



SENIOR CENTERS CONNECT

Promoting social connection while practicing
physical distancing

AN EVOLVING TOOLKIT

If your center is temporarily closed and offering essential services during the Coronavirus outbreak, you may be searching for ideas to promote social connection to your participants. This compilation of programs, webinars and resources has been shared by aging service professionals over the past few weeks for you to use. We intend to update this toolkit as more resources become available.

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Senior Center Professionals are Essential

NCOA's National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) has reached out to senior center professionals to gather operating ideas during the COVID-19 crisis. We have found that much has changed in the course of a few weeks, but the one constant has been the ability of senior center professionals to think creatively, practically and decisively to continue to promote wellness for older adults in their communities.

Maintaining food security was an immediate and top concern they addressed. Senior center professionals have stepped up and into the roles held by volunteers for the congregate and home delivered meals programs. They have stood in line preparing meals, developed new drive-up meal programs and driven to participants homes to deliver food.

They've also reached out to check on their participants. Making thousands of phone calls to ask: How are you? Do you need anything? How can we help? And letting older adults know they are not alone and that someone cares.

And, if this pandemic has taught us anything it is that we are social creatures and that connecting to others is crucial. So senior center professionals are creating holistic ways to connect. They understand that not everyone is connected to the internet, so they've sought low tech and high-tech solutions. They've sent cards, newsletters, added puzzles to home delivered meals. And now they are improvising a virtual learning and social connection environment. They are providing virtual exercise, book clubs and support group through Facebook Live, Zoom and other technology platforms.

Senior center professionals have shown that they care deeply about the welfare of their staff. They value their paid staff and volunteers and they have addressed staffs concerns and fears with compassion and flexibility. They are experts at adding fun (an important stress reliever) and often include joyful elements into the programming attributes, as you'll see in this compilation.

We encourage you to use the ideas you find in this collection, enhance them with your own creativity and share the things that are working well in your community to add to this body of knowledge. Please send additional ideas to me or Scott's at our email addresses found below.

Senior Center professionals are essential in every community! Thank you for all the hard work you are doing during this crisis, Maureen & Scott

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Providing Telephone Wellness/Reassurance Calls

Senior center professionals told us they are reaching out to their participants to offer telephone reassurance and to access who is at most risk. Those most at risk include those who might be those adults that are 80+ year, living alone, experiencing food insecurity, have compromised health or multiple health conditions, are experiencing isolation or are financially at risk. Your reassurance program might be a new program for staff. This outreach can also be accomplished by trained volunteers.

In Illinois, one site told us they had a team of volunteers and staff making outbound wellness calls. They were offering home delivery of food pantry items, but most people just wanted to social element to chat about things.

At a site in Minnesota they are calling over 1000 members with 3 basic questions

- Do you have food?
- Do you have access to your medications?
- Do you have critical health issue(s) that need attention?

Staff said that people are extremely appreciative and very excited to be able to talk.

Centers have also seen a huge surge of community people looking to help. Harnessing that would be very beneficial. Although sites will struggle with mobilizing the volunteer base at this time, since most staff are working from home and these types of volunteers would need background checks.

Call tips include:

- This may be the only check in call an individual is receiving. Staff in Florida told us that several older adults cried over the phone, they were so grateful that someone was checking in on them.
- Use a friendly tone of voice and identify yourself as soon as possible when making the call. Spend as much time talking as feels comfortable or appropriate.
- If a participant shares a problem or mentions a medical concern, be sure to follow up with referrals. Referral areas might include assistance with meals, chore services, transportation, grocery delivery, or case management.
- Schedule a pre-arranged time to call and include how often you'll make the call.
- Check on your participants basic contact information and who to call in the event that they do not pick up at their normal check in time call.
- If you do use volunteers, remember:
 - To have them trained on policies and confidentiality.
 - Be sure to conduct background checks on all prospective volunteers.

Assessing Risk

The Baltimore County Department on Aging determined who they needed to call first for a senior center member wellness check by using the data they had gotten from their annual assessment. They have used the Adult Well Being Assessment as part of their yearly participant survey.

They segmented their 20,000+ senior center members by:

- Using their social isolation score found on their Adult Well-being Assessment (anyone with a 3,4 or 5 was called),
- Including those living alone,
- Including those with a high Determine Nutrition Checklist score and
- Including older age participants (started with 80 years and older and then went to younger age categories).

They noted that it was really helpful be able to identify those most at risk first and then move to those with other supports (i.e., living with spouse of family, not isolated/lonely, younger) next.

Adult Well-being Assessment Tailored for Aging Adults

Part of the 100 Million Lives Aging Hub project is a promising IHI survey tool, known as the [Adult Well-being Assessment](#). The tool is a validated, self-reported survey that asks individuals to rate their overall well-being; finances; state of their physical, mental, and spiritual health; and social support. NCOA added a measure related to social isolation and loneliness, a common and significant issue among older adults. For a simple guide to using the Adult Well-being Assessment (AWA), download [here](#).

Wellness Call Guide Script

Hi, my name is: _____ I am with the {your senior center} I am checking in to see how you are doing today?

1. We've all been asked to stay home due to the Coronavirus, how is that going for you?
2. How are you feeling? Are you experiencing any symptoms of a cold or flu (fever, cough, chills or shortness of breath)? *If yes, say "people who are not feeling well should call their doctor for guidance. Do not go to the doctor's office, Urgent-Care or Emergency Room unless you have been instructed to do so."*

3. Is there anything you need or do you have any questions? (Adequate food)

Yes or No - *If yes, please elaborate! If you do not have an answer, tell them you will find out and get back to you.*

4. Would you like me to call and check in again?

Yes or No - *If yes, please note frequency.*

5. Have you received your Census postcard? The form is completed on-line, do you need help with that?

Yes or No - *If the answer is Yes, say "I will have X call you and he can help you get the form submitted"*

Reminders:

2. Please follow the preventative guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control. **(See CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Quick Reference Guide)**
3. {include local senior center number or best local number}. Your call will be returned!
4. Remember to log all calls.

