

# IOWA AAAs at Work: COVID-19 Report

IOWA ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING



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# RESPONDING TO NEEDS

## Older Iowans and COVID-19 Response

Older Iowans (age 60 and over) represent 17%<sup>1</sup> of Iowa's total population and remain the most vulnerable to serious illness related to COVID-19. In Iowa, 93% of the COVID-related deaths have been older adults.<sup>2</sup>

Federal funding was provided through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and emergency response funding flexibility through the Support Older Americans Act of 2020, which reauthorized the Older Americans Act. This additional funding and administrative flexibility assisted Iowa's aging network in rapidly responding to the safety needs of older Iowans.



*"When confronted with the dangers presented by COVID-19, Iowa's Area Agencies on Aging responded immediately, collaboratively, and creatively to offer options to keep aging Iowans safe, secure and supported in their own homes. We share this publication with you to highlight our successful interventions."*

**- Kelly Butts-Elston, President, i4a Board**

1) State Data Center of Iowa & Iowa Department on Aging (May, 2020). Older Iowans: 2020. Accessed: <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/Publications/older2020.pdf>

2) State of Iowa (2020). COVID-19 in Iowa: Outcomes Analysis (Deaths) Dashboard. Retrieved 1/7/2020. <https://coronavirus.iowa.gov/pages/outcome-analysis-deaths>

