

Guidance for Temporary Alternative Service Delivery of the Older Americans Act Programs Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Appendix B of PM 20-16: Title IIIB Supportive Services Title IIIE Family Caregiver Support Program

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on temporary alternative service delivery of the OAA Supportive Services (Title IIIB) and Family Caregiver Support Program (Title IIIE) during the COVID-19 pandemic as it aligns with the State's *Resilience Roadmap*.

The reopening of counties will be based on State and local public health guidance and on meeting readiness criteria and metrics. AAAs should continue to monitor State and local county public health guidance and follow their county public health recommendations. The decision to resume in-person Title IIIB and Title IIIE programs will be made at the local level and should be based on state and local public health guidance, along with consideration to the readiness of the older adults in the community.

To align with the population served by the OAA programs and to support consistency in services provided to participants, the following guidance will consider higher risk individuals as those 60 and older.

Stages One/Two/Three: Higher risk individuals should continue to stay home until Stage Four.

In-person services or activities are deferred until Stage Four unless they can be delivered remotely.

- Services that can be delivered remotely such as by telephone, computer, or other alternative means can be done without a change to the service category. Examples include legal services being delivered telephonically, a support group being held via video conferencing, or case management provided via phone without a face-to-face assessment.
- Services that are temporarily suspended due to health and safety concerns and cannot be reasonably delivered remotely may be changed to another service category that can be delivered remotely. For example, Adult Day Care services could be changed to Telephone Reassurance services and Transportation could be changed to Chore for delivering groceries.
- Services that require close contact should be triaged by risk to the client. Only services that are considered essential to the client's health and safety may be delivered in-person following guidelines set by State and local public health officials. Examples of essential services include but are not limited to: Personal Care and Transportation to provider appointments. Essential workforce information is provided on the State's COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.ca.gov/essential-workforce/>. For Information related to public transportation, refer to [COVID-19 Industry Guidance Public Transit and Intercity Passenger Rail](#).

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Since the population served by OAA programs is advised to stay home until Stage Four, guidance for Stages One/Two/Three focuses on preparation for resuming in-person programs in Stage Four:

- Plan employee training regarding how to limit the spread of COVID-19. Refer to the CDC [Symptom Screener](#) for guidelines and digital resources.
- Develop cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
- Consider outdoor programming, if feasible.
- Plan protocol for ensuring face coverings are available, as feasible, for staff or participants who arrive without a face covering and protocol for those who elect not to wear a face covering.
- Plan protocol for ensuring hand sanitizer is available for staff and participant use where handwashing is not feasible.
- Develop measures to maintain physical distancing (spacing at least six feet apart), such as floor markings to indicate individual space on floor.
- Develop protocols/strategies to ensure compliance for physical distancing for older adults with cognitive issues.
- Consider options for accommodating participants who are not ready to attend in-person activities, such as offering virtual support groups or caregiver trainings.

Stage Four: Stage Four marks the end of stay home order with the gradual resuming of in-person programs in the highest risk areas.

Higher risk individuals may consider resuming public interactions, with safety precautions including wearing face coverings, handwashing, and physical distancing. Current guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) for wearing face coverings must be followed. See link for CDPH's *Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings*, including a listing of individuals who are exempt from wearing face coverings: [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#).

Implement strategies developed during Stage Two and Three as appropriate.

Consider resuming in-home programs (e.g., case management, comprehensive assessments, homemaker, etc.) and in-person group programs (e.g., adult day care, senior center activities, support groups, etc.) while adhering to guidelines for wearing face coverings, handwashing, and physical distancing.

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Considerations include the following:

- There will be regional variance with reopening criteria met in one county and not another; it is expected that in-person programs will not be resumed at the same time in all PSAs. Continue to follow State and local public health guidance for resuming services for higher risk individuals.
- The readiness of the older adults to resume in-person programs will vary. Some communities may delay in-person programs if the older adults are not comfortable returning due to health and safety concerns, while others may resume in-person programs sooner if the older adults in the community feel safe participating in programs.
- Because older adults are at higher risk than the general population, it is reasonable to delay in-person programs beyond when the State enters Stage Four and the stay at home order is lifted for higher risk individuals.
- During the transition to in-person programs, temporary accommodations may be permitted, such as:
 - Participants with multiple risk factors or who are reluctant or fearful to return to an in-person setting may require continued remote services (e.g., telephonic case management).
 - Assessments for new participants and reassessments for existing participants may need to be conducted virtually for participants who may be reluctant to allow others into their home to conduct assessments (e.g., case management).
- Consider options to provide activities remotely, such as offering virtual community education, support groups and trainings. Offering a virtual option to participants post-COVID-19 may be an effective strategy to engage older adults who have not previously participated in Title IIIB or Title IIIE programs.
- Program flexibilities have evolved with the COVID-19 pandemic and are subject to change based on Federal and/or State guidance. The return to traditional programming will be communicated through FAQs as Federal and State guidance evolves. CDA recognizes that resuming traditional program requirements involves sufficient time to adjust program operations. Additional guidance will be provided accordingly.
- If there is a surge of new cases at any point in a county, it is recommended that in-person non-essential services be closed and State and local public health guidance followed for resuming in-person services for higher risk individuals.