Requests for support may be referred to:

- United Way – 211, a free, confidential service to find local resources 24 hrs. a day at **211.**

[Include local support information]

¹ Script from the Better Choices, Better Health Program.

Senior Centers Virtual Programming

Read this section for programming ideas. Ideas range from low-tech for those without computer capability to online programs. These ideas were shared during two recent NISC meetings.

No Technology

In Wabash County Indiana, they have reinstated mailed newsletters. Their first issue contained a listing of all the resources available in the community. Their next issue will have some virtual programming in place.

At Jewish Family Service in San Diego they are asking participants to write encouraging letters to senior center staff, meal staff, grocery store workers, etc. to show their gratitude. They are also matching folks to be pen pals.

Sunshine kits are being added to home delivered meals packages. In Illinois, senior center staff are going on local Facebook groups to ask for donations of puzzles and other fun items to make the kits. The items are delivered to the center where volunteers pack up individual kits.

Purpose driven programming

Kernersville Senior Enrichment Center, NC and Jewish Family Service in San Diego, CA shared this great idea to activate all those older adults that like to sew. They asked their participants to sew mask. In San Diego the masks are being used for food distribution workers and for their drivers.

As you know, the supply of face masks are at a critical all-time low throughout the entire nation. As a community, this is a great way we can band together and make a huge difference in this time of need!

According to the CDC website "Fabric face masks are NOT a substitution for N95 masks and while wearing homemade face masks will not prevent catching a respiratory illness, they can help reduce the spread of large particles when someone sneezes or coughs." In addition to helping medical staff during critical shortages, these masks can be used at home as well.

Joann's Fabric Stores has free kits to make 5 masks (first come first served). You must pick the kits up and return completed masks. The stores will donate to local hospitals.

Below you will find some links for DIY Face Masks:

- [How to sew a bias tape surgical face mask with flexible nose](#)
- [How to SEW a Medical FACE MASK // TUTORIAL](#)
- [Picture tutorial](#)

Minimal Technology

For those without computers, videos that were developed by senior center staff during a Facebook live session or with a smart phone to be shared with the local TV station to be shown in the community. Participants enjoy seeing familiar faces.

Rufty Holmes Senior Center, NC is using conference calling to connect their small groups. The crocheting group is chatting, and book group discussion are being connected. This is especially important for those without computers or Facebook. They are using a conference call program through Elevate called GoMeet, another platform mentioned was FreeConferenceCall.com.

Phone trees have been developed within senior center groups to encourage wellness checks within participants.

Technology Needed

Senior Center professionals are connecting to participants virtually using Facebook Live, Zoom and other online platforms. Here are a few scheduling ideas:

Use Facebook Live

Georgia has a great example of a **Facebook Live** program. See the description of an NISC Award of Excellence winner **Yoga with Yoni on Facebook Live**. It is a weekly yoga program offered at the Kinship Care Resource Center, Jonesboro, GA.

Create a Facebook Group

One local community created a Facebook group **“Helping Neighbors Around Palatine.”** It’s only been around for one week and already has over 1,000 members. They receive requests of people in need and their “neighbors” are dispatched to help – walk a dog, pick up a prescription, make a friendly phone call. It’s been amazing to see. This may be cropping up in many communities nationwide.

Senior Center staff are tapping into this resource to solicit donations and build good will with other community members for long term assistance. We received many donated care packages as a result of the group

Connecting with Zoom

North Shore Senior Center, Illinois has started online presentations, clubs, and discussion groups using Zoom. They report “It is working great!” They did their first Current Events discussion group yesterday with 30 people, and just finished with a History of Singing in the Rain with 135 people attending. Mary Staackmann, Director of Lifelong Learning said, “Everyone has been so grateful to reconnect with other members and their favorite instructors.”

They are trying to schedule at least one activity or class each weekday. Instructors have been very willing to work this way, and members have been eager to do this, and have mustered all their tech skills to take part. It's not too complicated for most people.

At the Friendship Center in Winona, MN, their virtual programming is held daily using Zoom it includes:

- 1 exercise program each day (Zumba, Yoga, Strength & Balance, NIA, Tai Chi).
- Fitness Center is doing daily Zoom room reach out to members for strength training, cardio, etc.
- They have set up our Memory Café' and Dementia support groups in Zoom room as well.
- They conduct a test run prior to the actual program so that kinks can be worked out (people don't realize they don't have a webcam or microphone, where the mute is, etc.)
- They use Facebook Live for outdoor events (hiking, biking) with our GoPro

The Baltimore County Department on Aging is using **BurnAlong** – This site has a wealth of exercise and wellness programs that people can participate in with their friends. Instructors can upload their classes so members can follow. Small fee applies but it includes a way that your instructors can get paid.

A few free national online classes include:

Planet Fitness offers a free 20-minute class daily at 4 pm PT, 5 pm MT, 6 pm CT, 7 pm ET for 20 minutes, streamed live on Facebook.

Share the Yale Science of Well-Being Class

One of the big ideas behind "The Science of Well-Being," Yale's most popular class of all time, is that true happiness doesn't come from your circumstances or your achievements. It comes, professor Laurie Santos, PhD, told CNN, from [simple daily practices](#) like [being grateful](#), living in the present moment, and connecting with others.

Now might be the best time to tune in to her massively popular course, which has been [available online](#) for about two years via Coursera. It's free to audit the classes, and costs \$49 for access to the full course materials and assignments (plus a certificate of completion). Over one million people have already signed up for the next semester of the class, which started March 24.

Be sure to go to the last page for an extensive list of **Online Resource** opportunities to share.

An Example of One Center's Virtual Programming Schedule

Schaumburg Township, Illinois **Virtual Programming Options – Adults**

Please note, Schaumburg Township does not recommend or endorse any referral or program. We have not checked or verified content. Please use discretion before viewing. Every effort has been made to check accuracy; if you notice something is not working, please contact us at 847-884-0030

ARTS AND CULTURE

Broadway Plays and Musicals

<https://tinyurl.com/wyq8vsx>

15 Broadway Plays and Musicals you can watch on stage from home

Public Library Free Access

<https://tinyurl.com/vfzuern>

Anyone with a library card and iOS or Android phone can loan an e-book in the collection. There may be waitlists for popular titles. Must download app SimplyE.

