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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AREA AGENCY ON AGING-FIVE COUNTY IS CAUTIONSLY CONCERNED ABOUT COVID-19

Area Agency on Aging-Five County is cautiously concerned about the COVID-19 virus and the potential impact it could have on the population of Older Adults. To help keep older adults in our Southern Utah community up to date on the potential effects of the COVID-19 Virus and any impact on services; we will be posting regular updates to our Webpage and Facebook. Every effort will be made to continue to provide critical services but the safety of the consumers we serve, our staff and the larger community will also need to be taken into consideration as difficult decision are made. In addition, we will be consulting our Local and State Health Department, State and Federal Partners and elected officials regarding any mandates and/or recommendations.

After careful consideration we have made the following decisions as it relates to programs and services operated by the Five County Area Agency on Aging under the umbrella of the Five County Association of Governments:

Starting Monday, March 16th the Five County Association of Governments Tonaquint Building and Main Street Cedar City Building will keep their doors locked. Signs will be posted on the door informing clients that we are **not accepting WALK-IN** appointments at this time. **Clients can call 435-673-3548 to make an appointment.** Nobody who is sick may enter the buildings. Anyone with a pre-scheduled appointment will be required to sanitize their hands as they enter and exit. We will have hand-sanitizer provided at the entrance area.

In regards to the Area Agency on Aging Services:

- **Home & Community Based Case Management Services (Alternative and Caregiver Support):** All case management services will be provided via telephone. Home visits for case management will be discontinued until further notice. Case managers will be accessible to their clients via telephone. In addition, case managers will be working with each client to develop an individual action plan for dealing with COVID-19 and potential interruption in services. In addition, providers for these programs are being contacted regarding their agency continuity of care plan; but we continue to encourage clients to have a back-up plan in place. At this time, we will not be adding any new clients to the program.
- **Home and Community Based Case Management services (Aging Waiver & New Choices Waiver):** To the extent possible case management will be provided via telephone calls. We are currently waiting for final direction from the State Medicaid Agency (SMA) as to required home annual assessments, until than home visit will continue for these two activities. At this time, new clients will not be added to the program. Case managers will also be working with each

client to develop an individual action plan for dealing with COVID-19 and potential interruption in services

- **Veteran Directed HCBS Case Management:** To the extent possible case management will be provided via telephone calls. We are currently waiting for final direction from VAMC as to required home visits for quarterly reviews. Case managers will also be working with each client and the personal attendant to develop an individual action plan for dealing with COVID-19 and potential interruption in services.
- **Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent Programs:** At this time, the Senior Companion and Foster Grandparents are continuing to volunteer; but are directed to take extra precautions and services could be discontinued at any time at the direction of the Volunteer, Five County, or the School District for the Foster Grandparents.
- Our **Annual Senior's Conference** Scheduled for May 1, 2020 at Festival Hall in Cedar City, Utah will be postponed until August 28, 2020. We post a notice of the cancellation and change in dates to our Conference link on our Website. Contact us if you are currently registered for information or if you have signed up as vendor.
- All **Evidence-Based Health Prevention and Promotion Classes** sponsored by Five County Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) have been cancelled until further notice. We are looking at options for Online/Video conferencing if allowed and will update you if this option becomes available.
- We will be continuing our **Telephone Reassurance Program** as part of RSVP. This program provides regular calls with homebound seniors to help reduce social isolation and loneliness and to check on the individual well-being. **In a effort to support more individuals who may be homebound, as a result of the COVID-19, we are looking to be able to assist additional individuals who are or may now be isolated and need someone to check in on them.** If you or someone you know is homebound and needs a call. Or if you are an older adult 55+ who would like to volunteer to call homebound individuals; contact: **Maria Bailey at 435-673-3548 x103 or RSVP@fivecounty.utah.gov.**
- All **Caregiver educational classes**, including Dementia Dialogues, Caregiver Academy, Dealing with Dementia, will be cancelled until further notice. We are looking at options for Online/Video conferencing if allowed and will update you if this option becomes available.
- The **Long-Term Care Ombudsman** will continue to manage any resident rights issues and complaints; however, to the extent possible, all complaints will be handled via telephone and/or as possible, via video conferencing. All routine site visits will be spotted until further notice. Any potential person visits with residents will be handled on a case by case basis in consultation with the Lead Ombudsman, AAA Director and the facility. The Ombudsman will also maintain weekly contact with each Facility via phone calls.
- **Senior Health Insurance Information and Senior Medicare Patrol.** All group presentation and/or any off-site counseling sessions will cease until further notice. To the extent possible, SHIP counseling sessions will be provided via phone. Any in person appointments at our St. George or Cedar City offices will be coordinated on a case by case basis with the SHIP Counselor.

- **Benefit Enrollment Center:** Any group presentation or off-site appointments will cease until further notice. All BEC activities will be provided via Telephone calls. Any in person appointments will be done only on a case by case and only if there is an extenuating circumstance. Any required documentation needed to apply for benefits can be mailed to our agency.
- **Veteran Service Officer:** All appointments will be done via telephone calls until further notice. No walk-ins will be accepted at this time and in-person visits will be scheduled on a case by case basis.

SENIOR CENTERS: Senior Centers are operated at the County level, Five County is in close contact with each of the Counties and their designated Senior Center Staff in regards to closure of senior centers and possible interruption in services. At this time, most of the Centers in the Five County Region are open; but they may be limiting certain services and activities. In addition, they could close at any time. However, the Counties are working to establish procedures to assure critical services, in particular, Home Delivered Meals can continue. They are also working to assess the needs of congregate meal participants and looking at either a meal pick up or delivery option on a temporary basis for those who need it. For more information regarding the Senior Centers please contact the following individual for each County:

- Beaver County: Sheila Shotwell- beaverseniors@infowest.com 435-483-5313
- Garfield County: Donna Chynoweth- seniorcenter@scinternet.net 435-862-4317
- Iron County: Curtis Crawford- ccrawford@ironcounty.net 435-225-1222
- Kane County: Craig Hansen- kcareandshare@kane.utah.gov 435-644-4968
- Washington County: Jacob Browning- jacob.browning@washco.utah.gov 435-634-5743

Summary:

For all our Programs and Services, we appreciate your patience as we work through these changes in normal operating procedures. We are continually receiving new information and updated directives are it relates to COVID-19 and service delivery. In addition, there will inevitably be an increase in calls to our agency. As a result, we ask for your patience as we try to respond to individual calls and request for assistance.

The following is some **basic information** regarding COVID-19 and safety precautions you can take:

- Stay at home as much as possible.
- Make sure you have access to several weeks of food, medications, and basic supplies in case you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact, and wash your hands often.

- Avoid crowds and high-traffic public places; reduce face-to-face contact with others as much as possible.
- Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
- Make a plan for emergency caregiving in case you or your caregiver becomes sick.

The following are the **recommended links** to obtain accurate and up to date information regarding COVID-19:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

<https://arthritis.health.utah.gov/2020/03/12/updated-coronavirus-what-older-adults-need-to-know/>

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/coronavirus-scams-what-ftc-doing>

<https://swuhealth.org/covid/>

The Area Agency on Aging-Five County Association of Governments has been providing services to frail elderly and disabled adults for over 20 years. We have an experienced staff with extensive skills and knowledge of community resources who can access these services to meet the needs of the aging population across five counties - Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, and Washington - in Southern Utah.