

March 18, 2020



## **SVCOA Operational Update Regarding Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Attention community stakeholders:

Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging (SVCOA), which provides essential services to older Vermonters and younger disabled individuals throughout Bennington and Rutland counties, has implemented the following programmatic changes as precautionary measures to protect agency clients, staff, volunteers, contractors etc., as well as the greater community, from potential exposure to novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Additionally, these measures have been established to ensure that SVCOA, to the best of its ability, can continue to serve its clients as usual. SVCOA is committed to maintaining service levels to its clients and remaining strong as a community resource during these challenging times.

### **General Agency Operations**

- As of this memo, SVCOA's Bennington and Rutland offices are closed to public visitors, including clients. If a client, community partner, service representative etc. needs to contact the agency, they are asked to do so via telephone or email.
  - For SVCOA's HelpLine, call: 1-800-642-5119 or 802-786-5990
  - To contact the Rutland office, call: 802-786-5990
  - To contact the Bennington office, call: 802-442-5436
  - To contact SVCOA by email, send to: [infoandassistance@svcoa.net](mailto:infoandassistance@svcoa.net)
- All SVCOA staff and volunteers have ceased home visits to clients. Services to clients will continue to be provided to the greatest extent possible using various technologies and alternative methods.
- SVCOA staff are required to conduct all meetings with community partners via telephone or videoconferencing.
- Services to clients that are provided through third-party contract organizations may be affected. Questions relative to these services should be directed to these specific organizations.
- Similar to many community organizations, SVCOA has been continuously adjusting its internal operational policies and protocols for the last few weeks based on updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), and Governor Scott. These adjustments will continue regularly as additional guidance is provided.

### **Case Management and Options Counseling Services**

- SVCOA Case Management and Options Counseling Services, like other SVCOA services, have ceased home visit operations, and will continue to provide services to clients via telephone, email, videoconferencing etc.

Anyone with questions specific to SVCOA's Case Management and Options Counseling Services, please contact Dana McMahan at 802-772-7829 or Jennifer Plouffe at 802-772-7861.

### **Nutrition – Meals on Wheels and Community Meals**

- On March 16, 2020, Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) advised all senior centers and meal sites to close effective immediately. Several of these congregate meal locations, including Bennington Café in Bennington and Godnick Center in Rutland, are still offering to-go / drive-through meal pickup for older Vermonters, a service that has been approved by DOH and DAIL. For a current list of all community meal sites offering the to-go option, please call 2-1-1.
- SVCOA's Home Delivered Meals Program (Meals on Wheels) will continue to operate and serve clients under the following revised protocol:
  - Meal delivery drivers will be screened regularly using the Vermont Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) screening tool, and will be exercising a number of precautions during meal delivery, including wearing personal protective equipment such as gloves, maintaining safe distancing from clients, regularly using sanitizer etc. Meal preparation practices also include a number of stringent precautions, as well as proper screening of meal preparation workers.
  - SVCOA is also continually identifying current clients who may need to receive meal delivery through adjusted protocol to limit potential risks to both the Meals on Wheels delivery driver and the client.
  - Anyone who wishes to sign up for Meals on Wheels should call 802-786-5990.
  - All clients who are new and are signing up for Meals on Wheels will be screened using the most current Vermont Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) screening tool. Should anyone answer yes to the following questions, clients will be provided meals using the following procedure:
    - Meals will be delivered once a week (7 meals)
    - Volunteer driver will ring the doorbell, leave meals at the doorstep and will proceed to wait in their vehicle to confirm that the client has received the meals
    - If the client does not come to the door within 15 minutes, the volunteer will bring the meals back to facility (this is to prevent any foodborne illness outbreaks)

Anyone with questions specific to SVCOA's Nutrition Program, please contact Courtney Anderson at 802-772-7828.

### **Additional Information**

Should anyone have any questions regarding any information provided in this update, please contact SVCOA at 802-786-5990. Thanks in advance for your understanding of these programmatic adjustments and precautionary measures. Please feel free to share this communication as desired.

Sincerely,

Chris Adams - Development & Communications Director  
Dana McMahon - Rutland County Aging Services Director  
Jennifer Plouffe - Bennington County Aging Services Director  
Rosemary Greene - Business Operations Director  
Courtney Anderson - Nutrition Director

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