# New Jersey

Creative Practices April 28, 2020

New Jersey network of aging services providers, including AAAs and local agencies, have developed many creative ways to fight social isolation during this time.

## Telephone Reassurance:

All counties are offering wellness check calls to their telephone reassurance consumers, senior center participants, care management clients, transportation riders, nutrition program participants, caregivers and many more. Our division shared out a telephone reassurance template for them to use in mid-march. Discussion includes; the importance of staying connected with friends and family (phone and internet). DIY mask options, and a focus on positive topics other than the COVID19 virus.

## Additional Telephone Reassurance Efforts:

Identify an emergency contact for every client called for a wellness check and advising the emergency contact to be in close contact with the vulnerable senior.

Utilizing Register Ready (a statewide database of individuals with access and functional needs used for emergency management planning) in partnership with a local CIL, to contact registered clients for a wellness check.

Connect with hospital discharge social work supervisors to refer all the COVID 19 discharge patients to I&A that they feel will be isolated when they return home to assess them for additional services including crisis contact numbers, volunteer organizations in their communities, HDM, and wellness phone.

Caregivers (and others) can also sign up to receive a daily affirmation e-mail by reaching out to lundqumc@ubhc.rutgers.edu

## Nutrition Programs:

Nutrition programs have begun sending out games, information sheets and other activities with home delivered meals. These include (large print when possible), coloring pages, word searches, crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, activity books, CDC info sheets, nutritional and health information booklets and resource directories.

They will be sending out Mother's days goodie bags, birthday cards and / or thinking of you cards to participants as well. Some items are included for the caregiver.

## Social Distancing Visits:

Senior centers have begun curbside visits with participants and drive-by parades to remind older adults that their community is still there for them.

Some senior buildings have begun to offer "Doorway Coffee and Cake" which includes coffee urns brewing in the hallway to spread smell of coffee while residents sit in doorways (which are more than 6 feet apart) and have coffee, tea, and cake served.

Other sites have begun a slight variation called "Doorway Bingo" where a staff person in the hall calls numbers to people in their apartments with the doors open. CB radios are placed in the hallway as makeshift speakers.

Others have organized musical performances on the balconies of the apartment buildings where residents can sit out on their individual balconies and either listen or take part in the collaborative musical experience.

## Remote Programming:

Many have begun offering their classes, exercise programs and group meetings via video conference technology. Some programs include beginner guitar, Italian, Zumba gold, Qi Gong, low impact aerobics.

Our partners at Rutgers University COPSA Institute have begun hosting virtual caregiver support groups.

One provider sends out a web link to private YouTube tutorial where a staff member of the Adult Day Center (closed due to COVID19) shares how to do a craft with her child. Craft supplies are delivered to participants along with their hot meal for that day. Participant (and caregiver) can do the craft along with the video, and watch video repeatedly.

Mailed activity packets to clients and distributing them to individual apartments in senior housing.

Some seniors have started phone, text, and email chains to share what they’re up to and include funny photos.

The Asian Women’s Christian Association has text distribution groups going in three different languages (Korean, Japanese, Chinese).

## Donations:

One county was getting a lot of inquiries about how to help during this time. They began suggesting to people who wish to donate that they contribute gift cards (Rite Aid, Walmart, etc.) that the AAA can distribute to consumers in need.