

Updated Guidance for Resuming In-Person Service Delivery of the Older Americans Act Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Appendix B of PM 21-10: Title IIIB Supportive Services Title IIIE Family Caregiver Support Program

The purpose of this document is to provide updated guidance for service delivery of the OAA Supportive Services (Title IIIB) and Family Caregiver Support Programs (Title IIIE) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State of California is preparing to move beyond the [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). On June 15, 2021, the tier-based approach of the *Blueprint* will no longer be in place and California will fully open its economy if criteria are met regarding vaccinations and hospitalizations.

Until the Governor announces that the State has met the criteria to move beyond the *Blueprint*, the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) should continue to follow the current guidance which is to defer non-essential in-home or in-person group programs and activities until after a county reaches Tier 4 (the yellow tier) and, ideally, until a county remains in the yellow tier for several weeks.

Once the State meets the required criteria for moving beyond the *Blueprint*, on June 15th or later, it will be at the AAA's discretion to resume in-home services and in-person group programs and activities. The decision to resume Title IIIB and Title IIIE in-home services and in-person group programs or activities will be made at the local level and should be based on state and local public health guidance, along with consideration of the readiness of the current staff, facility, and older adults at each site where in-person services are provided. Risk reduction measures should be continued including masking, handwashing, and physical distancing. Participants who have not received vaccinations should be referred to vaccination sites. Updates regarding status of moving beyond the *Blueprint* can be found at [COVID19.ca.gov](https://www.covid19.ca.gov) and [Beyond the Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#).

Preparation for Moving Beyond the *Blueprint*:

AAAs and service providers should ensure plans are in place for resuming in-home and in-person programs and activities in preparation for moving beyond the *Blueprint*.

Considerations for in-home and in-person group program or activities include:

- Staff/volunteer training regarding COVID-19 risk reduction measures. Refer to the CDC [Symptom Screener](#) for guidelines and digital resources.
- Cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
- Create a reservation system to manage seating capacity for in-person group programs and activities and with physical distancing requirements.
- Protocols for ensuring hand sanitizer is available for staff and participant use where handwashing is not feasible.

Updated Guidance for Resuming In-Person Service Delivery of the Older Americans Act Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Appendix B of PM 21-10: Title IIIB Supportive Services Title IIIE Family Caregiver Support Program

- Protocols for ensuring masks are available, as feasible, for participants who arrive without a mask and protocol for those who elect not to wear a mask. Masking protocols will remain in place until adjusted or discontinued per state and/or local public health guidance.
- Protocols for physical distancing (spacing at least six feet apart), such as floor markings to indicate individual space on floor. Physical distancing protocols will remain in place until adjusted or discontinued per state and/or local public health guidance.
- Consider scheduling additional sessions of in-person group programs or activities if unable to seat all participants at one time following physical distancing protocol. Allow sufficient time for cleaning and disinfecting between services/meeting times.
- Protocols/strategies to ensure compliance for physical distancing for older adults with cognitive issues.
- Consider outdoor programming, if feasible.
- Continue options for accommodating participants who are not ready to attend in-person activities, such as offering virtual support groups or caregiver trainings.
- Protocols for resuming in-home services when requirements are no longer waived including:
 - Initial assessments for new participants
 - Annual reassessments for existing participants
- AAAs and service providers should consult their own outside legal counsel for guidance on risk assessment and regarding questions about requiring proof of vaccinations or use of liability waivers.

Moving Beyond the *Blueprint*:

When the State meets the required criteria for moving beyond the *Blueprint*, it will be at the AAA's discretion to resume in-home services that have been deferred (e.g. case management, comprehensive assessments, homemaker, etc.) and in-person group programs and activities (e.g. adult day care, senior center activities, support groups, etc.). The decision will be made at the local level and should be based on state and local public health guidance, along with an assessment of the readiness of the current staff, facility, and older adults at each site where in-person programs and activities are provided.

Continue to follow state and local public health guidance for potential statewide or local changes impacting in-person services. Updates regarding status of the moving beyond

Updated Guidance for Resuming In-Person Service Delivery of the Older Americans Act Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Appendix B of PM 21-10: Title IIIB Supportive Services
Title IIIE Family Caregiver Support Program

the *Blueprint* can be found at [COVID19.ca.gov](https://www.covid19.ca.gov) and [Beyond the Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#).

Risk reduction measures should be continued when in-person group programs and activities are resumed, including masking, handwashing, and physical distancing. Participants who have not received vaccinations should be referred to vaccination sites. Vaccine information can be found at <https://aging.ca.gov/covid19/>.

Considerations for resuming in-person programs and activities include the following:

- During the transition to in-person programs and activities, temporary accommodations may be permitted, such as:
 - Continued remote delivery of services (e.g., telephonic case management) for participants who are reluctant or fearful to return to an in-person setting.
 - Virtual assessments for new participants and reassessments for existing participants who may be reluctant to allow others into their home to conduct assessments (e.g., case management).

Continue offering a virtual option to provide activities remotely, such as offering virtual community education, support groups and trainings.

Program Flexibilities

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, both ACL and CDA have allowed program flexibilities due to the need for safety precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The program flexibilities are detailed in the [Frequently Asked Questions - Guidance for AAAs for COVID-19](#). The reversing of the program flexibilities will be tied to the ending of the Major Disaster Declaration (MDD). Program flexibilities should continue no more than six months after the Major Disaster Declaration (MDD) ends. CDA will inform the AAAs once the MDD ends and the six-month transition period to reverse the flexibilities begins.