Virtual Museum Tours

<https://tinyurl.com/wp2gmtw>

12 Famous Museums offer virtual tours of their galleries.

Virtual Opera Performances

<https://tinyurl.com/qvvtbv>

Metropolitan Opera announced it would stream encore presentations on their website each night at 7:30 PM. You can also stream through the Met Opera's on-demand app.

EXERCISE

Unfold Yoga and Wellness - Digital

<https://tinyurl.com/yx36bem5>

A series of FREE, live, web-based, 20 minute movement and meditation classes. Recorded sample classes also available anytime.

The first Thursday of every month at 1:30 PM

Planet Fitness Home Work-Ins

<https://tinyurl.com/ukxdgye>

Free in-home workouts for Planet Fitness members and non-members. Recorded classes available anytime. Streamed live daily at 6 PM.

MISCELLANEOUS

Chatter Pack

<https://tinyurl.com/tr9j5jz>

A variety of online resources for enrichment: Virtual tours, online learning, geography & nature, music, arts & culture, literature, entertainment, anxiety & mental health, prayer

Ivy League Online Classes

[Freecodecamp.org/news/ivy-league-free-online-courses-a0d7ae675869/](https://freecodecamp.org/news/ivy-league-free-online-courses-a0d7ae675869/)

Over 450 online courses are available for free through all eight Ivy League schools

VIRTUAL SENIOR CENTERS

Programs listed below allow people to call a conference call line using their phone or log into an internet connection to access fun and interesting enrichment and education sessions. Each program is open to all US residents; there may be small fees, but we suggest reaching out directly for more information.

Covia Well Connected

<https://covia.org/services/well-connected/>

Program guide:

<https://covia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Well-Connected-Winter2020-FINAL.pdf>

Register for programs: 877-797-7299

Lifetime Connections Without Walls

<https://www.familyeldercare.org/programs/lifetime-connections-without-walls/>

Program Guide: <https://www.familyeldercare.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/LCWW-Winter-2020-Catalog.pdf>

Register for programs: 888-500-6472

Dorot USA University Without Walls

<https://dorotusa.org/our-programs/at-home/university-without-walls>

Program Guide: https://dorotusa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/DOROT_UWW_Brochure_20_SINGLES_0.PDF

Register: 212-769-2850

Mather Lifeways

<https://www.mather.com/neighborhood-programs/telephone-topics>

Program Guide:

<https://www.mather.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/TeleTopicsMARCH20webemail.pdf>

Register: 888-600-2560 or email teltopics@mather.com

4 Programming Ideas from the NISC Programs of Excellence Competition

Yoga with Yoni on Facebook Live

KINSHIP CARE RESOURCE CENTER, JONESBORO,

Yoga with Yoni on Facebook Live is a weekly program offered at the Kinship Care Resource Center, in the caregiver's home or anywhere with an internet connection. Kinship Care participants can come to the center for Yoga class or they can follow along in the privacy of their own home. Yoga instructions are broadcast on a live feed on Facebook.



The center's yoga instructor, Yoni, hosts a traditional exercise session in the center on a specific date and time. A second staff member will connect to Facebook, position the webcam and begin live streaming the class. During the live feed, off-site participants are encouraged to "check-in" by commenting or liking the feed. They were also asked to participate in a brief five question survey at the end of class. A link to the survey was provided during the class.

The use of technology makes this program delivery possible to all who have a computer, tablet or smartphone with internet capabilities. By logging into Facebook, they can participate in class real time or at a later hour, when it may be more convenient. Technology is here and multi-site simulcasts of classes are the next wave of the future for seniors. We at the Kinship Care Resource Center stand ready to conquer this challenge with fierce determination.

This innovative program is significant because it allows classes that have been primarily held in the center to now be taken at home. It also encourages the use of technology to obtain services.

In the 70's and 80's the current generation of older caregivers would exercise at home with television shows like "Jane Fonda's Workout" or "Wake up with Joni". Now caregivers can "Yoga with Yoni" anywhere with an internet connection. Through the use of technology, service provision of healthy programs in a forum similar to the past, can reach a diverse audience of seniors without transportation or self-consciousness barriers.

Outcomes: Participants benefited from this class by strengthening their flexibility and balance. By offering this program both in person and online, clients are able to participate more often.

Evaluation: A short survey was administered online, to participants to gauge program success.

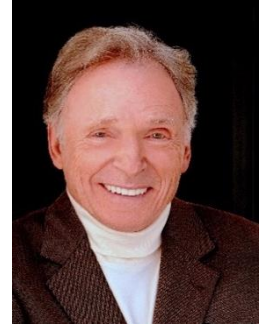
Number of staff or volunteers needed: 2

Cost: Expense: 0 **Revenue:** 0 **Net:** 0

Contact: Angela Burda, Kinship Care Resource Center
849 Battlecreek Rd, Jonesboro, GA
angela.burda@claytoncountyga.gov

Program Sharing: An Interview with Dick Cavett

MATHER LIFEWAYS, EVANSTON, IL



We wanted to explore the possibility of sharing a single lifelong learning program, using videoconferencing technology, at all of our various Mather locations.

In order to make the program successful, we decided to choose an older adult celebrity guest who might appeal to all our audiences. We decided to conduct an interview with former talk-show host Dick Cavett and stream the interview with Zoom videoconferencing technology to nine different Mather locations: our three Mather cafes in Chicago; our three life-plan communities in Evanston, Wilmette, and Tucson; two of our Chicago neighborhood locations in Skokie and Morton Grove; and our telephone program called Telephone Topics.

Our interviewer, Walter Podrazik, who teaches television history at UIC, was located in Evanston, and Dick spoke to us from his home in Montauk, New York. The program ran for about an hour, and the interview included six delightful video clips of celebrity guests from Dick's shows, including people like Robert Mitchum, Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn, Jack Benny, Groucho Marx, and Salvadore Dali. Dick was his usual charming, urbane, and witty self, and the program was a complete success with approximately 150 participants altogether organization-wide. This kind of a program was relatively easy to conduct and could be easily replicated by other organizations.

