



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Council on Aging
COVID-19 Message
February 23, 2021**

Important Message:

Due to a COVID exposure, Meals on Wheels, In-Home Services, and Foot Care is suspended until Monday, March 1, 2021.

Transportation services are still operating.

Everyone stay safe and healthy.

Kind Regards,

Denneen Smith
Executive Director



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Council on Aging
COVID-19 Message
October 29, 2020**

Hello Friends,

I wanted to share some info that I learned in meeting with the Health Department today. COVID cases are currently at an all time high in our county. Currently there are 12 folks hospitalized in isolation with COVID and they are planning to open another isolation unit.

Over the course of the past three weeks, we have seen average case numbers in our 4-county region (Antrim, Otsego, Emmet, and Charlevoix) consistently on the rise. In the past week we saw an average of a little over 26 positive cases per day. Just yesterday we saw 51. There is no sign yet of us peaking, plateauing, and certainly, not declining. The worst is yet to come.

Contract tracing reveals that there is definite community spread, meaning that people are contracting the virus with no notion of how they got it. About 40% of people contracted it from social gatherings, essentially meaning that they had dinner or hung out with non-household members.

Friendship Centers of Emmet County has decided that we are going to pause all services for 14 days (30 days for in-home services) minimum, effective Monday, November 2. We are hoping during the pause, the numbers will peak, plateau, and ultimately decrease. We serve the most vulnerable population in relation to this virus. The health and safety of our seniors and staff is most important.

Please! Everyone stay safe and healthy.

Kind Regards,

Denneen Smith
Executive Director



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Council on Aging
COVID-19 Message
(in Regards to Meals on Wheels Menu)
October 9, 2020**

Some of you have reached out to us asking why we are not producing a menu for Meals on Wheels. Friendship Centers works with local suppliers to secure supplies that we need in order to prepare and deliver meals. This includes not only the raw food, but the meal trays we put the food in, the plastic bags we deliver the meals in and the cleaning supplies we use to sanitize our kitchen and equipment. If you have taken a recent trip to the grocery store, you will likely see shelves that are not as full as they were before the pandemic. Our suppliers are encountering the same issues but at a higher level due to the quantity of supply that is required. This means that we are not guaranteed to receive what we order. As a result, this makes developing and publishing a menu almost impossible for us. We realize that some other agencies are continuing to publish menus but, in most cases, these agencies prepare far less meals per day than we do and require significantly less supply. We would like to be able to publish a menu and will likely return to doing so when supplies become more consistent.

It is important to understand that Meals on Wheels is a need-based program that is not for the sole purpose of convenience. Clients receive Meals on Wheels because they are isolated, require the nutrition that the meals provide and the security of a daily visit. Although supply has been inconsistent, we continue to develop meals that are nutritional and that the vast majority of our clients can enjoy. In the past, we have been able to be very accommodating with allowing clients to pick and choose which meals to receive. Some clients ended up receiving far less meals than they accepted, causing us to pause to consider if they enrolled in service because they had a need.

There are many moving parts in providing home delivered meal service. We remain committed to providing high quality meals and a friendly visit to seniors who need them in Emmet County. Thank you so much for your understanding and the unparalleled support that we have received.

Warmly,

Lisa Hoig

Lisa Hoig
Meals on Wheels Director



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Council on Aging
COVID-19 Message
July 27, 2020**

Like other employers, FCEC is struggling to cope with the continued spread of COVID-19 in Emmet County and throughout the Nation. Americans are traveling into our area from all over and bringing a higher incidence of the disease to our doorstep. Our county continues to have newly diagnosed cases each day. At the same time, we are trying to restart some of our most important client services. We are committed to balancing the need for services and risk mitigation as we assess the provision of services.

Our region, Region 6, is currently in Phase 5. For the general population, Phase 5 permits small congregate gatherings with appropriate safety precautions (face coverings and social distancing). Most businesses have reopened with strict mitigation measures and travel is permitted. Everyone who ventures out in public should be wearing masks when indoors and outside, when social distancing cannot be relied upon. All guidance recommends that those aged 60 and over or those who have underlying medical conditions should continue to shelter in place. We recognize that strict precautions must be taken to prevent spread to high-risk individuals as we engage with the community-at-large and then report to work with the most high-risk population.

If a Friendship Centers employee were to contract COVID-19, it would trigger a complete shut-down of operations for potentially several weeks. This would mean cessation of Meals on Wheels deliveries, which would have serious consequences for highly vulnerable home-bound seniors.

