

## **Pennsylvania Link to Aging and Disability Resource Office**

### **COVID – 19 Agency Survey Results**

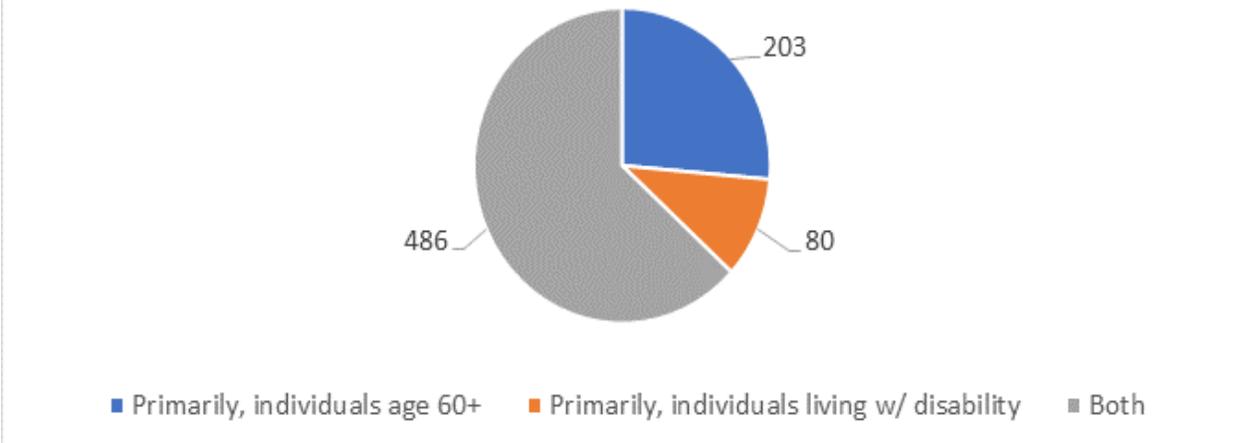
**April 3, 2020**

The Pennsylvania Link to Aging and Disability Resources, commonly referred to as the PA Link, is a cross-age, cross-system network of partner agencies that collaborate to serve individuals who need long-term services and supports. The mission of the PA Link is to improve access to long-term services and supports for individuals, their loved ones and caregivers, regardless of age, income, or ability, through an integrated network of partner agencies committed to expanding the use of community-based solutions, promoting person-centered decision making, and enhancing the quality of services.

Considering the unprecedented and challenging times our Commonwealth is currently facing in light of COVID-19, the Aging and Disability Office (ADRO) conducted a survey to its vast partner network in order to better understand how PA Link partner agencies are operating at this time, what type of adjustment have they made, what needs they may have, and where are the potential gaps in services for the community. The survey was developed and administered through Survey Monkey, and it consisted of eleven questions. The survey link was sent to the 3,706 PA Link partners on Wednesday, March 25, 2020, and the survey remained open for responses through close of business on Wednesday, April 1, 2020. A total of 769 PA Link partners responded.

Of the 769 total responses, 203 agencies indicated that they primarily serve individuals over the age of 60, while 80 agencies indicated that they primarily serve individuals living with a disability, and 486 agencies indicated that they serve both individuals over the age of 60 and those living with a disability. These agencies vary in how they serve older adults and people with disabilities. Their services range from in-home personal assistance support to homeless shelter management to education.