This successful program demonstrates that we can do much more in the way of sharing programs using videoconferencing technology. This will reduce the amount of time that staff at all of our locations have to devote to program planning and at the same time bring together all of our communities by sharing in a common experience. This kind of program sharing is also good for our presenters because it enables us to offer them a much larger audience than they would have at any single location, and it enables them to give a presentation without the additional time spent traveling to and from a certain location.

Outcomes: Our program participants were thoroughly delighted with the experience and enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about a person with whom they were all quite familiar. They also came to recognize that long-distance programs using videoconferencing technology can be quite as engaging as having a live speaker. Our Mather organization benefited by learning how videoconferencing technology can help create an extraordinary experience for our customers and residents.

Evaluation: No participant survey conducted – participant interviews indicated a tremendous success.

Number of staff or volunteers needed: 12 people. One staff person at each of the nine locations, one interviewer, one program coordinator, and one director.

Cost: Expense: 0 Revenue: 0 Net: 0

Contact: Chuck Freilich, Mather Lifeways
1603 Orrington Avenue, Suite 1800
Evanston, IL, cfreilich@matherlifeways.com

The Westshore Collaborative Website: "Casting a Wider Net"

WESTLAKE SENIOR & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Recognizing that "alone we can do so little, together we can do so much", 8 municipal senior centers from Greater Cleveland, spanning 2 counties, came together to share resources in a unique way. Together, we secured funds to help us build www.westshoreseniors.org, a website that combines our 8 senior center activity calendars, as well as information and resources, in an easily searchable, modern, but senior-friendly way. This helps our current patrons, many of whom we already share. They do not have to subscribe to or rifle through 8 different newsletters. More so, it helps us "cast a wider net", reaching people who would not normally think about using a senior center.

Our website comes up in a Google search, which is how younger seniors, as well as adult-children of seniors, and senior professionals would be looking for information. In this way, we are forging ahead in making our information and services available and known to more people, without increasing our size. We see this as a viable way to manage the demographic growth. One of the functions of our website is the ability to search a topic, "chair yoga" for example, and in an instant learn of all the different options "time, day, location" available in all 8 senior centers. Other functions include tabs for social service resources by city and county, information about volunteer opportunities, blogs on senior-centric topics, contact emails and photographs. It is a "one-stop-shop", but not a "one-size-fits-all" approach to service delivery.

The Westshore Collaborative Website is significant because 8 communities moved from competition to collaboration. It required cooperation from 8 mayors, 8 city councils and 8 senior center staffs. The primary benefit to our participants is accessibility to:

- A one-stop-shop of program information for 8 centers, eliminated 8 separate newsletters.
- A senior-centric website, westshoreseniors.org was designed for and tested by seniors..
- Senior-centric content. In addition to programming, the website also offers social services available in all 8 communities, as well as 2 counties, and a blog that features a variety of topics written by a variety of regional organizations.

Observable Measures: Our primary measurement is data provided about the website via Google Analytics. We track unique visits and total visits, time spent on the site, page views and average visit duration, among other metrics.

Number of Staff/Volunteers: 4 staff hours per month x 8 senior centers is what is required to maintain the website on a monthly basis. **Costs/Expenses:** We received funding \$26,000 which paid a web-designer and project manager to construct the website. Annually we will owe \$200 to maintain the licenses for the site.

Contact: Lydia Gadd, Westlake Senior & Community Services
29694 Center Ridge Road Westlake, OH lgadd@cityofwestlake.org

Bingo with a Twist

[Insert your center's name] BINGO

B	I	N	G	O
<p>List 3 things: you love about your favorite TV show or movie</p>	<p>Complete: 20 arm curls 20 knee lifts 20 ankle rolls</p>	<p>Take a Walk OR Get some Sun!</p>	<p>Take 3 deep breaths!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In through your nose, count 1...2...3... • Hold, count 1...2...3... • Out through your mouth, count 1...2...3... 	<p>Clean out your junk drawer! Throw away garbage, wash the drawer and share the weird items you find with us.</p>
<p>List 3 things: that you are grateful for today!</p>	<p>Call: a senior center friend or a family member!</p>	<p>Clean out your pantry/cupboards. How many expired items do you have?</p>	<p>Share: an easy recipe on Thursday's (3/19) recipe Facebook post!</p>	<p>Name all 50 States! NO CHEATING!</p>
<p>Drink 64 oz. of water in one day! Daily Suggestion Source: webmd.com</p>	<p>Stimulate your mind! Complete one crossword, word search, Sudoku or other puzzle</p>		<p>Reminisce! Look through old photos</p>	<p>Listen to music that makes you happy!</p>
<p>Take a selfie! Send to a friend or the WCCOA Facebook page</p>	<p>Write about: A positive & memorable time in your life.</p>	<p>How many words can you come up with in two minutes using the letters from: CORONAVIRUS</p>	<p>Mail: a friend or family member a letter</p>	<p>Play a Card Game!</p>
<p>Make something creative (Ex. Cooking, drawing, craft, etc...)</p>	<p>Pay it forward! Give someone a compliment</p>	<p>List 3 things: you love about your local Senior Center!</p>	<p>Write down: a piece of advice you would give to younger generations.</p>	<p>Purge! Go through your phone and clean out apps/pictures that you no longer want or use.</p>

Wood County Committee On Aging, Bowling Green, Ohio shared this engaging way to play virtual Bingo on Facebook

HOW TO PLAY: Complete all of the activities in a row vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Let the center know when you have achieved a BINGO and they will enter one ticket into their raffle with your name on it! Contact them by email.

Five Bingo Maximum = 5 raffle tickets.

Winner is drawn on Facebook Live at a set time.

HOW TO PLAY: Complete a row vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Let us know when you have achieved a BINGO and we will enter one ticket into our raffle with your name on it! Contact us via email at [insert an email address] or through Facebook Messenger.

FIVE BINGO MAXIMUM = 5 RAFFLE TICKET MAXIMUM

Winner will be drawn on Facebook LIVE, [add date]!