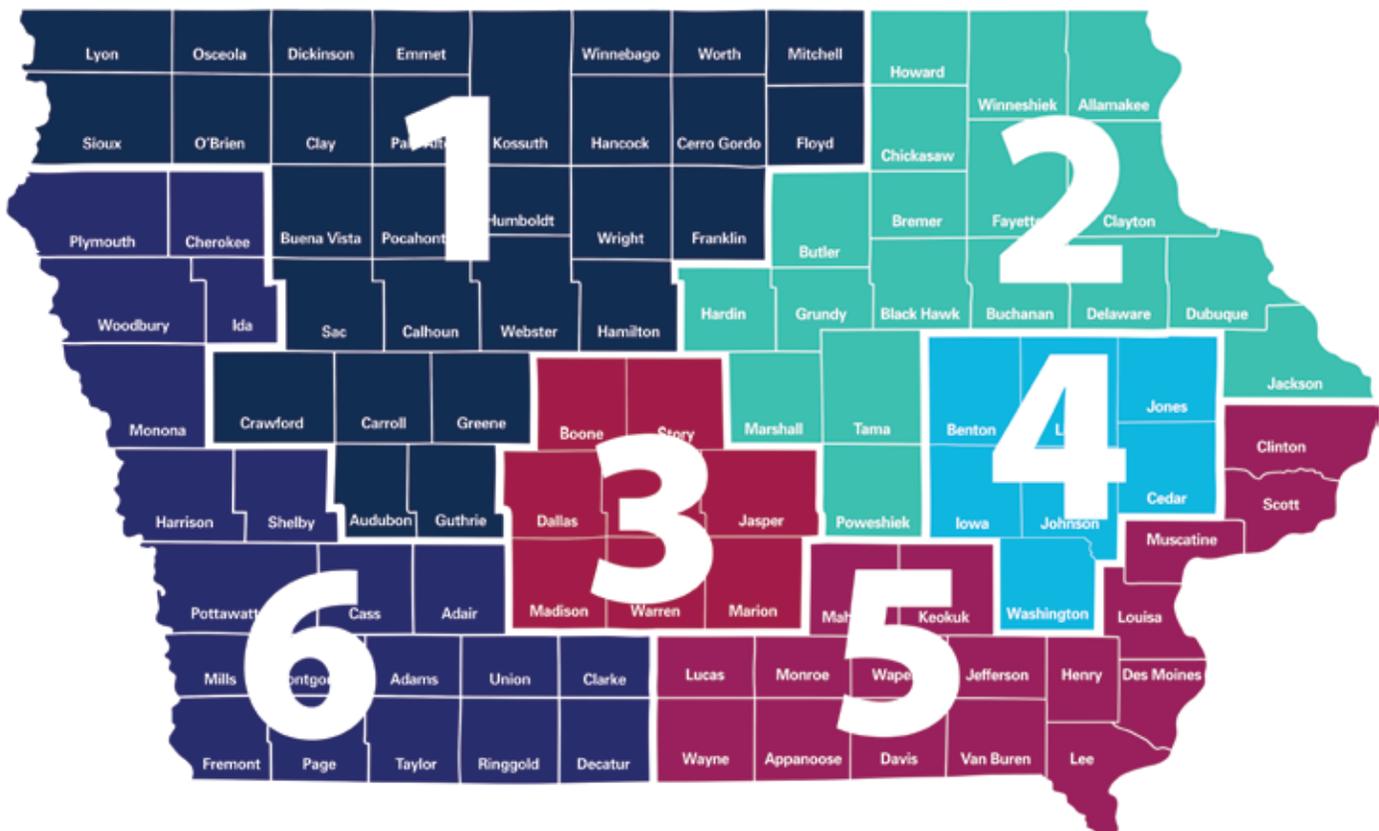
# Iowa's Area Agencies on Aging

Iowa's Aging Network was established by the U.S. Congress under the Older Americans Act of 1965 and was reauthorized to provide services, supports, and advocacy under the Support Older Americans Act of 2020. Iowa's six Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are designated by the Iowa Department on Aging to provide information and referral assistance, coordinate a wide range of home and community-based programs and services, and advocacy within their respective Planning and Service Area (PSA).

Programs and services are available for older adults over the age of 60, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers. LifeLong Links (866-468-7887) is Iowa's Aging and Disabilities Resource Center that provides statewide, coordinated access to local supports and services.

## Area Agencies on Aging Contact Information

PSA 1: Elderbridge Area Agency on Aging	800-243-0678
PSA 2: Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging	800-779-8707
PSA 3: Aging Resources of Central Iowa	800-747-5352
PSA 4: Heritage Area Agency on Aging	800-332-5934
PSA5: Milestones Area Agency on Aging	855-410-6222
PSA 6: Connections Area Agency on Aging	800-432-9209



# RAPID RESPONSE



## Iowa's AAAs rapid response to meet the needs of older Iowans included:

### Advocacy

- Statewide Workplace Framework that protected AAA staff, older adults, and the general public.
- Advocacy for CARES Act funding that provided \$2 billion in relief for aging networks throughout the United States.
  - **Advocacy efforts resulted in over \$12 million in relief for Iowa's aging network.**

### Meals

- Closed congregate meal sites
- Provided congregate meal site participants with home-delivered meals
- Substantially increased access to home-delivered meals for older Iowans who reported a need for food and to ensure their safety
  - **Established "grab-and-go" or "drive-by" meals to increase access to food**
  - **Created and delivered shelf-stable, multi-day meal packs and/or food boxes**
- Established safety protocols for deliveries to ensure the safety of meal recipients and of volunteers and staff

### LifeLong Links and Information/Assistance & Referral

- Have responded to a significant increase in calls from individuals seeking additional AAA services and supports
  - **Staff have worked remotely while meeting increased demand**

### Safety and Assurance Calls

- Staff, contractors, and volunteers maintain regular contact (every 7-10 days) with all individuals receiving services to confirm their safety, ensure that they have the food and services they need, and provide additional mental health comfort to combat fears and social isolation
  - **More frequent contacts are made for individuals who have complex needs or as requested**
  - **Along with safety-check calls, elder abuse specialists have worked to be readily available to support the safety of older Iowans experiencing or at risk-of experiencing elder abuse**

