



RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Seniors

Recommendation Number: (20200429-03A) COVID-19 and Resources for Older Adults

WHEREAS, the Commission on Seniors was created to advise the City Council on issues related to the quality of life for seniors in Austin; and

WHEREAS, older adults are the most at-risk population due to the COVID-19 crisis with recent data from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) showing that of confirmed COVID-19 fatalities in Texas to date, 76% were Texans 65 and older ; and

WHEREAS, the City is using a portion of its budget reserves to assist residents, including through the Relief in a State of Emergency (RISE) Fund for direct aid programs and health care services and related equipment; and

WHEREAS, the City will need to direct additional resources in the current budget and the FY 2020-21 budget to provide relief in the form of health aid, housing, food aid, and other forms of assistance to those whose health and finances have been put in jeopardy due to the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 crisis has caused the City, service providers, and the private sector to innovate in providing needed services to older adults, including online recreation and socialization programming from Parks and Recreation, no charge home delivery of groceries from HEB, wellness calls to seniors from providers and volunteers, collaboration between the health and social services sectors, and many other examples; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 warnings directed at older adults have resulted in a shrinking of the volunteer pool, as it is often the “young” seniors in their 50’s and 60’s who volunteer in programs serving “older” seniors who are in their 70’s and above; and

WHEREAS, even as the social distancing and other restrictions begin to be lifted, older adults will remain vulnerable and we expect older adults will be cautioned to limit their social interactions for many months longer than the general population, and many will continue to need assistance during that period; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Seniors recommends the City Council to direct the City Manager to address the following needs of older adults during the COVID-19 crisis and any subsequent time period during which older adults and those with underlying health conditions are required, cautioned or advised to limit social interaction:

- Mobile testing for COVID-19 for homebound persons
- Age Friendly and ADA compliant transportation to testing sites for anyone who does not have transportation or access to mobile testing
- Equity considerations in locating testing sites
- Provide personal protective equipment, disinfectants and training to older adults, caretakers, volunteers and service providers in need
- Expand access to broadband and technology to older adults with low incomes to help them stay connected
- Continue and expand online programs that provide training, social interaction and fitness options for older adults
- Work with providers to offer telehealth for older adults, including mental health services, and in multiple languages
- Support free delivery of groceries to older adults who cannot afford delivery fees
- Work with service providers and PARD to deliver meals to older adults with low incomes
- Ensure older adults have access to incontinence supplies
- Provide rental and utility assistance to older adults with low incomes
- Provide information on city and community resources with attention to culturally competent communication and language access needs including those of the deaf and hard of hearing community
- Continue to monitor and provide guidance on conditions in nursing homes, group homes, skilled care facilities and senior housing; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that many of the innovations borne of necessity during this crisis should be adopted as permanent measures to benefit older adults who are homebound or have limited transportation options. The Commission on Seniors recommends the City Council direct the City Manager to expand and/or supplement services to older adults by incorporating COVID-19 related services and innovations into ongoing programs and contracts with providers, such as:

- online and virtual program offerings to help combat social isolation
- free delivery of groceries to older adults with lower incomes and/or who are homebound
- access to broadband and technology to older adults with lower incomes to help them stay connected
- Telehealth options, including for mental health, in multiple languages; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these recommendations achieve Strategic Direction 2023 Outcomes: Government That Works For All, Health and Environment, Safety and Culture and Lifelong Learning.

Date of Approval: April 29, 2020

Motion by: Nicola Second by: Van Sickle

Record of the vote: 13 For: Briesemeister, Varteressian, Angel, Bordie, Cagle, Garcia-Pittman, Grampp, Hauser, Kareithi, Nicola, Temperley, Van Sickle, Spain.

Against: none

Absent: Jackson, Lugo

Attest:  _____

Janee Briesemeister, Chair