Two NISC partners, Barrie Atkin, who worked with NISC to produce Marketing for Any Senior Center and Ruthann Dobek, Executive Director of the Brookline MA Senior Center, who is a NISC member and pilot site partner that implemented Lyft ridesharing at their center, co-wrote this thoughtful article on maintaining and strengthening connections within your community.

Closed due to COVID-19? – How to make your senior center stand out in your community during the crisis

By Barrie Atkin, MBA & Ruthann Dobek, LICSW

Yes, the Covid-19 virus is dangerous and disruptive. Your Senior Center is probably closed – or at least off-limits to groups and gatherings. You may be working from home.

Even with so many events cancelled, you still have opportunities to increase community awareness of your Senior Center and the value of your organization.

Here are some strategies for how you can maintain – and perhaps enhance - your Senior Center as a vital community resource during this virtual time when you're not meeting with people directly.

[Note: we do not have any affiliation and are not receiving any revenue from any of the programs or services we mention in this article.]

2. Set up a Virtual Meeting Platform

Many of us will have to do our meetings, networking, and work sessions virtually. Set yourself up with an app or platform that allows for conferencing and meetings online.

A Virtual meeting platform is a way to be in meetings with others – with audio and/or video. You've probably already been a part of virtual meetings. If you want or need to be in contact with others, and especially with groups, or managing meetings, having your own virtual platform will allow you to host your own meetings.

For very basic needs, FaceTime (for Apple products) works and Skype is also good for 1:1 or a small group.

For more robust needs, a professional video conferencing software is imperative, one that offers both audio and video – so that you can both hear and see the other members in the meeting. Also look for a platform that provides a way to record the conversation. This provides you with a document of what was discussed. If you or your team require a written version, you can upload your audio file and have it transcribed or transferred to text.

Many municipalities will have a license for such platforms. If your Senior Center is a municipal organization, check with your IT department. The Town of Brookline uses Cisco Webex.

Zoom and GoToMeeting are two additional popular platforms. The Free version of Zoom limits sessions to 40 minutes. A Premium subscription does not have this limit.

2. Use FaceBook (and other Social Media Tools) for Greater Visibility

You can use your FaceBook page and your website to:

- Post emergency information.
- Share resources for people in need.
- List phone numbers to call for help.
- Remind your community that you are available and are practicing social distancing.
- Collect names of community volunteers.

Be sure to post such information on community websites as well. Submit articles and updates to your local media, including newspapers, community websites, list serves, etc.

Check if your local Public Access TV station is open. Ask them to show some of your past interviews or programs that may be relevant or helpful to people at home. Arrange to be interviewed remotely to give important information and support.

Partner with other organizations that are responding to the crisis such as healthcare organizations, civic and religious institutions, local social services, your Area Agency on Aging or ASAP. Remind them of your availability and your critical role as an expert on older adult issues and needs.

3. Keep Your Older Adults Engaged

Look for ways to reach out to your older adult community. Most of your participants are at home. If you are a municipal agency, use your town system to make a call to everyone.

- Remind them how to call to get help.
- Remind them to reach out to friends and neighbors who may live alone.

Use your newsletter to give your participants resources that you may not normally have space to include. Also suggest ways to stay active at home and in touch with others. MySeniorCenter's most recent FunFacts "Keep Socialization Alive" offers creative ideas for how to prevent loneliness. <http://www.myseniorcenter.com/funfacts/March192020.html>

This can be an opportunity to expand your reach. Offer a special email where residents can send non-urgent messages and concerns. Ask them to provide their emails so they can get email updates from you.

For emailing to groups, consider using an email platform such as Constant Contact or Mail Chimp that allows you to brand your message and provide a professional look and feel to your communications.

4. Advocate for your Community's Older Adults

Be in touch with your community's emergency management team, your town government and other local leadership. Remind them of your expertise and wealth of information about older adults and the resources you offer.

Evaluate and identify where you might have gaps of services. At some point, life will return to "normal". What can you do now to plan and strengthen your service and program delivery at that time?

5. Update your Brand Identity

In the short-term of this crisis, focusing on your brand may not be your primary priority. However, as the weeks go on and you have established new routines, consider evaluating your brand identity. This could provide a creative distraction! Research shows that organizations that plan ahead during a market downturn do better when the environment returns to "normal". If you can, take this time to strengthen your brand and your presence in your community.

Perhaps you've been meaning to upgrade your Senior Center's FaceBook profile or website. Often these are low priority tasks compared to keeping your Senior Center going on a daily basis and interacting with your participants.

Think about your available brand elements – your logo, tagline, use of color palette and fonts, your visuals and videos on your website, your testimonials, your newsletter. Do they reflect your most current thinking? Are they consistent with each other? Is it time to update the brand tools you are currently using, or do you want to develop new ones?

Perhaps one of your staff members has the time to work on this now. Or use your community websites to search for a volunteer.

For new graphics, you can use a DIY creative tool like Canva, source brand identity from online creative sites like 99design or work with a graphic designer.

Concluding Comments

As you're dealing with this unprecedented crisis, be sure to take care of yourself. It's hard to take care of others if you're worn down by the news and barrage of demands on you. Practice some self-care, whether it's going for a walk, escaping into a TV show, movie or book, or using mindfulness/meditation.

Stay connected with your friends, family and colleagues.

Whatever you do, stay safe – and look out for the more vulnerable and isolated individuals in your community.

About Us

Barrie Atkin, MBA is a marketing, strategy and fundraising consultant for mission-driven organizations. Barrie's clients have ranged from ESPN, Rodale and The Nature Conservancy to Massachusetts Medical Society, the Massachusetts Council on Aging and many senior centers. She is the co-author of "*Marketing Tools for Any Senior Center*" and has helped many organizations with rebranding. She can be reached at Barrie@AtkinAssociates.com; 781-788-6600
www.atkinassociates.com <https://www.linkedin.com/in/barrie-atkin-310134/>

Ruthann Dobek, LICSW has been Executive Director of the Brookline MA Senior Center and Council on Aging since 2002. She is also co-Chair of the Brookline Community Aging Network. Ruthann has been recognized by the Massachusetts Council on Aging as an Innovator of the Year and was named Social Worker of the Year by the Massachusetts NASW. She has piloted many innovative programs in caregiving, transportation and homecare for older adults. She can be reached at Rdobek@brooklinema.gov

Tips & Tools for Serving Your Participants From NCOA

Have a participant who needs emergency assistance? [Find our resources for urgent relief](#) on our older adults/caregiver's page.

