

AAA Committee Recommendation Report

Report to the AAA Board

Report prepared by: Cheryl Batterman batterman.cheryl@countyofdane.com	261-9789	Date: 5 April 2021
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From: ☐ Access Committee ☒ Legislative/Advocacy Committee ☐ Nutrition/Wellness Committee

History/Related Actions

At the 3/24/21 Legislative/Advocacy Committee meeting, the following was discussed and recommended:

Focal Points are receiving a lot of pressure to fully open programs and services while maintaining safe environments for staff and older adults during the pandemic. Committee members directed AAA staff to draft a letter for the AAA Board to sign, encouraging older adults to follow guidance provided by DHS, PHMDC, and AAA staff.

Motion made by SCHMIDLKOFER, seconded by KAUD to request the AAA Board encourage older adults of the importance of maintaining COVID-19 safety.

Ayes **6** CASTANEDA, KAUD, LEZOTTE, MCHONE, OLSON, SCHMIDLKOFER,
 and VUE

Absent 2 BUNCK and KRETSCHMAN

Financial/Budget/Other Resource Implications (if any)

None

Recommendations

To approve the attached draft letter concerning COVID-19 safety.

Attachments

COVID-19 Safety DRAFT Letter

DRAFT COVID-19 Safety Letter

[This letter will be mailed to the Senior Focal Points to be shared with their older adult clients, participants, staff, and volunteers]

On behalf of the Area Agency on Aging of Dane County's Board of Directors, I am writing to update you on the status of services you have no doubt missed over the past year. But first, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that for many this pandemic has challenged the core of our being, physically and emotionally. The loss experienced over the past year has been dramatic – from the loss of those we love, to in many cases, our loss of freedom and purpose. Collectively, this Board and the agencies that provide a whole host of opportunities for engagement in our community – such as Senior Centers/Focal Points and volunteer organizations, feel your loss as our own and long for a time when we can come together safely to remember, reflect, and move forward.

As of this writing, 16% of Dane County residents have been fully vaccinated, with 75% of those being older adults. We celebrate the wisdom of our state in making older adults a priority for vaccination! The rate of vaccinating the remaining 84% of residents is coming at a much quicker pace with the full complement of vaccinations now available. The idea of coming together as one by summer brings new hope for all.

As opportunities for engaging with others begin to reopen, Senior Centers/Focal Points and other aging service providers will do so with the assistance of Area Agency on Aging staff. They have received guidance from federal, state, and local agencies such as Public Health Madison & Dane County and the State of Wisconsin's Bureau on Aging and Disability Resources to ensure they are following public health orders and other regulations for services. Many health orders for masking and social distancing will continue until the majority of our community is vaccinated in order to stop the spread of the virus and the many variants that vaccines may not fully protect us from. Keep in mind, in many cases, our Senior Centers/Focal Points rely on staff and volunteers that are not yet vaccinated. Sanitizing spaces after each use is required and in many cases not feasible given the small staff available in our sites. Further, with the number of variants to this disease circulating, we do not want to find ourselves in the position of other major countries that opened too soon and now must go into lock-down again.

As such, you may have seen or will begin to see small group activities being offered by our Senior Centers/Focal Points where masks can be worn and 6 feet distancing can be assured. We hope you consider exploring these options. As more and more of our community becomes vaccinated, you may see these increase in size over time and become more plentiful. As we reach herd immunity (between 65%-80% of all people being vaccinated) we will be able to do group activities without distancing; until then, activities such as card playing are not recommended.

As for group dining at our meal sites, this activity remains high risk for transmitting the disease as masks must be removed in order to dine. Senior Centers/Focal Points and other agencies that host meal sites have been advised that reopening senior dining sites is not recommended at this time by AAA staff and other health partners. Although enjoyed by many, this will likely be the last activity to return on any scale. Until it does, we are committed to ensuring older adults have access to safely obtain a nutrition meal through carry-out, drive-up, or home delivered meals if qualified.

In closing, thank you for your dedication to staying the course throughout this incredibly challenging time and being patient with us as we safely bring back programming you may have missed.

Sincerely,
Carole Kretschman, Chair