

Here's to Your Health

Providing Information and Resources
to Improve Your Wellbeing.

A Newsletter from the Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access



The Impact of Loneliness and COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Our Seniors

Many people would love to grow old gracefully. While we hear that eating healthy, exercising, and regular doctor visits help take care of our bodies, what can we do to help our mental health as we age? Experts on aging and mental health advise that taking care of our mental health is just as important as caring for our bodies. Experts recommend that we stay connected to our families, friends, and community to keep our minds healthy as we get older.

The Mental Health Risks of Social Isolation for Seniors

According to Dr. Tobi Abramson, Director of Geriatric Mental Health at New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA), seniors that have low social contact and feelings of loneliness are more likely to experience increased health risks. These risks are greater than those associated with low physical activity and being overweight. Older people experiencing social isolation or feelings of loneliness may have disrupted sleep, more difficulty thinking clearly, and poorer immune systems. Dr. Abramson's insights, along with those of her colleague Dr. Jacqueline Berman, were shared during a virtual presentation to the staffs administering the Facilitated Enrollment Program for New York City's Aged, Blind, and Disabled.

The **COVID-19** pandemic impacts the mental health of older adults even more because we're all asked to "social distance" or physically distance from one another to reduce the spread of the virus. Dr. Abramson explains that changes to daily life in response to Covid-19 can bring on "feeling of uncertainty and worsen underlying risks for depression and anxiety".

Keeping Active and Connected is Key

Physical distancing does not mean giving up human connection. In fact, Dr. Jacqueline Berman, Senior Director of Research at the Department for the Aging, emphasizes the importance of having resources in the community for older adults to reduce their risks of feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Dr. Berman notes that the City's senior population is significant and growing as reflected in recent findings from the American Community Survey (ACS).

The senior mental health information shared in this newsletter is from a July 22, 2020 presentation by NYC Department for the Aging to staffs of the Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Single Stop and Public Health Solutions of the Facilitated Enrollment Program for the Aged, Blind & Disabled, a multi-agency partnership to educate and enroll NYC residents aged 65 and older, visually impaired or disabled in **Medicaid and Medicare Savings Programs.**

The ACS estimates that 1.73 million people 60 years or older lived in the New York City in 2017 and that number is expected to continue growing.

Dr. Berman emphasized the many services that DFTA has for this large senior population, from transportation, home meal delivery, senior employment to mental health care and much more. The various services can be accessed through DFTA’s [website](#) or by calling **Aging Connect** at **212-244-6469**. Aging Connect offers personalized, largely community-based services aimed at keeping the bodies and minds of New York City’s seniors healthy.

As a result of the operational restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, DFTA services are being offered by phone or online (virtually). There is even a service to help familiarize older adults with technology and help them to use tools such as Zoom for video conferencing. As this is a diverse city, services are offered in multiple languages.

| DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Brooklyn | Weil Cornell | 844-999-8746 |
| Bronx | JASA OHEL | 718-365-4044 718-851-6300 |
| Manhattan | SPOP OHEL | 212-787-7120 718-851-6300 |
| Staten Island | Weil Cornell | 844-999-8746 |
| Queens | CAPE/Commonpoint OHEL | 718-224-0566 718-851-6300 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aging Connect 212-244-6469 ▪ 1-888-NYC-WELL or https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/ | | |
| Source: Presentation from T. Abramson & J. Berman of DFTA | | |

Q&A ABOUT MEDICAID DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Could I lose my Medicaid coverage if I forget to renew it during the COVID-19 emergency?

No. Everyone with Medicaid coverage on or after March 18, 2020 through October 31, 2020, will keep their coverage unless they cancel it or move out of New York State during the COVID emergency. You do not need to take any action to keep your coverage.

I have been unable to provide proof of income and resources to my local district during the COVID-19 emergency. What should I do?

Contact your local district or call **347-396-6705**. They will allow you to attest to much of the information that determines your Medicaid eligibility over phone or email, instead of providing documentation. You can attest to the following:

- Your identity
- Your household Income
- Your Resources/Assets (if applicable)
- Your Retirement accounts and annuities (you may be required to provide proof at renewal)
- Your Social Security benefit amount

Q&A ABOUT MEDICAID DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

I have been unable to provide proof of my identity or immigration status for application/renewal during the COVID-19 emergency. What should I do?

If you are otherwise eligible, your Medicaid coverage will start or continue. You will be granted a 90-day-period to provide the necessary documents. If the COVID-19 emergency is still in effect at the end of the 90-day-period, and supporting documents are still needed, your coverage will be extended for a second 90-day period. Visit [NY State Department of Health](#) for more info.

CENSUS 2020

Why is the Census Important?

Money for your Community

The federal government uses the results of the Census to determine how \$675 billion is distributed to cities and states. The money is used to fund important programs and services we rely on, such as:

- Healthcare (including Medicaid, Medicare Part B, and hospitals)
- Housing (affordable housing)
- Transportation
- Education

Legislative Representation

The Census also determines how many representatives a state has in the U.S. House of Representatives along with how local and state district lines are drawn.

How to Make Sure You're Counted! Complete the 2020 Census:

- Visit: www.my2020census.gov
- Call: 844-330-2020 (English). Find phone numbers for other languages [HERE](#)

65 or older or Disabled?

Call **347-396-4705** for free help with Medicaid enrollment