- [4 Coronavirus Scams to Avoid](#), March 19
- [Encouraging Older Adults to Stay Active and Safe During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), March 18
- [Do Your Part to Stem COVID-19: An Intergenerational Call to Action](#), March 16
- [Coronavirus: What Older Adults Need to Know](#), March 11
- [COVID-19 Resources for Senior Centers](#), March 10

Archived

- [NISC Leaders for a Conversation about Your Senior Center and Coronavirus](#), held Thursday, March 19, 1 pm ET
- [Offering Evidence-Based Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), March 25
- [Delivering Aging Mastery® Online](#), March 20: This webinar offers suggestions for holding classes virtually and using the self-directed Aging Mastery® Starter Kits. (The Aging Mastery Program is not included on the Approved Evidence-Based Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Programs, but some states offer it locally.)
- [Responding to COVID-19 and CDSME Workshops](#), March 18

From Our Partner Organizations

- [Resources for working remotely](#), including how to use different technology platforms, at LinkedIn
- [FAQ on Medicare Coverage and Payment for COVID Testing and Treatment](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation
- [Get a comprehensive listing of links](#) to state protocols, proclamations, and materials compiled by ADvancing States
- [Media templates and crisis communications resources](#) from LeadingAge
- [Preparedness checklist for events](#) from the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
- [Toolkit: Senior nutrition network COVID-19 response townhall](#) from the National Resource Center on Nutrition & Aging

Where to Get Food Help Now

Share this information with your colleagues!

Affording healthy food is a challenge for many older Americans, but the spread of COVID-19 has made matters worse. Whether you're facing difficult financial times or are unable to leave your home, there are resources that may be able to help.

Meals on Wheels

With a network of over 5,000 programs, Meals on Wheels is offered in nearly every community in America. Meals on Wheels volunteers are committed to continuing delivery of nutritious food to homebound older adults and ensuring their health and social well-being.

[Enter your zip code to search for your local program.](#)

Food Banks

Feeding America operates over 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries across the United States, each serving a large area. Many food banks are adapting the way they serve their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic to follow physical distancing guidelines, such as setting up smaller community drop-off points.

Use the [food bank locator tool](#) to find one in your community.

SNAP/Food Stamps

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps people to afford food at over 250,000 participating grocery stores and shops across the country. While you must have limited income to get SNAP, many older adults and persons with disabilities can deduct medical expenses above \$35/month to help get SNAP and increase the amount of monthly SNAP benefits. [Find your state's SNAP application.](#)

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service, which runs SNAP, has given states options to make it easier for families to get SNAP during the coronavirus pandemic, including not requiring a face-to-face interview, and temporarily raising the SNAP benefit to the maximum amount. Call your [state hotline](#) to see what may be offered in your area.

Remember: SNAP can only be used for purchasing food and seeds for growing food. It cannot be used to buy pet food, paper products, and other toiletries. However, changes to broaden what SNAP can be used for are being discussed at the state and federal level.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

This program provides food and nutrition help at no cost. If you meet the program guidelines, you can pick up the food from your local food pantries or soup kitchens.

The types of food you can get are different depending on where you live, but usually include a lot of shelf-stable items such as pasta, dried beans, canned fruits and vegetables, and soups. To find out how to apply for the program, please contact your [State Agency](#). They can let you know if you meet the program guidelines and where you can get the food.

You can also find out whether you can get TEFAP, SNAP, and other food benefits by going to [BenefitsCheckUp.org](https://www.benefitscheckup.org) and completing a free, confidential screening.

Other Resources

Many communities are mobilizing local volunteers and resources to assist those in need during this pandemic. To find out what additional help may be offered in your area we encourage you to contact the following:

- Please call your state or local 211 service (or visit [211.org](https://www.211.org))
- The [Eldercare Locator](#) can connect you with a variety of services, including transportation and benefits. Dial 1-800-677-1116 (weekdays, 9 am – 8 pm EST)
- [BenefitsCheckUp.org](https://www.benefitscheckup.org) can help you find benefits that cover a variety of needs, not just food. Support you receive can free up room in your budget for food, too. Make sure to complete a full, confidential screening

Online Resources

Share these resources with your participants so they can take a virtual tour of the Louvre, learn about the moonshot at the JFK library, create “science experiment” snacks with your grandchildren, all this and more are available online.

Email Participants:

Feeling isolated and lonely! Missing your exercise or continuing education classes? Check out some great online resources to help you stay active while at home during the COVID-19 Outbreak.

Arts

[Google Arts & Culture: +2000 partners from +80 countries](#)

[Heritage on the Edge: A project of Google Arts & Culture](#)

[Europeana: 50,000,000 European works of art, books, music, and more](#)

[Smithsonian Open Access: Search 2.8 million images and 3D Models](#)

[ArtUK: Art collections from 3,200 UK organizations](#)

[Mexican Ministry of Culture: Short films, books, radio, paintings, from all cultural orgs](#)

[Memorica: Open access Mexican culture content portal](#)

[China's National Cultural Heritage Administration: Virtual portal of 100 institutions](#)

[OpenGLAM: Aggregates 88 unique open collections](#)

[NASA Image & Video Library: All NASA content is in the public domain](#)

[DPLA: Digital Public Library of America](#)

[MIMO: Musical Instrument Museums Online \(64,000+ instruments\)](#)

[BioExplora: Natural science open collections portal \(3D images, bio diversity\)](#)

[Science Museum Group: Collections from five UK science museums \(325,000+ objects\)](#)

[York Museums Trust: Collections from various museums in Yorkshire, UK](#)

[Archaeological Analytics: Archaeological Open Access Collections](#)

