

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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How Older Adults in Iowa are Being Helped by COVID Recovery Iowa

(DES MOINES, Iowa) - From the beginning, we've all heard about how much COVID-19 is impacting older adults. But those statistics refer to people who have contracted the virus. The impact is just as significant on our older population who have *not* been stricken with COVID-19.

"Many older people are feeling lonely, isolated and scared," said Michelle DeMarie, older adults specialty coordinator for COVID Recovery Iowa, a FEMA-sponsored resource for all Iowans who are affected in any way by COVID-19. "One of the most profound feelings is that they are losing precious time with their families, especially those who have grandchildren."

People who work with older adults are also struggling. "Workers in care facilities are having to provide the regular daily care that they've always done but also be there for them emotionally, since most of them are not able to see their families and in-house social activities may be very limited."

Karen Anderson is one of those workers. An activities assistant at a long-term care facility in eastern Iowa, Karen said all staff, no matter their previous role, have become part of the activities staff.

"It got harder and harder to keep residents busy and active," Anderson said. "We couldn't do group exercise. We play cards and games with them, do manicures and do their hair, wearing masks and goggles." Anderson's staff is helping connect to their families through FaceTime, Zoom and Skype.

COVID Recovery Iowa offers numerous ways to support people in the state who are struggling. One of those efforts, through a specialized group of counselors that DeMarie advises, is striving to help residential care facilities teach their residents how to use social media such as Facebook, FaceTime and Zoom, in order to connect to their families and the outer world.

Older adults who have been isolated from friends and families for a long time may just need someone to listen. Free and anonymous phone-based counseling is available to ALL Iowans through COVID Recovery Iowa. Call the Iowa Warm Line, 844-775-9276; to connect with a COVID Recovery Iowa counselor.

COVIDrecoveryiowa.org

1-844-775-WARM

Free, confidential counseling,
group activities, support groups
and resources for all Iowans

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COVID Recovery Iowa is also working to launch numerous programs and activities for the elderly and disabled populations in Iowa. These include, but are not limited to:

- Tutorials for staff and elderly population on digital programs such as Zoom, FaceTime and Grandpads. Access to technology is often a barrier for elderly and disabled people, DeMarie said, and her staff is working on ways to help gain access.
- Providing suggestions for tools for Alzheimer’s and memory care patients, including the digital photo frame application Aura; “fidget” toys or quilts and sensory pouches. These tools help calm and soothe patients, as well as connect them to loved ones.
- Live stream concerts and sing-alongs.
- Opportunity for sharing special talents, such as music and art
- Craft activities such as seasonal decorations and frames for family photos.
- Referrals to other agencies and resources in their communities, where appropriate.

COVID Recovery Iowa offers FREE, confidential virtual counseling to ANY Iowan who is struggling with COVID-19. For more information, and updates about our programs, visit COVIDRecoveryIowa.org.

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Caption for attached photo:

“Older adults in Iowa feel very isolated due to COVID-19. Our free phone-based counseling can be someone to talk to,” says Marie DeMarie, specialty coordinator for COVID Recovery Iowa.