



Pennsylvania Senior Community Centers – Guidance for COVID-19

The Department of Aging (PDA) understands there are concerns about the 2019-novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In light of rapidly evolving circumstances and actions taken to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, PDA is providing temporary guidance and flexibility in operations regarding Aging Services programs, including Senior Community Centers that are affiliated with Area Agencies on Aging.

Temporary Closings:

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) will 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. A AAA choosing to temporarily close notifies PDA of the decision to temporarily close prior to the actual closing of the center(s) and submits the information below. AAAs that will have already closed per the Governor’s directive must submit this information as well:

- Identify the centers that will be temporarily closed and the number of participants impacted.
- Provide the effective date of the temporary closure.
- Submit a contingency plan for each center on how the AAA will assure:
 - essential nutrition services are provided to those individuals in need
 - access or referral to other community resources
 - outreach to isolated or vulnerable senior center participants
- Indicate how the AAA will communicate the temporary closure and access to meals or other services to senior center participants.
- Communicate to PDA when the center will reopen.

Alternatives for providing congregate meals:

- Per Administration for Community Living [guidance](#), centers have the flexibility to offer take-out meals during this emergency declaration. AAAs may offer the congregate meal as a take-out meal at no cost/suggested donation to the senior center participants. These meals are eligible for Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) funding. The senior center shall package the take-out meal in an appropriate single use, disposable container and provide safe handling and re-heating instructions. PDA recommends continued use of a reservation system to minimize food waste. Continue to record these meals as standard congregate meals in SAMS.

- If the center prepares meals on-site, the AAA and center staff may package and deliver meals to participants' homes. The same dietary reference intake, packaging, reservation and recording system referenced above applies.
- Centers have the option to offer shelf-stable, frozen and grab-and-go meals. These meals are eligible for NSIP funding and shall be recorded as a standard congregate meal in SAMS.
- Enroll center participants into OPTIONS to allow greater access to meals per the in-home meal service. The Needs Assessment Tool-E (NAT-E) that was completed for the center participant is sufficient to receive meals and care management in OPTIONS.

Steps for minimizing the spread of COVID-19:

- Senior center participants, staff and volunteers are to stay home if they do not feel well and staff should send sick individuals home immediately.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Rub hands until dry. Practice frequent hand washing by all those visiting your center.
- Provide assistance to individuals who may have difficulty washing their hands.
- Have hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol available in multiple areas and encourage all of your center participants, staff and volunteers to use it.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Advise everyone to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning. The CDC provides [guidelines](#) for cleaning in community settings.

Outreach:

The AAA contingency plan is to provide outreach to participants who choose not to attend the center during this time or are unable due to temporary closing. Participants should 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. Periodic contacts or check-ins by phone, text, etc. to home-bound seniors who depended on the center helps to reduce social isolation.



Additional Resources for Senior Community Centers

- CDC Interim Guidance for [Community](#) organizations to get ready for COVID-19
- CDC Checklist for [Community](#) organizations to prepare for COVID-19

Where can I find more information about COVID-19?

The Pennsylvania Department of Health has a dedicated page for COVID-19 that provides regular updates. Click [here](#) for the most up to date information regarding COVID-19.

Additional information is also available on the [CDC](#) website and through [CMS](#).