[Digital Agnes: Canadian portal for curatorial research and online exhibitions](#)

[English Heritage: Variety of mediums of British content \(Podcasts, videos, etc.\)](#)

[Creative Commons: Aggregates all CC-licensed content and collections globally](#)

[Wikimedia Commons: Over 20,000,000 open images](#)

[Wikidata: “The Sum of all Paintings” metadata initiative via Wikimedia](#)

[Open Culture Coloring Pages: 113 museum coloring books](#)

[Global Museum: Portal for museum news, jobs, and resources](#)

[V21ArtSpace: Over 100 exhibit virtual tours](#)

[Arte.tv: Cultural documentaries, films, and more.](#)

Connecting With Others

[YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/) - <https://www.youtube.com/>
[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/) - <https://www.instagram.com/>
[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/) - www.facebook.com
[Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/) - <https://www.pinterest.com/>

Continuing Education

[Ted Talks](https://www.ted.com/talks) - <https://www.ted.com/talks>
[Talks at Google](https://www.youtube.com/user/AtGoogleTalks) - <https://www.youtube.com/user/AtGoogleTalks>
[BigThink](https://bigthink.com/videos/) - <https://bigthink.com/videos/>
[Lumosity](https://www.lumosity.com/en/) - <https://www.lumosity.com/en/>
[LearningRX](https://www.learningrx.com/what-is-brain-training/) - <https://www.learningrx.com/what-is-brain-training/>

Exercise Classes

[Link- https://forms.gle/5qVScXzKHWw41c176](https://forms.gle/5qVScXzKHWw41c176) - BCDA Stepping Challenge
<https://youtu.be/qXlrMY-rUJ8> Teresa Reed Aerobic Video
<https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/>

Food Services

[Grub Hub](https://www.grubhub.com/): <https://www.grubhub.com/>
[Door Dash](https://www.doordash.com/): <https://www.doordash.com/>
[Postmates](https://postmates.com/): <https://postmates.com/>
[Food Pickup Locations in Baltimore County](https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=2f9aa91a53c34f26afda8798024bfa75): <https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=2f9aa91a53c34f26afda8798024bfa75>
[Food to go Locator in Baltimore County](https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=9f204a7f67cd433f9e38c67ba402757e): <https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=9f204a7f67cd433f9e38c67ba402757e>
[Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/) - <https://www.amazon.com/>
[Target](https://www.target.com/) - <https://www.target.com/>
[Walmart](https://www.walmart.com/) - <https://www.walmart.com/>

Libraries

[US National Archives Catalog](#)
[Library of Congress](#)
[The National Archives, UK](#)
[Trove: National Library of Australia images, books, newspapers, maps, etc.](#)
[Biodiversity Heritage Library](#)
[Endangered Archives, British Library](#)
[Cambridge Digital Library](#)
[National Archives of Japan](#)
[Amsterdam City Archive](#)
[Louisiana Digital Library: 400,000+ digital items from archives, libraries, museums](#)
[Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine, digitized film, books, music, etc.](#)
[American Literature Portal, WikiSource](#)
[English Literature Portal, WikiSource](#)
[New York Public Library: 880,000+ digitized prints, manuscripts, videos, etc.](#)
[Villanova Digital Library](#)
[British Library of Illuminated Manuscripts](#)
[Arctos Database: Access to 3 million specimens and observations in 210 collections](#)

<https://maryland.overdrive.com/>
<https://www.bcpl.info/books-and-more/downloadables.html>

Virtual Tours

[Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: Virtual Tour](#)
[Dalí Theatre-Museum, Catalonia: Virtual Tour](#)
[The Vatican: 360-degree Museum Tours](#)
[The Palace Museum: The Forbidden City, China, 360-degree Virtual Tour](#)
[Hallwyl Museum, Stockholm: VR Tour](#)
[Byzantine and Christian Virtual Museum: Virtual Tour](#)
[The Louvre, Paris: Virtual Tour](#)
[Vatican Museums: Virtual Tours](#)
[The Hermitage, Russia: Virtual Tour \(YouTube\)](#)
[Westminster Abbey, London: Virtual Tour](#)
[Canadian Museum of History: Virtual Tour](#)
[The Science Museum, London: Shipping Galleries Virtual Tour](#)
[Museum of Flight: Virtual Tour](#)
[Florence as it Was: 3D models of Florentine buildings, artworks, and squares](#)
[The Kremer Museum: VR Tour](#)
[Mexican National Institute of Anthropology & History: Virtual Tours \(Flash\)](#)
[National Museum of Natural History, US: Virtual Tour](#)
[National Archaeological Museum, Spain: Virtual Museum](#)
[São Paulo Museum of Art: Virtual Tour](#)
[The Frick, Pittsburgh: Virtual tours, online collections, activities](#)
[Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan: Exhibit Virtual Tours](#)
[American Battlefield Trust: 360-degree Battlefield Tours](#)
[National Museum of the Great Lakes: Virtual Tour](#)
[Thomas Jefferson's Monticello: Virtual Tour](#)
[George Washington's Mount Vernon: Virtual Tours, timelines, etc.](#)
[Yellowstone National Park, US: Virtual Tours](#)
[Yosemite National Park, US: Virtual Tour](#)
[Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum: Virtual Tour](#)
[Cliffe Castle Museum: Virtual Tour](#)
[National Museum of the U.S. Air Force: Virtual Tour](#)
[Arizona State Museum: Virtual Tour](#)
[Vizcaya Museum and Gardens: Virtual Tour](#)

Online Museum Exhibits

[Girl Museum: Online Exhibits](#)
[Virtual Migration Museum: Interactive Online Experience / App](#)
[JFK Library: "Moonshot" App and Online Interactive](#)
[Virtual Museum of Canada: Virtual Exhibits and Cultural Content](#)
[Museum of Ontario Archaeology: "History of Ste. Marie II" Online Exhibit](#)
[Monterey Bay Aquarium: Animal Live Cams](#)
[Canadian Museum of History: Online Exhibitions](#)
[Remembering Lincoln, Ford's Theatre: Interactive online exhibit](#)
[M Woods, Beijing, China: Experimental Online Exhibition](#)
[Second Canvas Apps: 30 Museum Apps \(Google Sheet\)](#)