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

- AAAs have entered collaborative arrangements with local restaurants, grocers, pet food producers, and volunteer networks to meet the needs of individuals across the state, which have established innovative partnerships that may be sustainable past the COVID-19 public health crisis
- Raised scam and elder abuse awareness through social media alerts
- Enhanced use of technology to reduce social isolation and improve health
  - **Wellness sessions through Facebook, Zoom and conference calls**
  - **Easy-to-fix meals based on ingredients that are likely available in the home through Facebook and other social media**
- Caregiver support groups through conference calls
- Enhanced coordination with mental health and disability partners (e.g., MHDS regions, Easterseals Iowa, Iowa Compass) to meet the needs of adults with disabilities
  - **Increased donations, material aid support, and reassurance support efforts**
- Increased efforts to connect with local farmers and food-chain suppliers to develop ongoing, sustainable partnerships
- Enhanced collaboration with local food banks and pantries
- Increased community coordination efforts through public-private partnerships (e.g., coordination for use of hotel for COVID-19 positive individuals)



# FOOD INSECURITY RESPONSE



## Nutrition



*"Milestones's most unique challenge was probably in our nutrition program. Milestones prepares the meals for most of our counties (14 of 17). Between mid-March and April, we halted daily hot meal delivery to reduce exposure, coordinated with food suppliers and food banks, and set up shelf stable assembly lines, creating and delivering food boxes across the region... Simultaneously, Milestones cooks were realigning to mass produce frozen meals, and we began delivering multiple meals once or twice per week. Within a short timeframe, nutrition staff completely turned the Milestones nutrition operation around with entirely different products and strict protocols, processes, and delivery procedures ('turning the barge on a dime')."*

**-Becky Passman, CEO, Milestones Area Agency on Aging**



*"Aging Resources' providers have continued, without interruption, to prepare and serve hot, home-delivered meals and 'Grab & Go' meals at the former congregate dining sites. The monthly average for our eight county service area is 47,350 meals. We have also partnered with Hy-Vee and 5 Spice Sisters Asian Meals to provide meals, especially meals that are culturally appropriate."*

**-Carol Schmidt, Nutrition Services Director, Aging Resources of Central Iowa**



*"When the pandemic reached Iowa, Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging immediately took action to get vital nutrition delivered safely to older individuals in our service. We adjusted from daily meal delivery to weekly frozen meals to limit contact for both our volunteers and clients. To reach rural areas throughout Northeast Iowa, we developed new partnerships with local restaurants, grocery stores, and vendors. Through these partnerships, we were able to help older individuals remain safely at home and limit their exposure to the virus and help out community businesses also affected by the pandemic."*

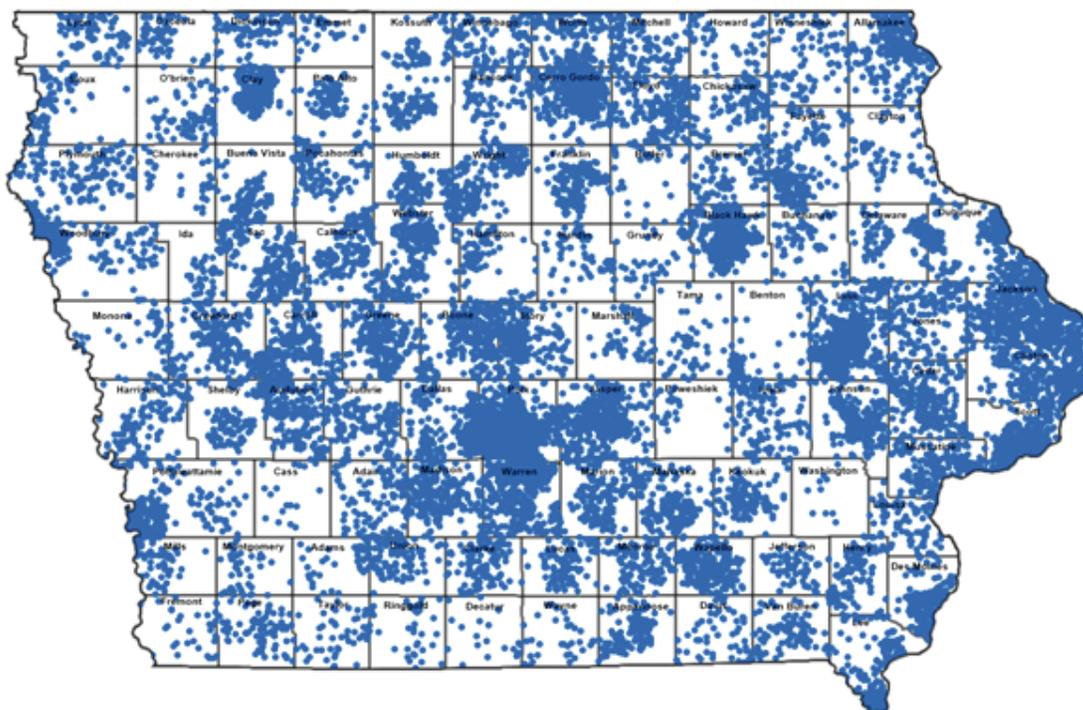
**-Mike Donohue, CEO, Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging**

