



JB Pritzker, Governor  
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Dear Aging Network:

The health, safety, and well-being of all those we serve are amongst our highest priorities at IDoA. With recent developments regarding COVID-19 (the 2019 novel Coronavirus), we want to take a moment to reinforce best-practice preventative safety measures and reference our process and procedures to keep our partners healthy. As an agency, we are closely monitoring the situation and are taking guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). The immediate health risk to the public in Illinois and the United States remains low. There is currently no recommendation to disrupt normal activities at work or at home.

**Available Resources:** We encourage IDoA partner organizations to be mindful of preventative measures that can be taken. Information is available from the Illinois Department of Public Health at their [Coronavirus-2019 \(COVID-2019\) website](#), and the COVID-19 Hotline at 1 (800) 889-3931

We have tasked all Area Agencies on Aging to develop a contingency plan to combat the spread of COVID-19, and how to handle a response in the case of an immediate epidemic. Additionally, please see the Environmental Protection Agency's [recommended list of antimicrobial products](#) for use against COVID-19.

The Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires HCBS Waiver programs to develop an Individualized Back-Up Plan for each Waiver participant - please see attached. IDoA views the Back-Up Plan as a valuable tool in assisting with the coordination of care for participants who experience an emergency, such as exposure to the coronavirus. IDoA strongly encourages its CCUs to ensure that the information on the Back-Up Plans is up to date and that the Plan is shared with the providers (In-Home, Adult Day Service, etc.) for each of the participants.

In addition to the CDC, our other federal partners - CMS and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) also have valuable resources on their websites. Specifically, I would like to refer you to "[What do older adults and people with disabilities need to know about the coronavirus.](#)"

Please remember that if you begin to have cold and flu like symptoms, you should not be at work. Anyone should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to work after an illness. Staying home when staff are sick is one of the critical pieces of workplace illness prevention.

#### **Recommended Proactive Steps to Stay Healthy**

- Wash hands regularly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Avoid the touching of eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Staff are asked to stay home if they exhibit cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Cover mouth and nose with the inside of the arm or with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue away immediately. Wash hands as soon as possible afterward.

The Department will continue to monitor this situation closely in the days and weeks to come. Be assured that additional communications will be forthcoming, if and when situations change. We will continue to take guidance from IDPH and communicate with all IDoA partner organizations, as appropriate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your IDoA program coordinator, or my office.

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[www.illinois.gov/aging](http://www.illinois.gov/aging)



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The CDC offers some [tips on its website](#) that can be useful in preventing many types of illnesses, including the flu. Additionally, the CDC offers specific [recommendations for working with high risk populations](#).

Thank you all for your dedication as we continue to ***support today, while planning for tomorrow.***

Sincerely,

Paula Basta, M.Div.  
Director, Illinois Department on Aging

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)