

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE May 1, 2020

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Office of Community Care Programming – Response to COVID-19 and Planning for Re-Opening (WIC and Senior Services)**

In light of the significant interruption to the operations within the City of Dallas and community as a whole, the Office of Community Care (OCC) has transitioned the service delivery models for its direct services and worked to coordinate with partners to understand programmatic adjustments. The goal of these adjustments has been to maintain service delivery to clients to the extent possible while maintaining a safe environment for staff and clients. OCC understands that our service offerings are critical to our clients, who are often among the community's most vulnerable, and the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 situation are likely exacerbating the already high demand on social services programming. As the community begins planning the reopening of public spaces, the OCC team is also reviewing its operations to determine how to open and expand service delivery in a way that ensures the safety of clients and staff.

WIC Programming

Programming Transition During COVID-19

Beginning in mid-March, the WIC program began closing its clinics to limit client and staff interaction. As the local agency responsible for administering WIC in Dallas County, Dallas WIC is constantly working in close collaboration with the State Department of Health and Human Services (HHSC), which activated a functionality known as “disaster mode” enabling the program to be able to deliver services without requiring in-person appointments and to administer WIC benefits. Additionally, HHSC made adjustments to the foods available for WIC clients to purchase to ensure that WIC clients have more options when shopping. Locally, these changes enabled Dallas WIC to deliver services via telephone and issue benefits via mail. Dallas WIC has also, in limited circumstances, allowed for staff to pick up benefits from local WIC clinics that remain closed, which can reduce the wait required for these clients who may have expired benefits or new clients seeking to access benefits.

Strategy for Re-Opening

A limited number of staff began returning to working on-site, with strict schedules and controlled access, which will expand the capacity for “drive-up/walk-up” service delivery. By Monday, May 4th, there will be staff on-site at each WIC clinic, with the exception of

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two clinics that are located within other facilities, while other staff will continue working from home. Dallas WIC will continue to coordinate with HHSC and will continue to deliver services using this combined model of telephone consultations and “drive-up/walk-up” benefits issuance and benefits issuance by mail. A typical Dallas WIC clinic includes a reception area and waiting area, which could lend to disease spread, so prior to fully re-opening, WIC will look to begin implementation of a phased model and will continue to coordinate with City leadership and HHSC to determine when to open the clinics to clients on a limited, scheduled basis. In the interim, Dallas WIC is exploring options that can be implemented within the clinics to support social and spatial distancing and to establish physical protective barriers where appropriate.

Senior Services Programming

Similarly, Senior Services programming has maintained operations, including casework and referrals and through our Senior Services Help Line, which has been consistently staffed and supported throughout the crisis as it is on a regular basis. Though the Help Line has remained active, many of our typical referrals have not provided certain services, leading staff to expect a backlog of demand for things like minor home repairs, lawn care help, and other services. In addition to the Help Line, the Senior Services team manages several program contracts.

- Senior Dental Program – Texas A&M School of Dentistry has severely limited access to dental clinic facilities and are only administering emergency dental services at this time. The School’s Dean has appointed a COVID-19 Task Force to make recommendations on how and when to transition service offerings, but expects to maintain the current limitations for the immediate term.
- Senior Employment Program – Programming was suspended by the provider, Mountain View College, due to reliance on in-person service delivery.
- Senior Ombudsman Program – The Ombudsman Program, administered by the Senior Source, temporarily suspended visits to nursing homes and assisted living facilities and will rely on the guidance from the federal government and state ombudsman office on how and when to resume these services. In the interim, the team continues to engage residents, families and facilities via telephone and continues to receive resident complaints by phone. Additionally, program staff are consulting with residents and their families via phone on their rights and sharing information on COVID-19 with residents and facilities.
- Senior Transportation Program – The program has been working over the last several weeks to transition clients to the newly-authorized DART-administered program. This transition was underway and is not a result of COVID-19. Service delivery has continued throughout this transition, and the current provider has limited rides to a single participant, rather than shared rides, and is cleaning and

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disinfecting vehicles between each rider. Similarly, DART has made adjustments has updated operational protocols for its Riders Assistance Program to increase the frequency of cleanings.

Staff will provide additional information as updates become available. Please contact me, should you have any additional questions.



Jessica Galleshaw
Director, Office of Community Care

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