The agencies will, in turn, distribute the supplies to local senior service providers.

These supplies are vital as older adults remain among the Ohioans most at risk for complications from the virus. According to Ohio Department of Health data, as of

June 10, 2020, 92 percent of the deaths in Ohio due to COVID-19 have been among adults age 60 or older. More than half of total deaths (53 percent) have been among those age 80 or older. It is important that providers who are entering seniors' homes to provide needed services have access to the proper tools to protect themselves

Donated supplies included:

- 333,000 dust masks
- 340 one-gallon jugs of hand sanitizer
- 32,016 16 oz. bottles of hand sanitizer
- 6,930 8 oz. bottles of hand sanitizer
- 13,000 hand sanitizer bottling kits with gallon jugs and 12, 8 oz. refillable bottles
- Greatly discounted transportation and delivery

and those they serve from infection.

The Ohio Department of Aging is deeply grateful to the Ohio Manufacturing Alliance to Fight COVID-19 and the participating companies that made this donation possible:

- AEP Ohio
- Anheuser-Busch
- Anthem, Inc.
- Axiom
- Cleveland Whiskey
- Fiat Chrysler Automobiles US
- GOJO Industries
- Manufacturing Advocacy & Growth Network (MAGNET),
- Meijer, Inc.
- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Correction's Penal Industries,
- Proctor & Gamble
- R & L Transfer

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

State Legislation:

HB 287, introduced by Representatives Russo and Perales, requires Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) waivers reserve a portion of their capacity for spouses and children of military members that transfer to Ohio, if they are receiving such services in another state.

Status: Passed House and Senate unanimously, sent to Governor for his action

HB 441, introduced by Representatives Plummer and West, requires EMS personnel and peace officers receive dementia training related to identifying and interacting with individuals living with dementia. Further, it requires the Attorney General and the EMFTS Board consult with the Department of Aging when drafting and adopting rules on dementia training.

Status: Received second hearing in House Criminal Justice Committee on June 9, 2020

HB 461, introduced by Representative Brent, authorizes the use of "electronic monitoring devices" in nursing home units under specified circumstances. Further, it appropriates \$50,000 to help Medicaid participants pay for the cost of the devices, should they wish to have one in their unit.

Status: Received first hearing in House Aging and Long-Term Care Committee on May 23, 2020

HB 498, introduced by Representative Fraizer, authorizes a refundable, one-time tax credit of up to \$5,000 for costs associated with disability-related home modifications for those aged 60 and older and requires the individual to receive approval from the Department of Aging prior to receiving the credit.

Status: Received third hearing in the House Aging and Long-Term Care Committee on June 10, 2020

HB 679, introduced by Rep. Fraizer, expands and clarifies telehealth requirements for health plans and Medicaid programs. Further, it requires long-term care facilities provide video conference visitation for residents and their loved-ones during emergencies.

Status: Received second hearing in the House Insurance Committee on June 3, 2020

HB 606, introduced by Representative Grendell, expands, clarifies, and extends civil immunity to the state and certain professions, including healthcare workers and emergency service providers, during the COVID-19 emergency through December 31, 2020.

Status: Passed the House on May 28, 2020

SB 308, introduced by Senator M. Huffman, expands, clarifies, and extends civil immunity to healthcare providers during disasters and service providers during the COVID-19 emergency.

Status: Passed the Senate on June 3, 2020

Visit www.legislature.ohio.gov for more information on these bills.

Federal Legislation:

H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, appropriated \$160 million for home-delivered meals and \$80 million for congregate meal services administered through Title III-C of the Older Americans Act. The Ohio Department of Aging's share of the investment, through the Administration of Community Living, totaled \$8.8 million, which was distributed to Ohio's area agencies on aging to support nutrition services.

H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act, appropriated \$820 million to support Older Americans Act programs. The Department of Aging's share of the investment totaled \$31 million, with \$29.3 million supporting Older Americans Act programs as well as a \$1.7 million grant to support Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) No Wrong Door relief. On June 1, 2020, the Ohio Controlling Board approved the department's request to increase appropriation authority to accommodate CARES Act investments:

- \$17.3 million for Title III-B Supportive Services;
- \$7.6 million for Title III-C Nutrition Services;
- \$3.6 million for Title-III E Caregiver Support; and
- \$734,000 for the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program under Title VII.

Visit www.congress.gov for more information on these bills.

RESOURCES

General COVID-19 information and resources from the Ohio Department of Health:

www.coronavirus.ohio.gov or

1-833-427-5634

COVID-19 resources and information for older Ohioans and senior services providers:

www.aging.ohio.gov/coronavirus

OHIO PARTNERS IN AGING

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