

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

Volume 10, No. 5 • May 2020

A Message from DCRS Director Jackie Scott

Residents' Needs During COVID-19

The Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS) takes great pride in the relationships we have built with you, our members and neighbors, and we value the trust you have in our ability to effectively respond to residents' needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the need for physical distancing, be assured that you are not alone in this — my staff and I are here and ready to help. We urge you not to panic, to use the tools we are giving you to make good, clear decisions for yourself and your family — and to remember your neighbors. During this stressful time, it's important to care for your emotional and mental well-being while monitoring your physical health. Reach out if you need something. And remember, while things seem uncomfortable because they are unknown, they are not insurmountable. We are a strong and resilient community and we will get through this together.

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the top priority of the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) is to protect the safety and well-being of Howard County's older adults, people living with disabilities or chronic conditions, and the front-line workers who work diligently to care for our most vulnerable residents. Based upon the COVID-19 guidance provided by the World Health Organization, CDC, and our State and local Health Departments, the following OAI facilities are closed and programs are cancelled until further notice:

- 50+ Centers, the Connections and Kindred Spirits Social Day Programs
- Group Programs, Rentals, Events and Activities
- Home Visit and Facility-Based Services
- Congregate Meal Program
- Tax Preparation Assistance
- The Loan Closet is closed for in-person appointments; for urgent needs, call 410-313-0363

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A Message from
Howard County Executive

Calvin Ball



Over the last two months we have been living through uncertain and challenging times. We want all of our older residents to know Howard County government is working diligently to keep you safe and healthy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Howard County is a resilient community, during the most difficult times, we remain dedicated and are working together, united around a common challenge. We've seen the generosity of neighbors, friends, and strangers over the past weeks, working to ensure people have food, medicine and other essentials.

I am proud of the work our Department of Community Resources and Services has continued despite the temporary closures of our 50+ Centers. They are delivering meals, providing critical communications, and still connecting residents to the resources they need.

Even as the government focuses on the virus, we continue to move forward with our everyday responsibilities. We recently proposed our capital budget for the upcoming year to the County Council that includes funds to construct the East Columbia 50+ Center and renovate the Bain 50+ Center.

Additionally, if you haven't had a chance, please be sure to complete your 2020 census today at [My2020Census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) or by calling 844-330-2020. Having each and every one of you counted is vital to securing much needed federal funding for healthcare, housing, public safety and more.

I am keeping all of our residents in my thoughts during this outbreak. We are getting through this day-by-day, and by looking after each other through calls and e-mails with those who we love. My promise to you, on behalf of the Howard County government, is that, moving forward, we will continue to safeguard the critical resources, support services and health of our older adult population.

We will get through this by working together and focusing on what matters most — the health, safety, and well-being of you and your loved ones.



MAKE YOUR MARK: MAY 2020

Even during the current COVID-19 pandemic, Howard County older adults are **Making their Mark** through volunteerism and community support.

Thank you for all that you are doing to support the Howard County community in these uncertain times, and for showing us that physical distancing does not have to lead to social isolation.

We hope to see you back at 50+ Centers soon!

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.
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Grab & Go Meal Packs Now Available

When Howard County 50+ centers closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis, congregate meal programs were suspended as well. To fill the void, the Office on Aging and Independence established a temporary **Grab & Go** meal program to provide healthy meals for center members that meet the 1/3 daily recommended allowance for older adults. In early April, OAI began offering the program to those most at nutritional risk in the congregate program (age 60+). Here's how it works:

Each **Grab & Go** meal pack includes seven individual entrées, plus seven milk cartons, a variety of fruit cups, apple sauce, and bread products. Eligible individuals include anyone age 60 and older, and their spouses of any age. Pre-registration is required to order, with limited meal kits available. To register, contact Maryland Access Point of Howard County at 410-313-1234 (voice/relay) or email map@howardcountymd.gov.

Orders must be placed by noon on Monday to receive a meal kit for the current week. Order may be picked up on Thursday between 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. at the Ellicott City 50+ Center, 9401 Frederick Road in Ellicott City 21042. The Howard County Office on Aging & Independence has partnered with Neighbor Ride and Roving Radish to ensure meals are delivered to pre-qualified individuals.

The cost of each meal kit is \$47.32 (\$6.76 per meal). Though funding is supported through the Senior Nutrition Program of the Older Americans Act of 1965, donations up to the full amount help to ensure the continued viability of the program. An anonymous donation envelope is provided with each meal kit and collected weekly at the **Grab & Go** location.



Although registration for **Cycle2Health (C2H)** is open, the **Office of Aging and Independence has made the decision to delay the start of the season until further notice due to COVID-19.** For more information, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/C2H.

COVID-19 FAQ

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In these uncertain times, you may have questions about OAI programs and services – when 50+ centers will reopen, whether cancelled programs will be rescheduled or fees refunded, and how to access services during the closure. Here are some frequently asked questions:

When will 50+ centers reopen? Will programs be rescheduled?

Some center-based events, like the Mosaic Workshop at North Laurel, will be rescheduled. Our website and Facebook page will be updated when centers reopen and regular programming is resumed. In the meantime, we are currently developing virtual classes to include exercise and wellness.

Do I have to pay for the classes, lessons or programs that I missed due to the temporary Center closures?

No. Most remaining class sessions for the winter season have been credited to participants' accounts. In the event of an indefinite closure announcement affecting the remainder of spring classes, pro-rated credits to accounts or refunds will be issued.

I paid for a Go 50+ fitness membership; these facilities are currently closed. I also participate in the Group Exercise Pass Program at Ellicott City 50+ Center. Will I be reimbursed?

Members will receive membership extensions to account for facility closures related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Who can I contact to learn more about food assistance?

Contact Maryland Access Point (MAP) at map@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-1234 (voice/relay). A new Grab & Go meal distribution program is available to individuals age 60+; registration is required. See the article at left for details, or call MAP for more information.

I had an AARP Tax Appointment to have my 2019 Tax Return prepared and still need assistance.

The AARP Tax Assistance program is closed until further notice; all appointments have been cancelled to protect both the preparers and the clients. The date for filing 2019 tax returns has been extended to July 15, 2020. Among the provisions of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, are waivers for 2020 required minimum distributions (RMDs) which may reduce your 2020 tax bill. For more information on how the CARES Act may impact you, visit <https://www.aarp.org/money/investing/info-2020/cares-act-retiree-tax-benefit.html>

How will the current COVID-19 restrictions affect OAI events planned for later this year, like Master Aging?

OAI has cancelled Master Aging this year due to the inability to plan for a large-scale event at this time. We are exploring smaller-scale alternatives to continue our engagement and outreach within the community.

What is the status of Howard County's Age-Friendly Initiative?

Work on the Age-Friendly initiative continues – just in a different way. Workgroups have been meeting via WebEx since March 17, and the members have received the initial analysis of the Age-Friendly survey to review. We are exploring the possibility of virtually hosting listening sessions and focus groups.

How can I get more information?

For the latest updates about COVID-19 in Howard County, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/coronavirus. To stay informed about the status of Office on Aging and Independence programs and services, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/aging and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

CONSUMER PROTECTION During COVID-19



If you have any consumer-related questions, problems or concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, contact us!

Howard County Office of
Consumer Protection
Department of Community Resources and Services

410-313-6420 (VOICE/RELAY)
consumer@howardcountymd.gov
howardcountymd.gov/consumer

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