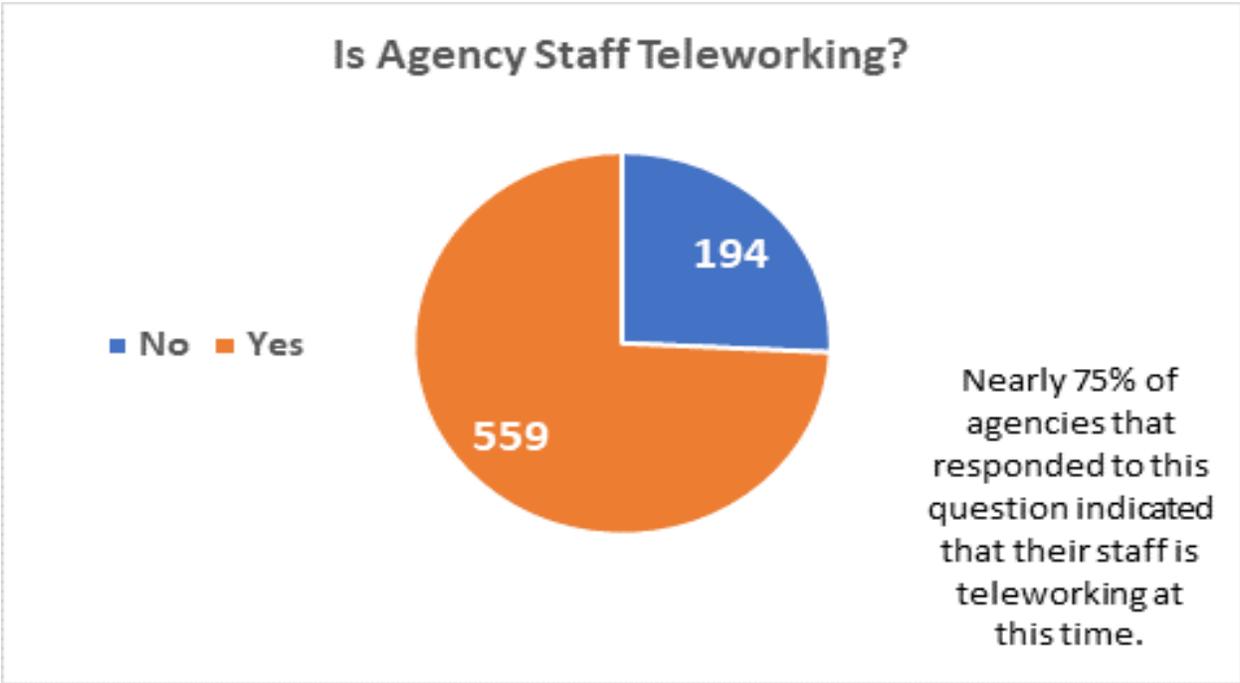
### What Population Does Your Agency Serve?



### How have Agencies Adjusted to COVID-19?

All direct-service partners have been affected by COVID-19 in our Commonwealth. They have quickly made adjustments to keep their staff and the people they serve safe. Most agencies that responded indicated that their staff is teleworking.

### Is Agency Staff Teleworking?



Many of these agencies shared concern with future employment and growing financial constraints. They also noted the difficulty in connecting people in the community to reliable and accessible sources of food. For those who still have staff going into homes, their biggest concern was personal protective equipment. Many agencies reported that they are able to connect with the people that they serve in innovative and remote ways. Programs that historically served individuals at their sites have reallocated their resources in the following ways:

- Food programs are now delivered or picked up via grab-and-go systems.
- In-person assessments/applications are now done via the telephone.
- Face to Face meetings are being held virtually using Zoom/Skype/etc.
- Agencies are leaning on volunteers to pick up groceries and/or prescriptions for at-risk individuals.

Even though agencies may not be physically open to the public, they continue to show dedication to the clients they serve by maintaining open channels of communication. Some agencies have been able to launch teleservices very quickly.



