

May 2020

REP. KATE HOGAN'S SENIOR NEWS



Innovations to Health Care Delivery During COVID-19

We're living through an unprecedented and challenging time. I hope that you, and those you care about, are healthy and safe.

Throughout these tough times, our state and local governments are stepping up in different ways to meet the challenge of stopping the spread of the virus and mitigating the effects of the pandemic. Those efforts have included new ways of delivering health care. For examples, I'd like to point out a few health care delivery innovations available in our district.

Some of you may have experienced telehealth, or the delivery of health care via audio, visual or instant messaging/online chat connection. If so, I hope the experience was a good one and could perhaps be used in the future to eliminate unnecessary trips or waits for doctor visits. Telehealth can be delivered by your regular doctor, in which case you may be required to sign up for their office's secure technology platform. It can also be done informally, such as when some senior centers offer their regular health and fitness classes via video.

Technology is being used in other ways, too. Governor Baker activated Massachusetts' 2-1-1 service to offer real-time COVID-19 information, resources and referrals. The State also partnered with Buoy Health to deliver a COVID-19 Web App, which residents can use to screen for signs of illness and connect to a health care provider via telehealth.

The Pharmacy Outreach Program, a joint initiative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, promotes understanding and accessibility in senior medication management – and it is only a free phone call away. Licensed pharmacists, case managers, and students work with seniors on Medicare (or Medicare-eligible) and their caregivers towards the goal of helping you afford your medication and understand just how to take it and why. This includes education on strategies and programs that can help you cut prescription costs and a “medication check-up,” where you can review your prescriptions with a pharmacist. The program is available through a toll-free hotline, appointments at the MCPHS campus, and in community outreach settings. Call 1-866-633-1617 to get started.

Our shut downs and social distancing periods can make seniors feel even more isolated than normal. Those in nursing homes and assisted living are no longer receiving visitors. Due to their increased risk, many seniors are practicing social distancing, even from their own families. To combat this, the Maynard COA has been contacting seniors individually and offering wellness checks. Some towns have also been connecting volunteer phone pals with seniors to provide friendly chats on a regular basis.

Of course, the Maynard Council on Aging is an amazing town resource for helping keep seniors and their families healthy and well. Most senior centers curtailed their regular activities during the pandemic, but remained available as resources to their communities. In Maynard, the COA offers van transportation for essential purposes and the Police Department is also offering grocery and pharmacy deliveries.

During these unprecedented times, it has been imperative to keep people at home for their health and safety. When we're on the other side of the pandemic, I hope we're able to look at the innovations that got us through and adapt them to the needs of people who remain unable, or who may not want, to leave their homes.

Contact Rep. Hogan:

If you need assistance or would like to contact me, please email me at Kate.Hogan@mahouse.gov or call me at (617) 722-2199.

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