

Resources for Adult Protective Services During Physical Distancing

To support adult protective services (APS) agencies and workers during the COVID-19 outbreak, NCCD offers the following resources and best practices. These resources are not intended to replace local or agency policy, practice, or guidance.

Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that older adults are at highest risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus. Other people at high risk include those with underlying health conditions such as chronic lung disease or asthma, serious heart conditions, or other medical conditions, especially if not well controlled, such as diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease, or people who are severely obese or immunocompromised. Many of the adults served by APS have one or more of these risk factors. In 2018, 70% of APS clients served nationally were over age 60.

During this public health crisis, it's important that both APS workers and clients stay safe. NCCD wants to help by ensuring that APS agencies, workers, and clients have as much information as possible.

While state and local health authorities are APS agencies' best resource for [local and up-to-date information](#), federal guidance is available for protecting yourself and those you serve at the following websites.

- The Administration for Community Living (ACL): <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>



- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: <https://www.cms.gov/outreach-education/partner-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-partner-toolkit>

Basic Measures

The CDC recommends the following basic protective measures for all individuals.

- **Stay home.**
- **Wash your hands often.**
- **Avoid close contact** (distancing yourself from others by at least six feet, which is about two arm lengths) with other people.
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces.



- **Avoid all cruise travel** and non-essential air travel.
- **Call your healthcare professional if you have concerns** about COVID-19 and your underlying condition or if you are sick.

Provide COVID-19 Resources to Your Clients

Provide your clients with the most up-to-date information through [CDC updates](#); [resources for clients](#) with disabilities (similar to [this state's tool kit](#)); resources for older clients, including [this helpful video](#); and information on [managing life at home during social isolation](#).

Assess and Maintain Connections

Connection with and assessment of your clients and their well-being is more important now than ever.

Consider practices that reduce client contact by triaging in-person responses to those who warrant the most urgent response, are at risk of imminent danger, or otherwise warrant an emergency response. Even if you can't do home visits the way you used to, seek alternative ways to check on clients, ensure they're informed, and assess their safety and needs.

- Make contact, even if just by phone. Virtual contact such as FaceTime, if available, is a valuable tool.
- If possible, talk/meet outside with appropriate physical distancing. Outdoor, in-person contact offers some access to the client without putting them or yourself at risk of exposure.
- Ensure that clients have their medical information, phone numbers, and information on who to call if they have symptoms.
- Ask clients about the supplies they have or need, including medications, medical supplies, and food.
- Inform clients on guidelines for preventing spread of the virus. This is especially important if they have service providers or home health aides in their home.

If making an in-person response, connect with the client ahead of time.

- Before going out, make sure the client understands the purpose of your visit and that you will, if possible, talk outside with appropriate physical distancing.
- If you will be wearing personal protective equipment, like a mask or face shield, explain why you have this safety gear on to help calm fears or discomfort.

Plan for safety and utilize network.

- Ask the client about their emergency contacts, family, and friends. The client's network can be an especially valuable resource for communication, unexpected or changing caregiving needs, and planning.
- Inquire about who the client already has regular contact with and consider reaching out to them (if you have permission) to see what they need to continue to stay connected with the older adults and adults with disabilities you are working with.

- Does the adult know about changes to essential businesses (grocery stores, pharmacies, banks) for services such as grocery/medication delivery, financial assistance, etc.? Develop quick lists and one-pagers of local businesses that continue to stay open during this time.
- Familiarize yourself with local community supports. Many community agencies are mobilizing volunteers to drop off supplies and meals and even conduct daily phone calls with the older adults and adults with disabilities. Local restaurants and small businesses are offering free meals and other services to community members.

Services in your community can be found through the Eldercare Locator at <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx> or 1-800-677-1116.

- Social distancing and lockdowns present significant challenges to older adults and adults with disabilities living with their abusers. Consider safety planning by phone with the client using careful language given the proximity and access of the abuser. Continue to contact the person regularly if you are concerned, and utilize contact made by community volunteers and resources along with emergency services.
- Finally, be aware of the potential for financial abuse, scams, and opportunists. Unfortunately, some people will use this global crisis to prey on older adults and adults with disabilities. Remind clients not to give out account information or other personal identifiers over the phone.

If you are made aware of a COVID-19 related scam, it can be reported to the National Center for Disaster Fraud: 1-866-720-5721 or disaster@leo.gov

The Changing Federal Landscape

While more information will be available in coming weeks related to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, or the COVID-19 stimulus package, below are some tips and resources related to what this assistance could entail for APS clients.

- Most people who receive monthly Social Security retirement and disability payments will also get a stimulus payment.
People who receive Social Security benefits but don't file a tax return are still eligible. Their checks will be based on information provided by the Social Security Administration.
- Waivers will be available to ease restrictions on home-delivered meal programs and other programs that add flexibility and extend funding to services provided under Medicaid and Medicare.
- Required minimum distributions (RMDs) from retirement accounts are suspended for 2020.
- Additional funding for SNAP is included in the CARES Act to help cover the expected cost of new applications to the program in addition to \$450 million for food banks and other community food distribution programs.
- Existing grantees in the aging and disability networks, including tribes and tribal organizations, will receive \$955 million from the package.
- For more information on what the stimulus package means for states and APS agencies, see the following.
 - » ACL bulletin: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USACL/bulletins/283d816>
 - » Summary of guidance for states: <https://www.ncsl.org/ncsl-in-dc/publications-and-resources/coronavirus-stimulus-bill-states.aspx>