# RESPONSE BY THE NUMBERS

## Home Delivered Meals

# Nutrition

The Area Agencies on Aging delivered meals across the entire state servicing every county in Iowa.



Iowa AAAs were able to offer expanded access for over 11,000 home delivered meals.



# IMPACTING LIVES

## Nutrition

*“Thank you for the meals I have picked up in Marion on Thursdays. This has helped me get through these awful weeks of isolation. I had lost all desire to cook and would settle for easy... Your people are so gracious when putting things in the car that I felt someone did care about me. I am back on track now and feel I can plan and fix good meals on my own again... God bless you for the gift of food and caring.”*

**- From Heritage Area Agency on Aging**



*“The meals are delicious. The people that deliver them are courteous and very nice. I’m not sure what we would do without such a caring organization. Thanks so much!”*

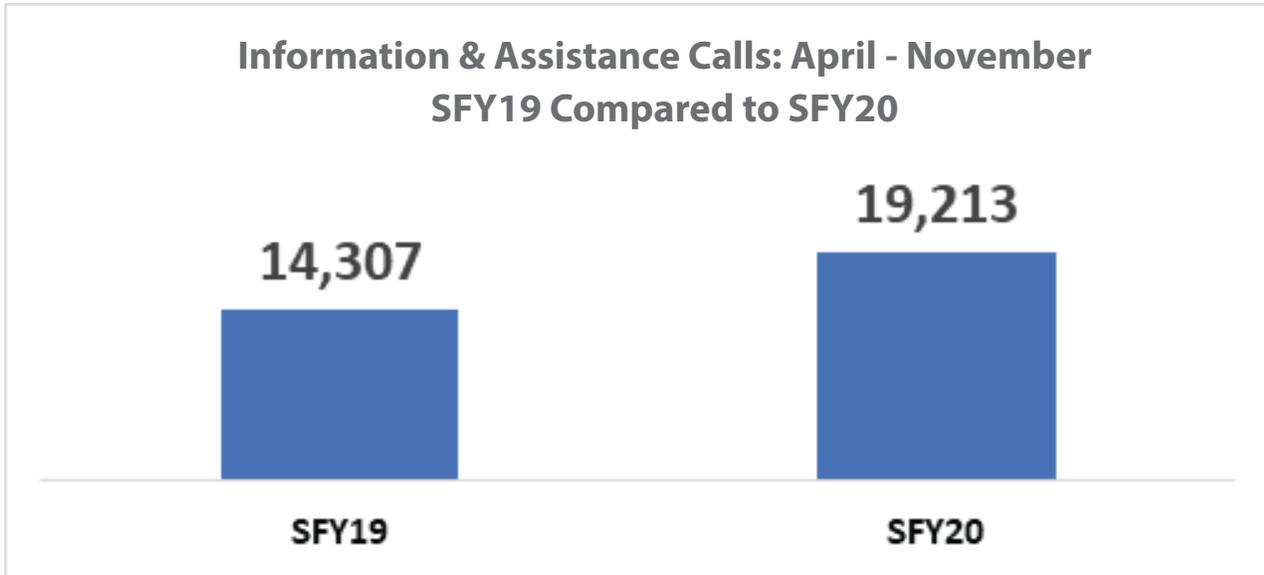
*“Elderbridge Agency on Aging, together with Sister’s Home Style Entrees of Humboldt, IA, are excited to announce that since April 1st we have provided 14,334 frozen meals to those in need due to COVID-19. A huge shout out to Sister’s for working so diligently to ensure that meals were sent out in a timely manner! Thank you to those of you who have contributed to the nutrition program. These meals would not be possible without the generosity of those who contribute to our meal program.”*