Concern for our clients and employees, as well as keeping our workplace free from the virus, drives our decisions. As such, we are currently providing home delivered meals and limited bus service with enhanced mitigation protocols. We are making plans to aid prioritized clients based on need for respite and personal care services. We are assessing our ability to safely provide foot care clinics. In partnership with MANNA we are providing fresh produce box distribution to seniors as long as supply continues. We are providing social work services, Senior Essential Needs and assessments via telephone. Senior Project Fresh is underway and we have distributed coupons for seniors to use at local farm markets. Many stores continue to have special hours for seniors to shop. While we have furloughed two-thirds of our staff during this time, the other one-third has worked all along to provide home delivered meals and address individual senior needs.

While we continue to navigate these unprecedented times, we recognize that the manner in which we conduct business has to change in order to address the ongoing issues surrounding COVID-19. Staff reporting to work comply with a daily health screen, including temperature monitoring before work and wear masks. Clients accessing services are required to comply with health pre-screens and wear masks as well. We have developed and implemented a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan that includes primary considerations related to the spread of the virus and additional training for staff.

We are placed in the awkward and unusual position of defining a framework of personal behavior on the part of employees and clients. These measures are solely for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of our clients, our employees and our workplace.

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**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
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COVID-19 Message
July 27, 2020**

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In order to mitigate the spread of the disease it is important to remember the following:

1. If you are sick, stay home. Do not leave your residence.
2. If you have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider or local health department for assistance and to seek testing as soon as possible.
3. If you have been in close contact (within 6 feet without PPE for more than 10 minutes) with someone who has a confirmed COVID-19 infection, you are required to quarantine for 14 days from your last contact with them.
4. We are asking staff and clients to indicate situations where they will have/have house guests who have traveled to northern Michigan for vacation or planning to travel out of the area. This information is necessary in order to consider risk of exposure during travel.
5. All individuals, whether full-time or seasonal residents of Emmet County, and visitors must adhere to the required safety precautions while in business establishments such as stores, bars and restaurants including face coverings, social distancing and capacity limits posted at business entrances.
6. Continue to adhere to maintaining 6-feet of distance with those outside your immediate household, and avoid crowding on outdoor trails and in recreational areas.

Due to the continued urging for those over age 60 and those with underlying medical conditions, to continue to shelter in place until we reach Phase 6, our buildings remain closed to the public. Our best estimate to restore congregate meals and activities is 60 days after we reach Phase 6. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor and assess services based on our ability to provide service safely. As previously stated, concern for our clients, employees and workplace drive our decisions.

If you have a need or have questions, feel free to reach out to us!

Phone: (231) 347-3211

Email: denneen@emmetcoa.org

Facebook: Friendship Centers of Emmet County, Council on Aging



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Council on Aging
COVID-19 Message
06/10/2020**

In Michigan, adults age 60 and over account for 37 percent of the COVID-19 cases and 87 percent of the deaths. Because this population is at high-risk, the Aging & Adult Services Agency (AASA) at Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) issued guidance on reopening programs and services for older adults age 60 and over and vulnerable individuals with underlying health conditions.

The guidance provides a phased approach toward re-engagement for all individuals with increased mitigation standards for those in the high-risk category. **MDHHS has made it clear that those in the high-risk category are “Safer at Home” until there is a treatment or vaccine.** The recommendation for those over 60 is to only venture out when *absolutely necessary* and then with appropriate precautions; wear a face covering and wash hands/use hand sanitizer or gloves. Make sure that you are cleaning and sanitizing frequently touched surfaces at home. If you are feeling sick or under the weather, stay home! Limit your contact with those outside of your home. Practice distancing from others at a minimum of 6 feet apart.

Friendship Centers of Emmet County continues to assess and re-assess as the State opens regions with less reports of the virus. Our desire is two-fold; keep our seniors safe and healthy and provide information and opportunities when safe and appropriate. Based on the recommendations from MDHHS, we will not reopen for congregate meal service until 60 days after we enter in to Phase 6. In the meantime, we are planning a strategic and careful course forward as we re-engage in providing services outside of our building.

There are many areas of consideration as we look to re-engage. The virus and our ability to secure PPE for staff will help us determine final decisions. We are required to have COVID-19 reopening plans that safely outline our strategy to protect seniors and staff. We must be certain that staff have the appropriate protections in order to not become infected or further spread the disease to seniors. We must be certain that we have ample and appropriate cleaning products to protect seniors from risk of infection. We must make accommodations for staff who are over 60 or those with underlying health conditions, as it is currently medically inadvisable for them to return to direct service work. We continue to distribute Meals on Wheels daily, so we need to be careful that our reopening plan does not compromise staff who provide this necessary service.

We are working diligently behind the scenes to chart a course that is safe for everyone involved. We desperately miss our seniors and are doing our very best to restore necessary services in a safe manner. Continue to check our website or Facebook page for updates. We appreciate your understanding as we try to make decisions in the best interest of seniors and Friendship Centers.



