**Question:** How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected aging services in Johnson County?

**Answer:** Since the pandemic started, all our services have been impacted, but some have been affected more than others. Overall, we have a great deal of pride that the services, in large part, have continued throughout this crisis. Our staff have been creative, resourceful and resilient while providing service options to benefit those we serve. Here’s what we have been doing during the pandemic:

**Information and assistance service** continues without much disruption. During the county shutdown, our offices were closed but our staff were still assisting folks over the phone and via email. We encourage residents to continue calling or emailing us about services; however, we are open for walk-in office appointments, when necessary. Monthly intake numbers have remained steady and within what we expect during normal conditions.

**Assessment and case management services** have been adjusted during the pandemic. All assessments and case management activities are handled remotely by phone, videoconferencing and email. Assessments generally have remained steady; however, we have noticed a couple of specific changes in service needs.

- One of our assessment services known as institutional transition has increased. This service assists clients in moving out of facilities and back into the community. Since March, we have assisted in transitioning more than 30 residents back into the community.
- Our diversion rate over the first six months has increased to 72%. Since 2013, we have tracked our number of community-based service assessments in comparison to assessments to gain access to nursing facility placement. The percentage of community-based service assessments or our “diversion rate” has ranged from 58% to 63%. Now at 72% in 2020, more senior adults have opted to continue community-based care and been diverted from more costly nursing facility placement.

**Administrative case management and Virtual Visits** have been added as two new services during the pandemic.

- **Virtual Visits** is a program that allows families to connect with residents of nursing facilities through agency tablets and video conferencing technology. We have three tablets dedicated to providing this service at our office and will set up 40-minute visits for family members of residents living in nursing facilities that are willing to partner with the AAA. Ask your nursing facility to call 913-715-8860 to schedule a virtual visit 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday, and we would be happy to help accommodate the partnership and a virtual visit.

**Nutrition programs impacted**

Our traditional congregate meal services have been suspended since the pandemic initially impacted our county. It is hoped that once the spread of the disease begins to flatten that congregate meals can return. It is likely that congregate meals will return as a grab and go meal option with the dine-in option returning once the pandemic has been reduced to a level that is safe for our participants.

**Our CHAMPSS congregate meal option** offered through our local Hy-Vee grocery stores remains an option; however, we did suspend new participants for a period of time. It is projected that this program will be opened for new participants by September.

Finally, our **Home-Delivered meal program** has been altered and is recovering. During the county shutdown, meals went from daily hot meals to weekly frozen meals and were delivered by county employees instead of our routine volunteer base.

To assist with the loss of the socialization component of this program, participants were contacted by phone routinely to check in on them. As a precaution, we also supplied each participant with three weeks of shelf-stable meals to prepare them for any service disruption that may occur during this crisis.

Since the shutdown, we have gradually restarted the daily hot-meal delivery and our volunteers are back to delivering. Our volunteer base that delivers the meals has decreased during this time so if you have an interest, we could use your help.