

# THE 50+ Connection

NEWS and EVENTS from the  
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

A Publication of the Department of Community Resources and Services

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## Coping with Stress and Anxiety During COVID-19

Over the past months, the coronavirus has upended life as we know it in Howard County. Residents found grocery stores emptied of canned and frozen foods, paper products and hand sanitizer, and dealt with closures of schools, parks, libraries and all but essential businesses. All church services and social activities were cancelled and 50+ Centers closed. “Stay home, stay safe” became the new mantra for older adults vulnerable to complications from COVID-19. The pandemic created the perfect storm for anxiety, according to AARP.

Coronavirus affects older adults more than any other age group, due to:

- complex chronic health conditions, including mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and cognitive impairment;
- limited mobility and resources, and food access concerns;
- a greater possibility of loss, leading to fear, depression, and anxiety;
- less access to social networks and/or caregivers (professional and family).

**Feeling stressed and anxious during these uncertain times is normal; taking steps to combat feelings of social isolation is crucial for older adults.**

- **Take care of physical and mental health needs.** Don't ignore symptoms of illness; call your doctor if you have concerns. Many providers now offer tele-health services. Keep current medications filled and take as directed. If your anxiety interferes with daily functioning, contact a behavioral health provider or reach out to Grassroots 24-hour Crisis Hotline at 410-531-6677 for help.
- **Get regular exercise.** Exercise, like walking or stretching, can calm the tension in your body and lift your mood. For more fitness ideas for all activity levels, visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/aging](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/aging) and view the Virtual Offerings Guide from the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI). All classes are free and offered through WebEx.
- **Maintain social networks.** Stay in touch with loved ones by phone, text or social media, or try one of OAI's virtual programs like Coffee and Conversation. Or, volunteer for the new **Phone a Senior** program and make a weekly call of social support to other older adults. Call 410-313-1234 to volunteer or receive support calls.
- **Limit news consumption.** Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage – including social media – and follow only reliable sources. Avoid negative posts and comments; try to share positive actions instead. Check out [www.goodnewsnetwork.org](http://www.goodnewsnetwork.org) for suggestions.
- **Practice calming techniques.** If you are feeling particularly anxious, try deep breathing, take a warm bath, go for a short walk, or play with your pet. Listen to music or read a book. Visit [www.hclibrary](http://www.hclibrary) for online selections. Start a journal to keep track of your feelings.
- **Be productive.** Cleaning out closets or your garage can divert attention from anxious thoughts while giving you a sense of accomplishment. Now is the time to try a new hobby or craft project.
- **Share support.** Share your thoughts and concerns with others in OAI's weekly SeniorsTogether groups: **Think Positive; Men's Roundtable; Low Vision Support; NewsTalk; Brainteasers; Open Mind; and Trenders.** Contact Karen Hull at 410-313-7466 or [khull@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:khull@howardcountymd.gov) for the schedule and WebEx links.

For more resources, contact Maryland Access Point of Howard County at [map@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:map@howardcountymd.gov) or 410-313-1234 (voice/relay).

A Message from  
Howard County Executive

### Calvin Ball



This July may look a bit different than usual, as Howard County begins to re-open and recover from COVID-19.

Celebrations with friends and family enjoying summer will be unlike those in years past.

We continue to urge all Howard County residents, especially those with vulnerable health conditions, to continue safe health practices by washing hands regularly, practicing physical distancing and wearing face coverings in public. Our older adult population over 60 should continue to stay at home as much as possible.

This month, keep in mind the new tax filing deadline for the IRS is July 15. There are many resources available online if you need support when filing taxes this year. AARP has expanded their online offerings due to the suspension of their in-person services. Information can be found at [www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp\\_taxaide/](http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/). Maryland CASH Campaign ([www.cashmd.org](http://www.cashmd.org)) is also offering remote services.

Additionally, our efforts to become an AARP Age-Friendly community continue virtually, which has created an opportunity to keep our older adults engaged and connected during a time of self-isolation. Age-Friendly work groups have been meeting remotely since mid-March and the initiative will be only as strong as the engagement and participation we receive. Individuals who are interested in joining one of the work groups may contact Terri Hansen, Age-Friendly Manager, at [thansen@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:thansen@howardcountymd.gov).

As we continue to manage this pandemic, we will continue to safeguard the critical resources, support services, and health of our older adult population.



