

Beaver County Office on Aging COVID-19 Task Force Newsletter Volume 2--April 8, 2020

THE BEAVER COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM IS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO NEEDS ASSISTANCE DURING THE COVID-19 STAY AT HOME STATUS

Ombudsman is a Swedish term that means citizen advocate. "Ombudsmen advocate for those who can't, support those who can and ensure all long-term care consumers live with dignity and respect."

Under normal circumstances, staff and volunteer Ombudsmen make regular monthly visits to each personal care and nursing facility in Beaver County to talk with residents, family and staff about the quality of life in the home. Ombudsmen also complete resident directed complaint investigations where the goal is to resolve issues to the satisfaction of the resident. Confidentiality and consumer direction are extremely important throughout the process.

Our Ombudsmen are working full time, at home, and are still available for any complaints or questions related to Nursing facility and Personal Care Home resident rights and problem resolution. If you have a problem you need help with give us a call. We will return your call by the end of the next business day. Note: Ombudsman calls are considered and treated with highest confidentiality.

HOW TO CONTACT THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM:

1. **Email us at Ombudsman@BCOA.US**
2. **Or call the Ombudsman direct phone line 724-480-8589**
3. **If calling the Office on Aging main phone 724-847-2262, identify your call as an Ombudsman issue, with no details, as these calls are highly confidential. Ask for an Ombudsman to call you back and leave your NAME AND PHONE NUMBER ONLY.**

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THE BEAVER COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING IS PROVIDING SERVICES

For the safety of our staff and consumers, the Beaver County Office on Aging is working from home and will be providing full services via phone, email or postal mail. If you need to reach us or have a question about our services, please leave a message that includes your name, phone number, brief description of your needs, and whom you are trying to contact. We are checking our messages during our normal business hours of Monday –Friday from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. A staff member will return your call by the end of the next business day. Please call if you need assistance or know anyone who may need guidance during this time at 724-847-2262 or 888-548-2262.

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WHAT WILL MEDICARE COVER DURING COVID-19?

Medicare covers the lab tests for the COVID-19. They also will cover any hospitalizations that are medically necessary. This hospitalization also would include if you test positive for COVID-19 and need to stay in the hospital under quarantine. If and when a vaccine becomes available, Medicare will cover those vaccines under Medicare Prescription Drug Plans or Part D. Remember, if you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, they will cover these same benefits under

your plan. Medicare will allow these plans to waive cost-sharing for the COVID-19 lab tests. Keep in mind that during this national emergency, scammers will try to take advantage of you, so guard your Medicare card, check for errors on claims on your Medicare summaries and if someone calls asking for your Medicare number, hang up!

Telehealth Services

Telehealth services have been expanded to meet the needs of COVID-19. These services have been temporarily expanded so that you are able to see a doctor or specialist without going into the office. During this time, you are able to receive a specific set of services including evaluation and management visits (common office visit), mental health counseling and preventative health screening, using an interactive two-way telecommunications systems (like real-time audio and video). Your basic home telephone will work. You will have to verbally consent to using the virtual check-ins and your doctor must document that consent in your medical record before you use the service. You will pay your usual Medicare coinsurance and/or deductible for these services, if they apply.

YOUR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS DURING COVID-19

Medical Assistance and CHIP will pay for the COVID-19 test, and you should not be charged a co-pay for the test as long as a doctor approves it. Your Medical Assistance benefits should not end during this emergency period. As long as you had coverage as of March 18, 2020, your benefits will remain intact unless you voluntarily disenroll or you move to another state.

County Assistance Offices are closed to the public effective March 17, 2020, but they still are processing Medical Assistance applications. You can apply and renew your Medical Assistance or CHIP benefits over the phone at 1-866-550-4355 or on the COMPASS website www.compass.state.pa.us.

MATP for transportation to non-emergency medical appointments still is operating, but be prepared for limited availability. Call 724-375-2895 to schedule. Medical Assistance will pay for Telehealth which is a real time two way interaction with your doctor. Call your MCO for more details.

PA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ADVISES EVERYONE TO WEAR A MASK IN PUBLIC

Members of the public are encouraged to wear homemade cloth or fabric masks, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Save surgical masks and N95 respirators for health care workers and first responders. "My mask protects you, your mask protects me."

Wear a mask when: shopping at essential businesses, like grocery stores or pharmacies; visiting your health care provider; on public transportation; interacting with customers/clients at essential businesses; feeling sick, coughing or sneezing.

PA ATTORNEY GENERAL STATES THAT PENNSYLVANIANS CANNOT BE EVICTED FROM THEIR HOMES AT THIS TIME

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro has stated March 31, 2020, that Pennsylvanians cannot be evicted from their homes at this time. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ordered courts closed to eviction proceedings due to the COVID-19 state of emergency. The Court's order is applicable to all Pennsylvania property owners, managers, landlords, as well as mortgage brokers and lenders.

