



# DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County  
Department of Human Services



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## **Local senior centers collaborate to combat isolation, loneliness**

The pandemic has been challenging for everyone, but one group that has been facing an especially difficult time is seniors. In addition to being at a higher risk for severe illness from the virus, many seniors have been unable to connect with their friends and families in-person and may not have the technology or the know-how to connect virtually. This loneliness has been made even worse by the temporary closing of the physical locations of senior centers around the County.

Recognizing the struggle that countless seniors are now facing, centers in the Area Agency on Aging's (AAA) Senior Community Center Provider Network banded together to create a workgroup focused on combatting isolation. The workgroup of 13 centers – led by Justin LeWinter, program manager at Macedonia FACE – has been meeting biweekly since June.

The main role of the workgroup is to share resources between agencies, whether it is opening virtual events to seniors at other centers or compiling best practices in a Google Doc. One of the workgroup's most successful initiatives has been bingo games that participants can join by phone or through Zoom. More than 50 seniors attended the most recent game held on October 15.

Over the coming months, the workgroup plans to continue exploring new ways they can remotely support local seniors, with an emphasis on addressing the digital divide.

"I would like to commend the Allegheny County Senior Center Network for being able to quickly shift from in person to virtual and remote programming," said Jennifer Baker, care management supervisor for senior centers and wellness programs in AAA. "This shift has enabled senior centers to continue operations and has also provided essential social connections for seniors in our community."