## Age-Friendly Howard County WORK GROUP MEETINGS

If you are interested in joining one of the work groups, contact Terri Hansen, Age-Friendly Manager, at [thansen@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:thansen@howardcountymd.gov). There is a work group for each of the domains of livability as defined by AARP and the World Health Organization, meeting on the designated day of each month:

**HOUSING** Group — 1<sup>st</sup> Friday • 9:30am to 11:00am

**TRANSPORTATION** Group — 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday • 3:00pm-4:30pm

**WORK & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** Group — 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday • 3:00pm -4:30pm

**COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES** Group — 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday • 9:00am-10:30am

**OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS** Group — 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday • 9:00am-10:30am

**COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION** Group — 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday • 1:00pm-2:30pm

**SOCIAL PARTICIPATION** Group — 4<sup>th</sup> Monday • 3:00pm-4:30pm

**RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION** Group — 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday • 9:00am-10:30am

# Pets and COVID-19



## What You Need to Know from the CDC

The Centers for Disease Control (cdc.gov) is still learning about how the virus that causes COVID-19 can affect animals. A small number of pets (cats and dogs) have been confirmed to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with a person with COVID-19. Some pets did not show any signs of illness, but those pets that did get sick all had mild disease that could be treated at home. None of the pets have died. Tests for COVID-19 in animals are available for most types of pets, but testing is only recommended for animals with COVID-19 symptoms and/or those that have been exposed to a person with COVID-19.

Based on the limited information available now, the risk of pets spreading COVID-19 to people is low. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- If your pet tests positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, isolate the pet from everyone else, including other pets.
- Do not wipe or bathe your pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use.
- If you think your pet has COVID-19, call your veterinarian first to discuss what you should do.
- Pets with confirmed infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 should be restricted to isolation in the home until a veterinarian or public health official has determined that they can be around other pets and people.
- There is no reason to abandon or surrender pets that have been confirmed positive for the virus that causes COVID-19.

For more information about pet precautions and care during the current pandemic, visit the Office on Aging and Independence's **Paws4Comfort** web page at [www.howardcountymd.gov/paws](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/paws).

# Pet Food Bank Steps Up to Meet Growing Needs

Did you know that the Howard County Police Department's Animal Control and Adoption Center operates a pet food bank? To respond to increasing demand in the wake of COVID-19, the center has joined Howard County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) at pop up pantries in the community, assisted a local church to provide pet food and supplies to congregation members in need, and answered calls from more than a hundred households asking for help.

## Want to donate to the pet food bank?

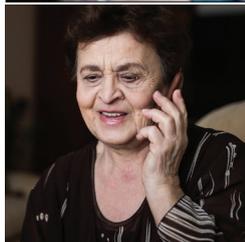
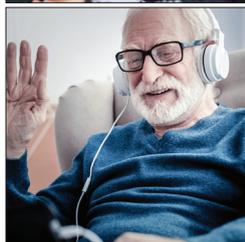
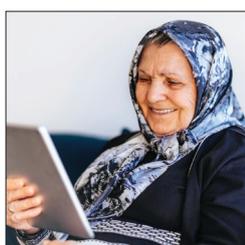
The easiest way to help is through the Amazon wish list at <https://bit.ly/hocoanimalcontrol>



Donations from the wish list may also be dropped off under the front overhang of the center at 8576 Davis Road, Columbia 21045. Anyone who needs assistance with animal food or supplies can reach out to Animal Control directly at [animalcontrol@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:animalcontrol@howardcountymd.gov).

# Phone A Senior

— A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY —



**BECOME**  
someone's lifeline.

**ENGAGE**  
in community connections.

**SHARE**  
hope and laughter.

**ENJOY**  
friendly conversations.

**CONNECT**  
with a weekly call.

— FOR MORE INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEERING, CONTACT US TODAY —

Howard County Office on  
**Aging and Independence**  
Department of Community Resources and Services

**410-313-1234** (VOICE/RELAY)  
[map@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:map@howardcountymd.gov)  
[www.howardcountymd.gov/aging](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/aging)

# Complete YOUR Census Today!

IMPORTANT. EASY. SAFE.



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[www.my2020census.gov](http://www.my2020census.gov)  
410-313-6325 (VOICE/RELAY)

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**2020 CENSUS**

## Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

Department of Community Resources and Services

The 50+ Connection is published monthly by the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence.

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request. To join our subscriber list, email [kahenry@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:kahenry@howardcountymd.gov)

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Find us on [www.facebook.com/HoCoCommunity](https://www.facebook.com/HoCoCommunity)

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