

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING
Division of Home and Community Living**

2880 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95833
www.aging.ca.gov
TEL 916-419-7500
FAX 916-928-2267
TTY1-800-735-2929



PROGRAM MEMO

TO: Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

NO: 23-08

DATE ISSUED: April 25, 2023

EXPIRES: Until Superseded or Rescinded

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: HCBS Funding

SUPERCEDES: N/A

SUBJECT: Transition from the Connections, Health, Aging and Technology (CHAT) pilot program into CDA's Digital Connections (DC) program

PURPOSE

The purpose of this communication is to provide guidance and assistance regarding conclusion of the Connections, Health, Aging and Technology (CHAT) pilot program and transition into CDA's Digital Connections (DC) program. There are two key differences between the CHAT and DC programs.

- A. The eligibility requirements and pre-assessment surveys required for the CHAT program are not required for the remaining devices that transition to the DC program. The DC program has separate eligibility requirements.
- B. For the CHAT devices that transition to the DC program, vesting and ownership of the devices will transition to the AAA. When the devices transition, the CHAT reporting requirements will no longer apply, and the DC reporting requirements will become effective.

BACKGROUND

On August 14, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) N-73-20 to improve broadband speed and access in California, including improving download speeds for all Californians and to bridge the digital divide for two million Californians who lack broadband

access. The EO specified older adults as a priority population at-risk for isolation and loneliness when impacted by the Digital Divide.

In response to the EO, CDA embarked upon the CHAT program in June 2021 using CARES Act funding. CDA worked collaboratively with a workgroup of AAA directors to develop the CHAT program and partnered with the AAAs to distribute nearly 4,000 iPads with data plans, customized onboarding, technical support, and digital literacy training to older Californians. The purpose of this project was to mitigate loneliness and isolation for older adults, providing them with greater access to resources and information. For this project, CDA also partnered with the University of Southern California's (USC) Graduate School of Gerontology to develop survey tools that would evaluate the effectiveness of digital devices in reducing social isolation for device recipients.

USC SURVEYS AND SSRS

Eligibility and Pre-Survey:

In February 2023, USC confirmed that they have sufficient pre-survey data to effectively conduct their comprehensive study on the effectiveness of digital devices in reducing social isolation and loneliness for device recipients.

Upon receipt of this notice, AAAs shall cease all referrals to CDA and SSRS for completion of the eligibility and pre-surveys and shall assume all responsibility for determination of eligibility. Providing the AAAs with local control over eligibility determinations should also expedite the distribution of devices.

Please note: Eligibility determinations shall be based on the **Digital Connections** (DC) eligibility guidelines (not CHAT eligibility guidelines) as outlined in [Program Memo \(PM\) 23-02](#).

Post-Survey Requirements:

For CHAT program participants who completed the pre-survey to receive a device will still be contacted by SSRS and are expected to complete the post-survey as a requirement of receiving their device. Participants can also contact SSRS directly at (323) 372-2238 if it has been six months or longer since they received their CHAT device to proactively complete the post-survey. In addition, participants may also have the option of completing the post-survey via a digital survey provided to them on their device.

DEVICES

AAAs shall continue to distribute any remaining CHAT devices that transition to DC, in addition to devices received under the DC program. Devices shall be distributed to eligible program participants, utilizing the method(s) of distribution most suitable to your organization.

As stated in [PM 23-02](#) Appendix C, title and ownership of the devices will unconditionally transfer to local programs (e.g., title vests with the AAA and CDA does not tag or track as part of State property) upon execution of the DC contract with the AAA. This will allow CHAT iPads to be effectively administered at the local level. Please refer to [PM 23-02](#) Appendix C for more information pertaining to equipment and asset management and the process for transferring the CHAT devices from CDA to the AAA.

DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING

The training vendors supporting CHAT program participants will continue to support all recipients of a device through December 31, 2023. AAAs will continue to work with their existing digital literacy training vendor assigned to designated CHAT program participants. Upon transition from CHAT to DC, referrals for digital literacy training will be sent directly to each AAAs assigned digital literacy training vendor.

DATA UPGRADE

Data plans for CHAT iPads will continue to be supported through December 31, 2023. Additionally, as of 2/17/2023 all CHAT iPad data plans were upgraded from 5GB to 10GB of data in alignment with the DC iPad devices. Prior to expiration of the data plan on 12/31/2023, program participants should be encouraged to enroll in the Affordable Connectivity Program at: <https://www.fcc.gov/acp>

TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

All iPads distributed through the CHAT and DC programs will be covered by the Mobile Iron MDM system managed by CDA, Honeywell helpdesk with Language Support, and Remote Admin services through December 31, 2023. The Honeywell Help Desk phone number is: 1-855-563-0055.

PARTNER APPRECIATION

CDA truly appreciates all the support and participation in the CHAT pilot program. The success of CHAT program has led to significant opportunities, methods, lessons learned,

and information which has enabled CDA to advance meaningful work around digital inclusion for California's older adults and adults with disabilities. Thank You.

INQUIRIES

For Digital Connections program inquiries, email: digitalconnections@ca.gov

For CHAT program inquiries, email: chat@aging.ca.gov

Nakia Thierry, EdD MSG

Branch Chief, Older Adults Branch California Department of Aging

Cc:

Mark Beckley, Chief Deputy Director, California Department of Aging