[Reina Sofía Museum Radio: Audiovisual resources; an acoustic museum experience](#)
[Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum](#)
[National Museum of the U.S. Navy](#)
[National Women’s History Museum](#)
[Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)
[MoMA Learning](#)
[Speed Art Museum: At-home art-making videos](#)
[The Field Museum: The Brain Scoop \(YouTube\)](#)
[North Carolina Museum of Art: Learn, \(collections, videos, curriculum\)](#)
[Sketchfab: 3D Models \(link goes to cultural-specific search\)](#)
[The Hammer: Contemporary Art programs, \(YouTube\)](#)
[Royal Albert Memorial Museum: Exeter Time Trail \(Interactive timeline\)](#)
[Les Fruits de Mer: Activities, books, films about Caribbean wildlife](#)
[Museum of Early Trade and Crafts: Recipes, Games, Coloring Pages, etc.](#)
[Museum Strathroy-Cardoc: Sydenham River Discovery online exhibit \(Flash\)](#)
[Denver Art Museum: Artist videos](#)
[Thomas Cole National Historic Site: Videos](#)
[Virginia Museum of History & Culture: Lecture series videos](#)
[Better World Museum: Draw Together in VR, Bob Ross-style videos](#)
[Discover XR: The Future of Social Media & Online Learning \(YouTube\)](#)
[KaiXR: Free Museum VR Field Trips \(no VR gear needed\)](#)
[HistoryView.org: Virtual Reality Tours](#)
[Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum: Activities, Coloring Pages](#)
[Paleontological Research Institution: Resources for Families, K-12 Students, College Students](#)
[Tate: Tate Kids \(Games and quizzes, videos, kids’ art, etc.\)](#)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art: MetKids](#)
[Exploratorium: Science Experiment “Snacks”](#)
[American Museum of Natural History: Ology science website for kids](#)
[Shedd Aquarium: Sea Curious- Kid Questions, Animal Answers \(YouTube\)](#)
[Glazer Children’s Museum: Online Activities](#)
[Children’s Museum of South Dakota: Recipes for Play](#)
[Suzhou Museum: Online Mini-Games](#)
[Pittsburgh Children’s Museum: The MAKESHOP Show \(Makerspace Blog\)](#)
[The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis: Museum at Home](#)
[Long Island Children’s Museum: Play Outside Ideas](#)
[Norton Simon Museum: Art Projects for Kids \(scroll to section\)](#)
[The Kennedy Center: ArtsEdge, art education resources](#)
[Canadian Museum of Nature: Coloring Pages, Arctic, Garden, Dinosaurs](#)
[MCA Chicago: “Art Like Me” Culturally-Relevant Art Workbook for Kids](#)
[National Museum of Australia: “Fun at Home” DIY activities](#)
[Smarthistory: Source of history content for Khan Academy](#)
[Frist Kids: Art activities and videos](#)
[iCivics: Virtual games \(free beginning with Covid-19\)](#)
[International Association of Children in Museums: Coronavirus Guide](#)
[Rijksstudio: Remix collections from Rijksmuseum](#)
[Naturalis: 40.000.000 natural science collections objects](#)
[SMK Open: National Gallery of Denmark Collections](#)
[The Belvedere, Vienna, Austria](#)

[Canadian Museum of History](#)
[UK Postal Museum](#)
[South West Collections, England](#)
[Brooklands Museum, Surrey, UK \(cars, motorcycles, aircraft\)](#)
[Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, UK \(art and history\)](#)
[Paris Museums: Over 300,000 works](#)
[Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland](#)
[Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam](#)
[Kröller-Müller Museum, The Netherlands](#)
[Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain](#)
[Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway \(art by Edvard Munch\)](#)
[Mori Art Museum, Tokyo](#)
[Museum of New Zealand](#)
[Open Access at the Met](#)
[New York Archaeological Repository: Nearly 1,000,000 objects](#)
[Cooper Hewitt, New York \(historical and contemporary design\)](#)
[Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio](#)
[Albright-Knox, New York](#)
[The Barnes Collection, Philadelphia](#)
[The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Pennsylvania](#)
[Corning Museum of Glass, New York](#)
[The Guggenheim, New York](#)
[Delaware Art Museum](#)
[McMaster Museum of Art, Canada](#)
[Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Arts, Arizona](#)
[The Henry Ford, Michigan](#)
[Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University](#)
[Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum, Virginia](#)
[Akron Art Museum, Ohio](#)
[Oakland Museum of California](#)
[National Museum of African American History & Culture](#)
[Chicago History Museum, Illinois](#)
[Walker Art Center, Minneapolis \(visual, performing, media arts\)](#)
[The Hammer, LA \(contemporary art\)](#)
[Los Angeles County Museum of Art \(LACMA\)](#)
[Crocker Art Museum, California](#)
[The Walters, Baltimore](#)
[Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University](#)
[Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois](#)
[The Khalili Collections: 35,000 works of art](#)
[M+ Collections: 5,000+ Cultural Objects](#)
[Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture](#)
[Latino Cultural Arts Center, Denver](#)
[Digital Cleveland History](#)
[New Museum Digital Archive](#)
[Royal Armouries Collections](#)
[The Latin American Art Museum of Buenos Aires \(MALBA\)](#)
[Xul Solar Museum, Argentina](#)

[National Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#)
[Chilean National Museum of Fine Arts](#)

Music

[Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/) - <https://open.spotify.com/>

[iHeartRadio](https://www.iheart.com/playlist/) - <https://www.iheart.com/playlist/>

[SoundCloud](https://soundcloud.com/) - <https://soundcloud.com/>

[Radio.net](https://www.radio.net/) - <https://www.radio.net/>

[Mashable](https://mashable.com/2007/07/06/online-music/) - <https://mashable.com/2007/07/06/online-music/>

[Music on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9-kyTW8ZkZNDHQJ6FgpwQ) - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9-kyTW8ZkZNDHQJ6FgpwQ>

Spiritual Resources

www.churchnativity.com

www.gfc.org

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