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Community Mitigation Strategy
03/18/2020**

As a result of the unfolding events related to COVID-19, Friendship Centers of Emmet County's Community Mitigation Strategy continues to evolve as we assess and re-assess the safety of the seniors of Emmet County and Friendship Centers staff. Slowing the curve of the spread of COVID-19 is our top priority as we continue to monitor the needs of our most vulnerable. Compliance with social distancing is crucial.

Beginning 03/18/2020, in addition to our previous Community Mitigation Strategy dated 03/12/2020 (below), the following is in effect until April 06, 2020:

- Curb side meal pick up at all centers is suspended.
- All In-Home Services are suspended. In-Home Services staff will be contacting clients to determine imminent needs and issues will be addressed on a case by case basis.
- All foot care appointments are suspended.
- All in-home assessments for services are suspended. We will be contacting clients to complete regularly scheduled assessments via telephone.
- All transportation is currently suspended. We will be reaching out to scheduled riders to determine imminent needs and issues will be addressed on a case by case basis.
- All Retired Senior Volunteer Program volunteer services are suspended.

At this time, we will continue Meals on Wheels deliveries while adhering to social distancing guidance. We are taking every measure to keep our seniors and staff safe and healthy.

Friendship Centers telephones will continue to be answered, Monday-Friday from 8:30am-4:00pm. The main phone number is (231) 347-3211.

Friendship Centers of Emmet County will be calling seniors who are listed in our data system to complete wellness checks via telephone. We will do our best to assess imminent needs and issues will be addressed on a case by case basis. If you are concerned about a senior who lives in Emmet County, please call us at (231) 347-3211. We will do our very best to reach out to them as we conduct wellness checks via telephone.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we all work together to keep our community healthy and safe.



**Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Community Mitigation Strategy
03/12/2020**

Friendship Centers of Emmet County received interim recommendations from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for COVID-19 on late in the evening on March 11, 2020.

Based on the interim recommendations, the following is in effect IMMEDIATELY and UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE:

ALL Friendship Centers buildings (Petoskey, Brutus and Pellston) are CLOSED to the public. We will continue to serve seniors for the purpose of social work, MMAP and foot care by appointment ONLY.

ALL activities are SUSPENDED.

Congregate Meals

Congregate meals will be available for CURB SIDE PICK-UP ONLY. Seniors wishing to get a meal should call one business day in advance to reserve a meal. Meals can be picked up at the Petoskey Center, Monday-Friday from 11:30am-12:30pm. Meals can be picked up at Huber (Brutus) Center, Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:30am-12:30pm. Meals can be picked up at the Pellston Center, Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30am-12:30pm. Suggested meal donations remain \$3.00 per meal.

Meals on Wheels

The last day for daily, hot meal service will be Friday, March 13, 2020. Staff will contact current meal recipients to determine need for once weekly delivery of frozen meals. Suggested meal donations remain \$3.00 per meal.

Friendship Centers staff will be following an enhanced protocol of sanitization to mitigate the possibility of the spread of germs.

Transportation

Transportation will continue with no more than 6 people scheduled per ride. Transit will only be for the purpose of medical appointments or grocery shopping/prescription pick-up. Friendship Centers staff will be following an enhanced protocol of sanitization to mitigate the possibility of the spread of germs. Friendship Centers will call riders prior to scheduled pick-up to conduct a pre-health screen. Riders who have had a cough or fever over 100.4 within the last 48 hours are asked to travel for the purpose of essential doctor's appointments ONLY. Rider will be transported alone and increased measures of protection and sanitization will be implemented. Friendship Centers reserves the right to deny service upon arrival based on cough or fever concerns.

In-Home Services

Services will continue for qualified seniors. Friendship Centers will call clients prior to scheduled appointment to conduct a pre-health screen. Service to clients who have had a cough or fever over 100.4 within 48 hours will be postponed. Friendship Centers reserves the right to deny service upon arrival to client home based on cough or fever concerns. Friendship Centers staff will follow enhanced protocol of sanitization to mitigate the possibility of the spread of germs with appropriate disposal of personal protection equipment.

Health Services

Social work and foot care services are available by appointment ONLY. Foot care clients will be called prior to scheduled appointment to conduct pre-health screen. Service to clients who have had a cough or fever over 100.4 will be postponed. Friendship Centers staff will be following an enhanced protocol of protection and sanitization to mitigate the possibility of the spread of germs. Friendship Centers reserves the right to deny service upon arrival based on cough or fever concerns.

RSVP

ALL volunteers who provide volunteer time at Friendship Centers buildings are NOT to report to centers. Volunteers are encouraged to make their own decisions about providing volunteer time within the