



PHILIP D. MURPHY
GOVERNOR

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
LT. GOVERNOR

State of New Jersey
Department of Human Services
Division of Aging Services
P.O. Box 807
Trenton, N.J. 08625-0807

CAROLE JOHNSON
COMMISSIONER

LOUISE RUSH
DIVISION DIRECTOR

Important CONGREGATE NUTRITION SERVICES AND COVID – 19 Notice

March 14, 2020

Dear Area Agency on Aging Directors:

The highest priority of the Division of Aging Services is the health and safety of the seniors we serve. Early information on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) suggests that older adults and people with chronic or underlying health conditions have a heightened risk of getting very sick if they become infected. An important step to preventing the spread of COVID-19 is to eliminate large groups of people congregating together.

To help prevent the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) we strongly urged that by Tuesday, March 17, all Division-funded, congregate nutrition services close until advised otherwise.

Additionally, the Division has directed that face to face care management visits shall be conducted telephonically during this time. We also ask for your increased vigilance in telephonic wellness check for those seniors who are socially isolated and/or at high nutritional risk.

The immediate health and safety of the NJ seniors and caregivers we serve are our top priority, and we are committed to working with our individuals, their families, and provider community to identify the best available solutions to keep individuals safe.

We recognize that this guidance will raise immediate questions about service delivery and reimbursement. The Division will provide additional details but we wanted to get this message to you all as quickly as possible. This is an evolving situation, we will stay in touch often, and we encourage stakeholders to monitor state and national public health websites for the most up-to-date information and guidance.

- * New Jersey Department of Health Coronavirus Information [Link](#)
- * Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus Information [Link](#)
- * New Jersey Department of Human Services Coronavirus Information [Link](#)

Action Taken

As a result of the senior centers and nutrition sites closing, for those participants in federal and state-funded senior nutrition programs who have been deemed most at risk of going hungry due to the site closures, they will receive a 21-day supply of shelf-stable meals at their homes. This is being done through a joint effort of the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services (DHS/DoAS) and the 21 county-based Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

DHS contracted with a national meal preparation vendor, which is shipping more than 13,000 meals to seniors' homes through the month of April. The meals will be delivered to their doorsteps by FedEx drivers and no signature will be required. Each box contains seven meals.

The meals prepared by the national vendor supplement efforts already underway at the county level to deliver nutritious fresh, frozen or shelf-stable meals and grocery items to vulnerable adults. Many of the closed meals sites – located at senior centers, community buildings and in churches halls – stopped serving meals at their locations switched their focus to home delivered meals or “grab-and-go” arrangements, where seniors or their caregivers go to the congregate site but only to pick up meals to be eaten at home. AAAs have also partnered with restaurants and food banks to address increased requests from the public for nutritional support.

Seniors who are unable to prepare their own meals and have no family member, friend, neighbor or caregiver to do so, are urged to contact their county AAA [link to <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/saaaa.html>] for information and assistance.

Louise Rush, Director
Division of Aging Services
New Jersey Department of Human Service