

# Beaver County Office on Aging COVID-19 Task Force Newsletter Volume 3, April 15, 2020

## DHS Launches New Support and Referral Helpline

The Department of Human Services has launched a statewide Support and Referral Helpline staffed by skilled and compassionate caseworkers who will be available 24/7 to counsel Pennsylvanians struggling with anxiety and other challenging emotions due to the COVID-19 emergency and refer them to community-based resources that can further help to meet individual needs. Call 1-855-284-2494 or TTY 724-631-5600.

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## Greater Pennsylvania Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association Begins Virtual Support Groups

The Greater Pennsylvania Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association is offering Virtual Support Groups for dementia caregivers due to the stress in performing caregiving during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is designed to provide caregivers a way to connect with others, give and share support and obtain information without leaving home. Attendees can participate by telephone or computer. There are afternoon and evening sessions. To register, call 1-800-272-3900.

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## Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disability

AID in PA is a resource collection for Pennsylvanians in the autism and intellectual disability communities. A joint effort between ASERT (Autism Services, Education, Resources and Training) and statewide Health Care Quality Units, the site is designed to connect individuals with disabilities, families, professionals and community members with resources that can best serve them in emergency situations. Current resources focus on the COVID-19 crisis, and the site can be adapted for other challenges facing the community. Visit <https://aidinpa.org>.

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## Virtual Senior Academy

The Virtual Senior Academy is a free program that connects adults age 50 and older in the Pittsburgh region through interactive courses online that are offered throughout the day. If you are looking to expand your horizons and make new friends, the Virtual Senior Academy is for you. It offers live learning experiences using video chat software that covers topics like health and wellness, arts and music, book club, history, current events, fitness and more. Class facilitators are community members who to share their passion and knowledge with other Pittsburghers. You can sign up for classes or become a facilitator by signing up at <https://virtualsenioracademy.org>.

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## Be Safe with Cleaning Chemicals—Do Not Mix the Following Products

The Safe and Healthy Homes Project of the Allegheny County Health Department warns everyone NOT to mix the following cleaning chemicals.

- **Do not mix:** Bleach + Vinegar: This produces chlorine gas which can cause coughing, breathing problems and watery eyes.
- **Do not mix:** Bleach + Ammonia: It produces chloramine and chlorine gas. These chemicals will cause shortness of breath, chest pain and chemical burns both on skin and internally.

●**Do not mix:** Bleach + Rubbing Alcohol: This can produce several highly toxic chemicals that can damage the nervous and respiratory systems as well as the skin and eyes.

●**Do not mix:** Hydrogen Peroxide + Vinegar: This combination makes peracetic and peroxyacetic acid, which can be highly corrosive.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people routinely should clean frequently touched surfaces, such as counter tops, tables, keyboards, phone, door knobs and faucets. As with any cleaning product, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the label.

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### **Tips for Dementia Caregivers during COVID-19**

●If a person living with dementia shows rapidly increased confusion, contact the health care provider for advice, instead of going directly to the emergency room. The doctor may be able to treat the person without a visit to the hospital.

● People living with dementia may need extra and/or written reminders and support to remember important hygienic practices from one day to the next. Consider placing signs in the bathroom and other places in the home to remind them to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water. Demonstrate thorough hand washing.

●Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be a quick alternative to hand washing if the person with dementia cannot get to a sink or wash his or her hands easily.

●Ask the pharmacist or doctor about filling prescriptions for a greater number of days to reduce trips to the pharmacy.

●Think ahead and make alternative plans should respite care be modified or cancelled or if the primary caregiver become ill during the COVID situation.

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### **Absentee and Mail in Ballots Will Be Available for PA June Primary Election**

Pennsylvania's primary election has been rescheduled for June 2, 2020, and voters have the option to vote either by absentee or mail-in ballot rather than going to their polling place on Election Day. These ballot applications will be accepted through May 26, 2020.

An absentee ballot is if you plan to be out of your municipality on Election Day or if you have a disability or illness. This ballot requires you to list a reason. The mail in ballot is for those who do not need an absentee ballot, and no reason is required. For either ballot, you must be registered to vote.

To make an application for either ballot, you may do it online at VotesPA.com, apply in person at the county election office or send a signed letter to your county election office including the same information that is on the application form. At the moment, do not show up at the County Courthouse to apply, since there is extremely limited admittance to the building due to the COVID-19 situation. You can be advised and get more information by contacting the county election office.

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### **PUC Urges Consumers to Learn about Programs to Keep Utility Service Affordable**

The Pennsylvania Utility Commission (PUC) urges consumers to understand the resources and options available to help keep utility service affordable during the COVID-19 pandemic and to contact their utility companies before their bills become past due. If you have had a reduction in income as a result of the Coronavirus emergency, you now may qualify for various Customer Assistance Programs (CAP), and it is important to contact your electric or natural gas companies.

●Every major electric and natural gas utility overseen by the PUC offers Customer Assistance Programs, under which qualifying low-income customers pay discounted bills. Qualification is based on household size and gross household income.

Other options include:

●Budget billing takes a customer’s annual utility costs and averages them out over 12 months so that bills do not jump up or down from month to month.

●Payment Plans help to address past-due bills or delinquent balances over a period of time.

●Hardship Funds are supported by utilities and donations from utility customers along with non-profit and charitable organizations operating in the Commonwealth.

●Lifeline Service: Contact your telephone company or participating wireless services provider about Lifeline, a federal financial support program which helps eligible low-income consumers and households to keep their telephone and internet access. For more information visit, [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org) or call 1-800-234-9473 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week.

●Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may have funds available to help eligible customers providing financial assistance with heating-related utilities and crisis funding to address emergency situations. Contact your utility company in regard to this.

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## **Tell the Beaver County Office on Aging What Beaver County Older Adults Will Need in the Next Four Years—Please Complete Our Survey**

The Beaver County Office on Aging is developing its Four Year Plan 2020-2024 which is used as a management tool to guide with decisions regarding the budget, staffing, services and programs for older adults in our county. To develop the plan, we need your input and opinions. Tell us what Beaver County older adults age 60 and over will need in the next four years. Please fill out the Beaver County Office on Aging Needs Assessment Survey for Older Adults-2020 by clicking on this link. We also ask if you would help older family members and neighbors complete this survey online.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Beaver2020>

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## **Prescription Coverage and Refilling Issues**

### **PACE Information**

The Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly (PACE) started on March 5 to grant enrollees early prescription refills on most medications.

Under regular circumstances, enrollees must use 75 percent of their supply before refills will be reimbursed. PACE will now reimburse refills purchased before 75 percent of the days supply has passed. The exceptions are opioids and other controlled substances, which will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Enrollees who would like to receive this exception should contact their pharmacy provider and ask for free home delivery. PACE has also waived the requirements for pharmacies to obtain delivery signatures, so medications can be left at enrollees’ doors, eliminating the need for social interaction. If enrollees are having difficulties in obtaining their refills, they can contact PACE cardholder services at 1-800-225-7223.

### **Delivery Information**

Most pharmacies provide drive-thru pickup or delivery options. If you are having difficulty obtaining your prescriptions, call your pharmacy for their options. If their options do not work for your situation, you can consider some other pharmacy options.

**My-MedPak**

- Offers phone enrollment for the program
- Offers free home delivery
- Offers online, by phone or set up for automatic refills
- Customized packaging so you don't need to set up pill boxes

For more info: Amy Amadio, [www.my-medPak.com](http://www.my-medPak.com) / [amyamadio@my-medpak.com](mailto:amyamadio@my-medpak.com) / 724-683-3111

**Beaver Healthmart – Beaver**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has curbside pickup and home delivery
- Offers coordinated prescriptions so all of your RX's are due for refills at the same time

**Brighton Pharmacy – New Brighton**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has curb side pickup and home delivery

**CVS**

- Offers both online and phone refills
- Has drive-thru pickup and home delivery

**Giant Eagle**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has curb side pickup and home delivery. \*service not available at all stores

**Hoffman's Drugstore – Aliquippa**

- Offers both online and phone refills
- Has curbside pickup and home delivery
- Can also pay most utility bills in their store.

**Hometown Pharmacy – Beaver & Monaca**

- Offers both online and phone refills
- Has curbside pickup and home delivery

**Med-Fast**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has curb side pickup or free delivery

**Rite-Aid**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has drive-thru pickup
- Offers 1 trip refills – pharmacist will coordinate all prescriptions so you can pick up all in 1 trip
- Offers talking prescription caps for the visually impaired.

**Walgreens**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has drive-thru pickup

**Wal-Mart**

- Offers both online and by phone refills
- Has curbside pickup and home delivery \*services not available at all stores

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**TOOTHBRUSH SAFETY DURING COVID-19**

COVID-19 is a new disease and we're still learning how it spreads. The virus is thought to spread when infected people cough or sneeze, and possibly by touching contaminated surfaces. It may also be found in a person's saliva. So when you're sick and you brush your teeth, germs end up on your toothbrush, too. And if it's stored in a shared toothbrush holder, germs can spread to other people in your household.

Not everyone who has COVID-19 shows symptoms, so it's important to practice proper toothbrush hygiene even if you think you're fine. Be extra careful if you have family members who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, such as older adults and people with serious underlying medical conditions.

Here are tips to help keep your family healthy, whether you have a cold, the flu, and especially if you contract COVID-19.

**Social distance your toothbrush:** If you've been exposed to COVID-19 or think you may be sick, isolate your toothbrush just like you'd isolate yourself from the family. Avoid side-by-side storage—instead keep your toothbrush by itself, upright in a cup or other toothbrush holder, by your bedside table or in another separate area.

**Wash your hands before brushing or flossing:** Never touch your mouth or brush and floss your teeth before first washing your hands thoroughly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You also can use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Make sure to wash your hands after brushing and flossing, too.

**Disinfect the handle:** After using your toothbrush, wipe the handle with a safe household disinfectant. According to the National Institutes of Health, the coronavirus can live for 2 to 3 days on plastic, and it is possible for someone to get the virus from touching contaminated surfaces. The CDC recommends using a diluted household bleach solution, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants.

**Don't contaminate the toothpaste:** Be careful if you share a tube of toothpaste with someone else. Don't touch the tip of the tube directly onto your toothbrush. Squeeze a bit of toothpaste onto a Q-tip or piece of wax paper, then apply it to the bristles. Remember, you only need a pea-sized amount.

**Never share a toothbrush:** Toothbrushes can still have germs on them even after being visibly rinsed clean. Though adults know better, make sure the kids aren't grabbing for the wrong brush. Try color coding or writing each child's name on his or her brush to help prevent swapping bacteria. Keep a watchful eye on youngsters during brushing—they don't always have the best hygiene habits and could innocently spread germs.

**Trash your toothbrush after being sick:** Make sure to replace your toothbrush with a new one so you don't risk getting sick again. If you use an electric toothbrush, just replace the head. Even if you're healthy, the American Dental Association recommends replacing your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months or sooner if the bristles look worn out.

*Information from United Concordia*