In Michigan, adults age 60 and over account for 37 percent of the COVID-19 cases and 87 percent of the deaths. This population is at high-risk, so the Aging & Adult Services Agency (AASA) at Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) issued guidance on reopening programs and services for older adults age 60 and over and vulnerable individuals with underlying health conditions.

The guidance provides a phased approach toward re-engagement for all individuals with increased mitigation standards for those in the high-risk category. **MDHHS has made it clear that those in the high-risk category are “Safer at Home” until there is a treatment or vaccine.** The recommendation for those over 60 is to only venture out when necessary and then with appropriate precautions; wear a face covering and wash hands/use hand sanitizer or gloves. If you are feeling sick or under the weather, stay home! Limit your contact with those outside of your home. Practice distancing from others at a minimum of 6 feet apart.

The Charlevoix County Commission on Aging continues to assess and re-assess as the State opens regions with less reports of the virus. Our desire is two-fold; keep our seniors safe and healthy and provide information and opportunities when safe and appropriate. Based on the recommendations from MDHHS, we will not reopen for congregate meal service until 60 days after we enter in to Phase 6. In the meantime, we are planning a strategic and careful course forward as we re-engage in providing services inside and outside of our building.

There are many areas of consideration as we look to re-engage. We are required to have COVID-19 reopening plans that safely outline our strategy to protect seniors and staff. We must be certain that staff have the appropriate protections in order to not become infected or further spread the disease to seniors. We must be certain that we have ample and appropriate cleaning products to protect seniors from risk of infection. We must make accommodations for staff who are over 60 or those with underlying health conditions, as it is currently medically inadvisable for them to return to direct service work. We have continued to distribute Home Delivered Meals daily, so we need to be careful that our reopening plan does not compromise staff who provide this necessary service.

**What the COA has been doing since the inception of COVID-19 in our area to best support our aging adults at this unprecedented time:**

- We have been actively reaching out to our aging adults by phone for social and wellness checks. These calls have allowed us to connect our aging adults with resources that had been unmet before.
- We have continued to provide Home Delivered Meals to our home bound clients.
- We have provided weekly Frozen Disaster Meals by reservation delivered to any Charlevoix County resident 60 years old or older so that our most vulnerable do not need to leave their homes as often.
- We have and are providing Hot Curbside Pick-up meals by reservation at each of our Senior Centers.
We have provided virtual resources, activities, education and safety guidelines to our aging adults though our Website, Facebook and even printed material in our meal bags.

We have partnered with the Area Agency on Aging of NW Michigan to provide Quarantine Boxes for those most food insecure through the State of MI Website.

We have partnered with Manna to provide Fresh Fruit and Veggie Boxes to those most food insecure.

We have trained staff on how to safely provide our services during the COVID-19 pandemic and any future Health Crisis that might affect our services the same way.

We have purchased Personal Protective Gear for our Staff to provide our services safely.

We have implemented Safe Practices regarding engagement, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting in our Senior Centers, our COA Office and even regarding our services with you.

We are providing the Senior Project Fresh Program to all that qualify in our county.

We are distributing Medicine Lock Boxes and Drug Deactivation Pouches to our home bound aging adults to assist with keeping their meds safe and disposing of it properly during this Stay at Home time.

We have implemented Safe Practices regarding engagement, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting in our Senior Centers, our COA Office and even regarding our services with you.

What do we have planned for JULY 2020 that includes the above but MORE:

- We have started up In-home Foot Care and Foot Clinics.
- We have gradually started up our Health Care Services – Personal Care, Homemaking and Respite.
- We will provide Hot Home Delivered Meals to our home bound clients.
- We will provide weekly Disaster Meals delivered by reservation to any Charlevoix County resident 60 years old or older so that our most vulnerable do not need to leave their homes as often, adding a Hot Meal to the order.
- We will continue providing Hot Curbside Pick-up meals at each of our Senior Centers five days a week – NO Reservations needed! 😊
- We will begin hosting a virtual caregiver support group on Thursday, July 9, 1-2:30PM.
- We will begin hosting entertainment and activities virtually.
- We will continue to provide activities, entertainment, education and safety guidelines to our aging adults though our Website, Facebook and even printed material in our meal bags.
- We will continue to provide Fresh Fruit and Veggie Boxes weekly to those most food insecure for the month of July.
- We will be training our VOLUNTEERS on how to safely provide our services during the COVID-19 pandemic and any future Health Crisis that might affect our services the same way so that we can bring them back to help us serve you better.

We desperately miss our seniors and are doing our very best to restore necessary services in a safe manner. We hope to add MORE to each phase of our reengagement. Please continue to check our website or Facebook page for updates or you are welcome to call the COA office at 231-237-0103 for more information. We appreciate your continued patience and understanding as we try to make decisions in the best interest of seniors and the COA.

Sincerely,
Amy Wieland, Executive Director

Attachments:
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