

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING**

1300 National Drive, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95834  
www.aging.ca.gov  
TEL 916-419-7517  
FAX 916-928-2505  
TTY1-800-735-2929



**DATE: APRIL 23, 2020**

**TO: ALL AREA AGENCIES ON AGING (AAA) DIRECTORS**

**SUBJECT: FRIENDSHIP LINE CA (1-888-670-1360) STATEWIDE EXPANSION OF WARM-LINE TO ADDRESS INCREASING ISOLATION OF OLDER ADULTS, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, AND CAREGIVERS**

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During this unprecedented time, the Department (CDA) and the AAA network are responding to changing, growing, and urgent needs of older Californians, people with disabilities, families, caregivers, and communities. Existing priorities are amplified, and new concerns are quickly emerging.

To help address these significant challenges, CDA recently proposed that CDA and AAAs consider pooling approximately 5% from some standard program allocations in order to make priority investments in shared services that are more effectively delivered together.

With this approach, CDA, in consultation with AAAs, has dedicated a portion of one funding source in the new federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, H.R. 748, to a shared priority service: fighting isolation and supporting behavioral health. As a result, the Friendship Line warm-line service in the Bay Area has been expanded to serve Californians statewide, through use of a portion (less than 5%) of the Supportive Services allocation (\$20.9 million). The term of the agreement is April 1, 2020, through August 31, 2020, the current emergency services period. The remaining Supportive Services funds (\$19.9 million) will be allocated locally to the 33 AAAs.

CDA invites and encourages all AAAs to prominently promote and refer to the Friendship Line CA's new number: 1-888-670-1360. CDA will share call volume data with AAAs and post on our new Data Dashboard webpage for COVID-19 services.

The need for expanded services to address isolation and loneliness is both long-standing and rising. Older adults were the first Californians to be asked to stay at home and are saving lives by their leadership and service - but older adults cannot live in social isolation while in physical isolation, given the profound risks to both physical and mental health. Making it easy for all adults to dial the "Friendship Line CA" any time for a friendly conversation, when feeling a little lonely, or when in crisis, will help Californians continue to stay home, stay healthy, and stay connected in the tough and uncertain months ahead.

The Friendship Line is the only accredited, 24-hour toll-free crisis line in the country for people aged 60 years and older, and adults living with disabilities. It primarily functions as a "warm line"

**FRIENDSHIP LINE CA (1-888-670-1360)**

**STATEWIDE EXPANSION**

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to provide a friendly listening ear and emotional support for those secluded seniors facing loneliness, isolation, or anxiety, including listening to their increasing fears and concerns about COVID-19. Both the new toll-free line for California (1-888-670-1360) and the previously established toll-free line (1-800-971-0016) will take inbound calls, as well as offer pre-scheduled outbound call service. New, first-time, callers are encouraged to dial the new toll-free line (1-888-670-1360) first. The Friendship Line is run by the Institute on Aging (IoA), one of California's largest nonprofits dedicated to health and community programs for older adults and adults living with disabilities. The Friendship Line has previously contracted with some local AAAs, including in San Francisco, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties.

CDA is truly grateful for this strategic partnership to address the challenges older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers are facing while staying at home and staying connected during the pandemic.

If you have any questions about the Friendship Line statewide expansion, please contact Thomas Cameron, Deputy Director, Division of Administrative Services, at: [Thomas.Cameron@aging.ca.gov](mailto:Thomas.Cameron@aging.ca.gov) or (916) 217-7077.

Sincerely,

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Kim McCoy Wade  
Director  
California Department of Aging