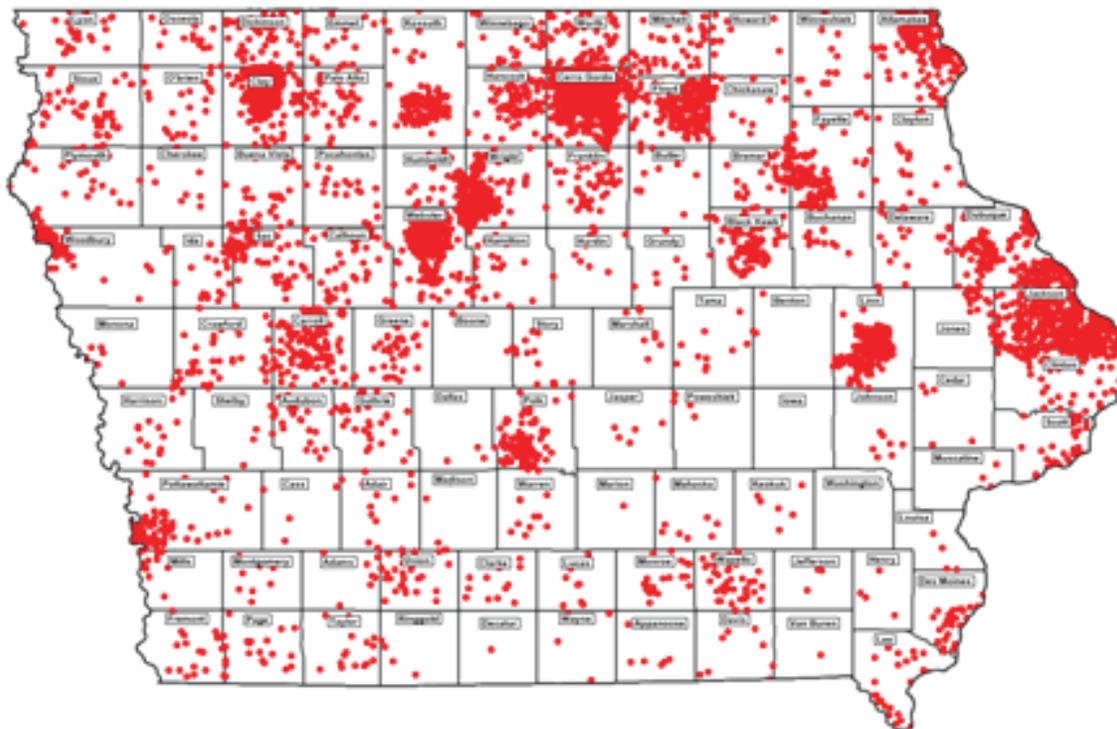
# RESPONSE BY THE NUMBERS

## Information & Assistance

Information and assistance calls increased nearly 35% during the pandemic.



