



**\*\*\*MEDIA ALERT\*\*\***

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### **Orange County's Office on Aging Launches Toolkit to Help Older Adults Safely Reenter Public Spaces Following Isolation**

*The Older Adults Programming: COVID-19 Resource Toolkit offers guidance and tools to help programs for older adults successfully resume in-person services while supporting staff and volunteers in their work.*

**SANTA ANA, Calif.** (September 13, 2021) – Orange County's (OC) Office on Aging launched its online Older Adults Programming: COVID-19 Resource Toolkit (Toolkit) today to support senior centers and community-based organizations safely care for older adults who are re-emerging following a period of isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Older Adults Programming: COVID-19 Resource Toolkit contains guidance and information on various topics, including:

- Recognizing signs of mental health needs
- Appropriate social skills for safe interactions
- Helping seniors with technology barriers
- Grief and loss support
- Caregiver support
- Adult Day Programs & Residential Care guidance
- Self-care tips for staff and volunteers

The OC Office on Aging recognized the need for a Toolkit over the summer when senior centers and other older adult-serving programs throughout Orange County began to reopen and return to pre-pandemic offerings. Understanding the negative and long-term consequences of isolation, the OC Office on Aging began building the Toolkit to address older adults' hesitation, fear, mental and physical decline, as well as safety for older adults and the staff and volunteers who care for them.

"Isolation due to the pandemic has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of our older adults," said Chairman Andrew Do, First District Supervisor for the Orange County Board of Supervisors. "Their engagement back into the community is more critical now than ever. The resource toolkit offers excellent guidance for those caring for older adults, including older adults themselves, on reentering the community in safe and healthy ways during this period of the pandemic."

To assist in the development and launch of the Older Adults Programming: COVID-19 Resource Toolkit, the OC Office on Aging assembled an Orange County Senior Re-Emergence Steering



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Committee. The Committee members – comprised of key stakeholders from the OC Office on Aging, city and nonprofit providers, and other experts – served as advisors; shared and reviewed content for the Toolkit; and tested the Toolkit, all with a health equity lens.

“We have been compelled to address the service delivery for older adults in an equitable manner during the pandemic,” said Mario Ortega, CEO of [Abrazar](#) and Co-Chair of the Orange County Senior Re-Emergence Steering Committee. “Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, community and senior centers have been critical in supporting the needs of our most vulnerable community members. We have all been innovative, creative, and resilient in modifying our service delivery to assist our community. This Toolkit is a continuation of these efforts. We want to provide a centralized resource for service providers to assist older adults in Orange County to access resources and continue to heal.”

Members of the Orange County Senior Re-Emergence Steering Committee are as follows:

- Abrazar
- Access California Services
- Age Well Senior Services
- Alzheimer's Orange County
- Asian American Senior Citizens Service Center
- California Department of Veterans Affairs
- Costa Mesa Community Services
- Council on Aging
- La Habra Family Resource Center/Institute for Healthcare Advancement
- Meals on Wheels Orange County
- OC Veterans & Military Families Collaborative
- Office on Aging/OC Community Services
- Senior Citizens Advisory Council (SCAC)
- Seal Beach City Planning Commission/Seal Beach Leisure World

To access the Toolkit, please visit <https://www.officeonaging.ocgov.com/covid-19/resource-toolkit>. For specific questions regarding the Older Adults Programming: COVID-19 Resource Toolkit, email [OoACOV19Questions@occr.ocgov.com](mailto:OoACOV19Questions@occr.ocgov.com) or call (800) 510-2020.

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**Orange County's Office on Aging** serves as the lead advocate for approximately 600,000 seniors 60 years and older residing in the county, with a specific focus on low-income ethnic minorities. As an advocate, the OC Office on Aging is responsible for understanding the needs of Orange County's older adults and utilizing the federal funding and programs available to meet those requirements. In addition, the OC Office on Aging is charged with directing or participating in coalitions to drive new ideas, services, and legislation in support of Older Adults. Finally, the department is to take a proactive view and help those in the senior services industry, public and private, plan for the future needs of this populace.