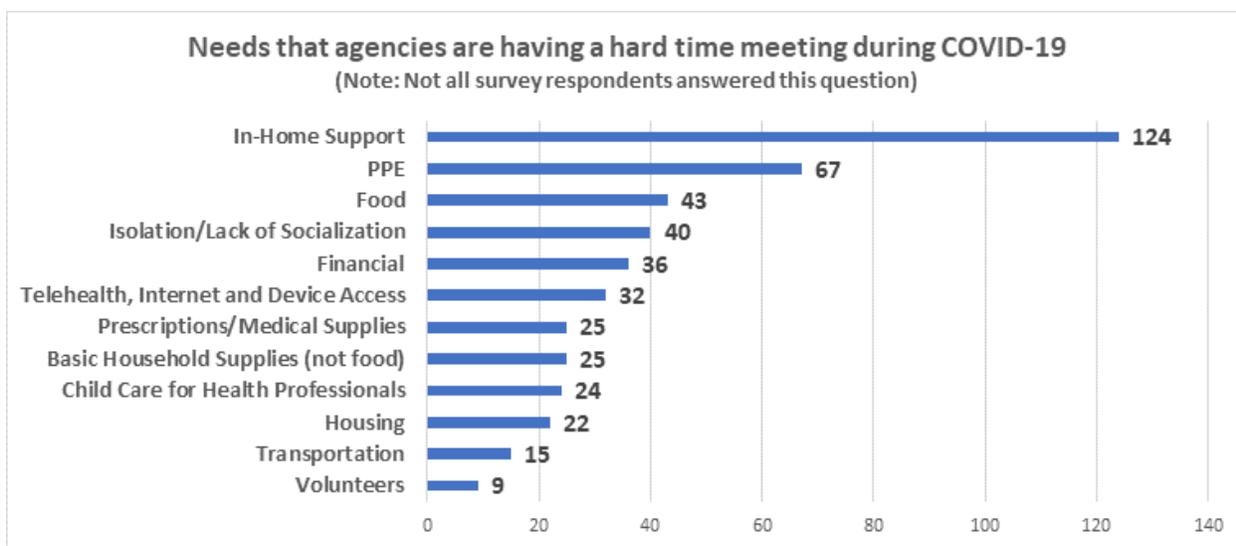
## **What are the Immediate Challenges Facing Providers?**

The chart below outlines the most common responses to question 11 of the survey which asked agencies to identify any gaps in service or needs that the agency is having difficulty meeting during COVID-19. We searched the 296 free text responses for key words which are noted as the category title in the chart below. We also searched for other related words and phrases in order to identify as best as possible how often a need or service category was mentioned in this free text response option.

<b>Category title within chart:</b>	<b>Also includes any mention of...</b>
In-Home Support	Personal Care, ADL Assistance, Nurses, CNA, LPN shortage
Personal Protective Equipment	Masks, Wipes, Supplies
Food	Groceries, Meals
Isolation/Lack of Socialization	No Visitors
Financial	Funding, Money, Employment
Telehealth, Internet and Device Access	Laptops, Phones, Printers, Computers, Online, Internet, Technology
Prescriptions/Medical Supplies	Hospital Beds
Basic Household Supplies (not food)	Cleaning Supplies, Toilet Paper, Paper Towels
Child Care for Health Professionals	Day Care
Housing	Rent Assistance, Homelessness
Transportation	---
Volunteers	---

We identified the following as needs through the resources: a lack of in-home support was noted almost twice as often as any other need, followed by a lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Accessing food, remaining connected to community and avoiding isolation, and concerns over finances were also identified as concerns at this time. Obtaining prescriptions or other medical supplies as well as basic household supplies (not including food) and finding childcare for healthcare professionals who are serving on the front lines of this current crisis were also noted as problem areas.

***"The digital divide is felt even more as so many of our persons do not own nor have access to computers – magnified even more with libraries being closed and community rooms in the buildings where persons live also closed."*** This is just one example from an agency in the Commonwealth identifying with the need for in-home technology.



### **How can PA Link partners help?**

Since the survey was initiated, the PA Link to Aging and Disability Resource Office, (ADRO) has identified many resources from participation in conference call meetings with partner agencies across the Commonwealth. The ADRO will make an effort to connect agencies who identified needs in the survey, to available resources in their respective locations.

One of the core components to the Pennsylvania Link to Aging and Disability Resource Office is the Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) program. PCC is designed to better guide Pennsylvanians on the wide range of public and private Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS). The goals of the program include; reducing gaps in service, empowering individuals to take action regarding their long-term care, and streamlining eligibility. Approved and trained partners across the Commonwealth fill the role of Person Centered Counselors. A Pennsylvanian is eligible to receive PCC if he or she is an adult over the age of 60, or an individual living with a physical, behavioral, or developmental disability. This free service connects Pennsylvanians to public benefits and private resources.

Because PCC can be facilitated remotely, the service can be a resource for the needs addressed above, such as; finding access to food, perscriptions, household supplies, medical supplies, and in-home support.

Of those partners who provide PCC and responded to the survey, 86% have indicated that they are still able to provide PCC during the COVID-19 emergency. Individuals who believed they would benefit from speaking with a Person-Centered Counselor should contact the PA Link Call Center at 1-800-753-8827.