

COAST Recommendations for the Reopening of Barnstable County COAs

Purpose:

Cape COAST (Councils on Aging Serving Together) is providing these recommendations to assist Cape municipal governing authorities in making decisions regarding resuming operations at Barnstable County Councils on Aging. COAST understands the need to adhere to any state guidelines and best practices which may be released regarding operations at COA facilities during the COVID public health crisis. COAST further understands that final decisions are to be made by municipal governing authorities following the Governor's orders and DPH guidelines, and negative trends in COVID health data may result in future adjustments to these recommendations.

Recommendations:

Whereas there is an elevated and serious risk from COVID-19 for older persons and people with underlying health conditions, Cape COAST is proactively making the following recommendations for planning relative to the reopening of Councils on Aging in Barnstable County to protect the safety of those we serve:

Preparations

- Review mass.gov Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces regarding social distancing, hygiene protocols, staffing and operations, and cleaning and disinfecting
- Review with town officials possible changes/modifications to facility, and supplies needed, for employees before employees begin working
- Review with town officials protocol for employee health screenings
- Review staff capacity limitations with town officials
- Develop staffing plan in accordance with mass.gov standards and recommendations made by town officials
- Develop a plan to track all those in the building in the event that contact tracing is needed due to exposure
- Create contingency plans should staff become sick
- Develop clear facility and vehicle sanitization plans

Soft Opening

- Employees begin working in the office following town guidelines which may include staggered scheduled, daily screenings, social distancing, facial coverings, and 25% capacity limits
- All regional COA offices should be answering phones live in some capacity by July 1st, or as determined by local officials
- COAs will continue to prioritize the coordination of essential services including transportation, food needs, medical appointments, pharmacy pick-ups, and outreach support
- Identify critical services to introduce first, i.e. transportation, tax preparation, footcare, etc. establishing safety protocols for each service to review with town officials and community partners, i.e. participants waiting in car until called, one entrance and one exit, conduct health screening of individuals upon entry, taking temperatures, escorting participant to appointment within building, etc.
- Assess possible changes/modifications to facility, and supplies needed, before limited services can be provided and review with town officials before public has access to facility which may include restricting traffic flow, specified entrances and exits, increased signage, strict sign-in policies,
- Review and assess programs and activities to determine which, if any, might be able to appropriately transition to an alternative online platform, being mindful of the need to stay connected with those who are unable to utilize technology platforms

Limited Opening

- Open to individual critical appointment-type services on a limited basis following approved procedures and protocol which may include plexi-glass screens, traffic
- All regional COA offices should be open for limited critical appointments in some capacity by August 1st, or as determined by local officials
- Continue to offer programs and activities utilizing online platforms, social media, and cable access television stations
- Assess use of volunteers reviewing any such activity with town officials before implementing, and communicating policy with volunteers
- Assess possible small group activities (groups with a maximum size of 10) that can adhere to required social distancing protocol to introduce first, establishing safety protocol for each service to review with town officials

Expanded Opening

- Resume small group activities on a limited basis, limiting number of activities occurring at a time, and limiting groups to a maximum size of 10, keeping in mind the need to ensure compliance with all required safety protocols
- All regional COA offices should be open for small group activities on a limited basis in some capacity by September 1st, or as determined by local officials
- Continue to educate older persons of appropriate safety measures when stay at home orders are modified, and the need to remain vigilant regarding exposure
- COA activities and gatherings of more than 10 individuals should be prohibited until such time as the risk of COVID transmission has diminished

Unrestricted Opening

- ***This phase will not be permitted until health officials release sector-specific protocol for older adults, especially those at higher risk, which may not be until Phase 4 of the Reopening Massachusetts plan***
- COA activities and gatherings of more than 10 individuals should be prohibited until such time as the risk of COVID transmission has diminished