NEW DEADLINE DATES IN PENNSYLVANIA

- Primary Election—New Date: June 2, 2020
- PA Drivers Licenses expiring before April 30, 2020—Now expire May 31, 2020
- Real ID—New Deadline: October 1, 2021
- PA Income Tax—New filing deadline: July 15, 2020

STIMULUS CHECK SCAM WARNING

Scammers may try to take advantage of regarding the issuance of Stimulus checks. If someone contacts you by phone, email or text for Social Security for bank account information, do not provide any information.

WEBSITE TO FILE AN UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIM

If you were working and laid off from your job, only file for unemployment using this state website, www.uc.pa.gov. Do not use any other website as it may not have the correct information or may request unnecessary information about your mortgage or credit company which could be sold to third party companies for marketing.

BEAVER CHURCH OFFERS PROGRAMS

First Presbyterian Church in Beaver has a number of programs, including phone counseling, to help people during COVID-19. Call or email the church, leave a message, and someone will call back, according the Rev. Marc de Jeu, associate pastor. Call 724-774-6398 or email office@fpcbeaver.org.

NO NEED TO STOP AT PA TURNPIKE TOLL BOOTH DURING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY— TOLLS WILL BE COLLECTED BY E-Z PASS OR TOLL BY PLATE INVOICE

In order to limit person-to-person contact during the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission will no longer accept cash or credit cards at tollbooths. All tolls will be assessed electronically through the E-ZPass system or the Toll By Plate program.

During coronavirus mitigation, motorists will no longer stop at tollbooths. Instead, the Toll By Plate system will take a photo of the license plate of each vehicle that does not have E-ZPass and send the registered owner an invoice within 30 days. More information about how the Toll By Plate system works is available at www.nocashzone.com.

MENTAL HEALTH AND CRISIS SUPPORT LINES

This is a difficult time and it is easy to feel alone and cut-off from the world. Social distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation and we want people to know that even as we all face this difficult period, no one is alone and support is available.

- The Mental Health Support Line can be reached toll-free, 24/7 at 1-855-284-2494
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Línea Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio: 1-888-628-9454
- Crisis Text Line: Text "PA" to 741-741
- Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990

DO YOU WANT TO BE THE FIRST TO KNOW?

You can sign up for Alert PA at <https://www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts/Pages/default.aspx> notification system. The text notification system that will alert you to an emergency and weather related alerts, health notifications including COVID-19, building alerts and other updates from state and federal agencies.

VETERAN CAREGIVER SUPPORT COORDINATOR RESOURCES

The local Veteran Caregiver Support Coordinator (CSC) can link you to important resources and services that are available to you, as a caregiver, and to the Veteran. The Caregiver Support Line (CSL), 1-855-260-3274, is also available and offers support by caring licensed professionals.

- Check medication and supplies and submit refills or requests for renewals via [My HealthVet](#), or the call-in number 1-877-327-0022.
- Contact your healthcare provider for medication refills and to learn more about what telehealth services may be available to you.
- Learn to use VA Video Connect through the [VA mobile app store](#) or by contacting the Veteran's VA care team, before any urgent problems arise.
- Have 2 weeks-worth of non-perishable food at home so you are prepared to stay home for some time. It is important to minimize trips to the grocery store. If needed, contact your local CSC for information on community resources.

HOPE GROWS SUPPORTS CAREGIVERS

Hope Grows, located in Moon Township, is a non-profit organization aimed at supporting and encouraging caregivers to process the mind, body, and spiritual stress associated with the role of caregiver.

Their programs range from: support groups, individual and family counseling; The Hope House, a place for both current and past caregivers to engage in an overnight wellness respite style Bed and Breakfast; professional education and training to enhance the knowledge of the needs of the family caregiver; short walks; and essential oils classes. Contact them by phone at 412-369-HOPE(4673) or visit online at <https://hopegrows.net>.

WHO IS AT HIGHER RISK FOR SERIOUS ILLNESS FROM COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe disease. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Based on what we know now, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are:

- People aged 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including: chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, immunocompromised including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications; severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] ≥ 40); diabetes; chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; those pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk with severe viral illness, however, to date data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk.

What should people at higher risk of serious illness with COVID-19 do? If you are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, you should: stock up on supplies; take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others; keep away from others who are sick when out in public; limit close contact and wash your hands often; avoid crowds, cruise travel, and non-essential travel.

If there is an outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible. Watch for symptoms and emergency signs. If you get sick, stay home and call your doctor. More information on how to prepare, what to do if you get sick, and how communities and caregivers can support those at higher risk is available on [People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](#).

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