



JB Pritzker, Governor
Paula A. Basta, M.Div., Director

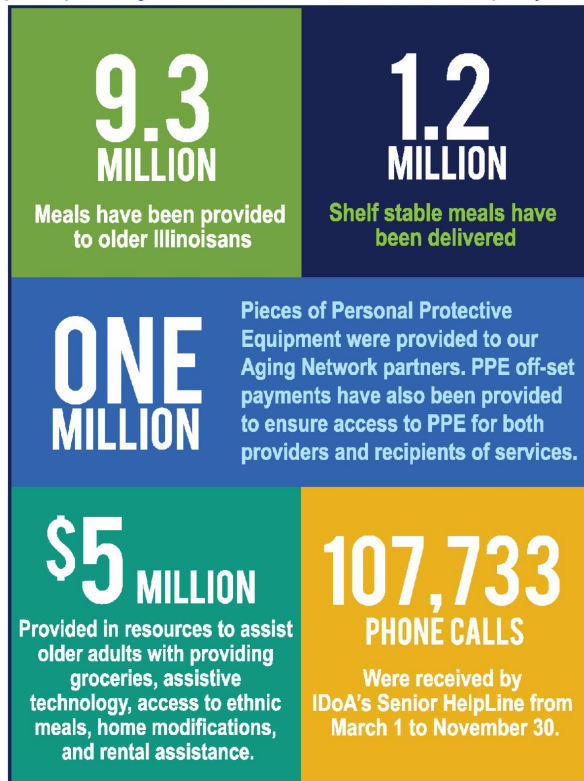
Respect for Yesterday
Support for Today
Plan for Tomorrow



December 14, 2020

Since the pandemic began in March, IDoA has played an integral part in providing older Illinoisans with resources and help they need.

Dear Aging Network:



We are nine months into the pandemic and even though it seems like we should be back to business as usual, we are far from it. As we close this calendar year, an unfortunate statistic has been that **over 88% of the COVID-19** deaths in the State of Illinois have been adults 60 years of age or older. For some of us, that reality may have hit a little too close to home. I know that fatigue is settling in, but there is reason for hope as we can see the light at the end of the tunnel with the recent news of **vaccine availability!** Yet we all must remember that there continues to be a long road ahead.

As you can see with the graphic on the left, the Aging Network continues to play an integral part in providing older Illinoisans with resources and help they need. Despite the challenges we face every day, we are proud to partner with you in meeting the needs of older adults, caregivers and our communities of our state. Rest assured we will continue

working to provide a full array of services to all of our communities with a special focus on low income minority communities. **Thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication to the Aging Network!**

The Area Agencies on Aging continue to enroll an unprecedented number of new seniors requesting home delivered meals - close to 24,000 new referrals have been received, and we continue to receive about 132 new referrals each day. Home Delivered Meals not only provide a nutritious meal for an older adult but a friendly face with the delivery. For some older adults living in the community, the volunteer delivering their meal may be the only person that the older adult sees all day.

Unfortunately, it has become necessary to once again, temporarily suspend in-person activities through our Adult Day Services programming, which were just beginning to safely re-open. ADS providers continue to administer remote services, CCUs conduct assessments and re-assessments via phone, and coordinate with local entities to provide Emergency Senior Services, EHRS and AMD services. Our Community Care Program - specifically our In-Home providers continue to be steadfast in providing services - enabling over 100,000 older Illinoisans to remain in their homes during this pandemic. I would like to offer a special thank you to our in-home providers who have continued to deliver services throughout the pandemic - despite the increased risks. These visits continue to be extremely important - as it allows our in-home care workers the ability to closely monitor our seniors' physical **and** mental well-being.

The State's Long-Term Care Ombudsmen have been extremely busy during these past 9

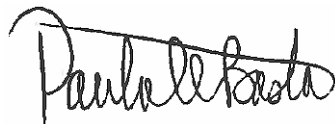
months. While navigating the changes and limitations that were put in place at long-term care facilities, our ombudsmen have been resilient in making every reasonable effort to assist, empower, represent and intervene on behalf of residents in a variety of long-term care settings. Since March, our ombudsmen handled over 22,000 consultations to residents, facility staff, and other individuals. Over 14,000 of these consultations were flagged by our ombudsmen as having something to do with the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, our ombudsmen have conducted over 200 indoor visits and close to 1,000 outdoor or window visits throughout the state. Thanks to our Long-Term Care Ombudsmen who continue to **be the voice of those who don't have one** during these difficult and challenging times.

In our Office of Adult Protective Services, a few months ago, we began to resume face-to-face visits for our high-risk clients and clients where there was a concern for their health, welfare, and / or safety. Reports of suspected abuse, self-neglect and exploitation are extremely serious, and protecting our most vulnerable Illinoisans is paramount to what we do. Resuming face-to-face visits were of utmost importance to confirm information acquired during investigation and continue forward with casework. There were almost 7,000 intakes that were responded to by our Office of Adult Protective Services between July and October. Additionally, our APS colleagues were in overdrive these past months, working on the backload of cases that were kept open longer to assure that reports were properly investigated, and at-risk individuals were properly monitored during the stay at home orders. A huge thank you goes out to APS for modifying processes, and for taking proper precautions while conducting their work.

In closing, I want to reiterate how important it is that we remain cautious and encourage others to follow direction from Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health. As a reminder, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Chicago Local Engagement and Administration (LEA) holds a [weekly webinar series](#), and this week will focus on what providers need to know about vaccines. This is a time like no other in our lives. Please stay in communication with us here at IDoA - whether that is a call to your IDoA program coordinator - or me personally. We are here to help and will do everything in our power to ensure that you have the resources you need to offer services and supports to those you serve.

I hope that all of you enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday, in your own way, and took some time to unwind. Additionally, I hope that in the next few weeks, before [Jolly Old St. Nicholas](#) himself comes to visit, you find some time to enjoy the [Most Wonderful Time of the Year](#) by taking a [Sleigh Ride](#) in a [Winter Wonderland](#) or building your own [Frosty the Snowman](#) in this [Marshmallow World](#) of ours. Whichever you decide, remember to [Deck the Halls](#) safely, and be thankful for all that we have. It has been tough this past year, but I am hopeful that 2021 brings a new sense of hope, promise, and happiness to everyone. I am truly grateful for all the work you are doing and appreciate your continued dedication to **supporting today and planning for tomorrow**. Please continue to stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,



Paula Basta, M.Div.
Director, Illinois Department on Aging

