



### **Tri-County Office on Aging's PANDEMIC PIVOTS**

With older adults at high risk for contracting COVID-19, and with higher than average mortality rate for this population, TCOA took action in March by adjusting the following:

- While TCOA had to close its office to the public per the Governor's Executive Order on March 13, TCOA staff began working remotely, with eligibility assessments, case management appointments, and other services shifting to online platforms or more often via telephone. Staff maintained regular contact with clients, helping to prevent feelings of fear and loneliness while also meeting standards for new and continuing assessments.
- TCOA continued to work with its network of in-home service providers and Direct Care Workforce and integrated a legislatively authorized a much needed \$2 per hour wage increase into contracts and reimbursement processes. These partners offer supports such as assistance with activities of daily living, chore services, prescription medication assistance, and a range of other services that promote the independence and dignity of older adults. Not only did services continue, but TCOA has added 100 new clients to its MI Choice Waiver Program since March, and we now have the agency's highest ever caseload of clients.
- TCOA coordinated delivery of pickup of Personal Protective Equipment to clients as well as Direct Care Workers. This included distributing thousands of hand-made cloth masks as well as over 15,000 surgical/medical masks, 100 gallons of hand sanitizer, and over 500,000 gloves.
- TCOA provided limited grocery assistance with volunteers going shopping for older adults to ensure they had food, cleaning and/or household supplies they needed without leaving their homes. 10 volunteers helped 57 seniors to date.
- TCOA Meals on Wheels home delivered meals program decreased the delivery schedule from up to five days a week down to one day a week in order to minimize contact between volunteers and participants as well as kitchen staff. However, participants continued to get up to a week's worth of meals. The number of individual clients receiving home delivered meals between March and August was 1895. The agency's year to date client total of 2254 individuals is already 380 people higher than all of FY 2019.
- Congregate Senior Dining sites were closed with meal pickups offered at 24 different locations across the tri-county area. The average number of Congregate Dining site participants during this time of year is approximately 625 people receiving 2120 meals per week. At the peak of this service, TCOA served 5,775 meals to 825 people in one week, with a total of 1355 enrolled participants.

- Through funding and coordination from the Aging and Adult Services Agency of the MI Department of Health and Human Services, TCOA was able to deliver or make available specially designed Quarantine boxes containing up to 20 non-perishable food supplies for up to 20 meals. We have distributed over 450 boxes to Q-boxes date. An additional 350 people received produce boxes at least once and in some cases weekly between (June and September.)
- Because of the limited socialization and contact with staff and volunteers resulting from these changes, TCOA launched “Friendly Reassurance Calls.” These calls, which still continue for a percentage of our clients, were conducted by staff and volunteers and served as a mechanism for checking in on seniors who might be at risk of social isolation and who might not otherwise have someone to turn to in an emergency. For some, the phone calls became a high point in the day for both the volunteer and the client. In late March there were 100 volunteers making calls to 2,000 individuals. Those numbers have slowly dropped to 45 volunteers connecting with 1,000 individuals.
- TCOA local evidence-based health and wellness programs were shifted to an online format for those that were sanctioned to do so. That included Chronic Pain PATH, Diabetes PATH, and Powerful Tools for Caregivers. Facilitators offer a “Zoom-orientation” one week in advance to help participants become more familiar with the features and expectations of the workshop. Brain Health and Dementia 101 workshops and consultations also shifted to remote delivery, with online video presentations created.