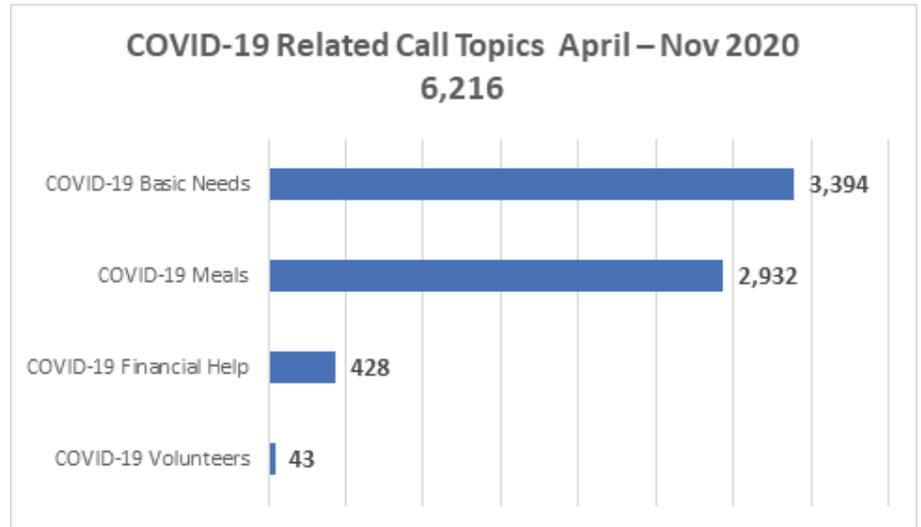
COVID-19-related information and assistance calls were received from 97 of Iowa's 99 counties



# HERE TO HELP

## Information & Assistance

**Access to food/meals and basic needs (e.g., access to toilet paper, general paper products like paper towels, cleaning disinfecting items, masks) have been the most requested services during the pandemic.**



**However, AAA staff proved time and time again that they were willing to go the extra mile to and deliver creative solutions to meet client needs**

*“Thomasina had a client (who) was trying to find a way to obtain a power-lift recliner. The client desperately needed to get her feet up to reduce the fluid buildup in her legs. Money was very tight for this client. Medicare only pays a small portion of the power lift recliner, leaving the balance to be paid by the client, which could be over \$500.00 at the very least.*

*The client told Thomasina that she would be OK with a used power lift recliner. Thomasina searched for several weeks for a possible used power-lift recliner until reaching out to a colleague who said she knew of a power-lift recliner that may work for her client. The colleagues connected with a friend and was told that they would give the power-lift recliner to the client for FREE! Thomasina’s client’s family picked up the chair and took it to the client. The following Monday, the client called Thomasina to say how much she “loved” the power lift recliner. Thomasina and the client both sent a thank you to the owner of the power lift recliner. Her generosity truly was a blessing!” - Sue Anne Stoermer, Elderbridge Agency on Aging*



# OFFERING COMFORT

**Social isolation was a repeated concern among families of Iowa seniors and AAA counselors alike. The health concerns raised by COVID-19 and consequential social distancing requirements, left many older Iowans alone, separated from friends and family. Iowa AAAs responded with compassion and solutions.**

*“During the last month I have had a few telephone calls with a 90-year-old woman who lives in the same town as me, just a couple of blocks away. I helped set her up with some frozen meals a couple times. We chatted about our town, puzzles, the weather, and more. I always like to ask my callers if there is anything else they need.” The lady responded and said, “Well I don’t want to be a bother, but why is it so hard to find milk?” I replied, “I didn’t know it was, you know, my husband has to go to the store tonight anyway if we find some would it be alright for him to drop some off to you?” She stated, “Well that would be great!” I confirmed her milk of choice and told her I would call and let her know before my husband stopped by that evening.*



*About 20 minutes after I had gotten off the phone with the woman my husband called and let me know he got the milk. I gave the woman a call and let her know my husband was on his way and she let me know she thought he was just pulling up to her home. I stayed on the phone with her as she confirmed it was him and during the delivery.*

*He took the milk to her door and she told him to hang on a second because she needed to get something for him. He replied, “Oh no don’t worry about it. You don’t owe us anything.” She demanded he wait and I heard my husband thank her. At that time I was unsure what she had given him. When my husband got home he showed me the cookies and told me that he told her not to pay us. He then stated, “I wasn’t going to take her money, but I had to take the cookies. I don’t think there is anything more offensive than not taking a 90-year-old woman’s cookies.” My husband and I both laughed and smiled.”*

**-Olivia Pals, Service Specialist Elderbridge Agency on Aging**

# BATTLING SOCIAL ISOLATION

*“ During this time of Covid, I’ve noticed on I&A calls that people need more time on phone calls just to talk and share stories about what is going on in their lives or of their experiences. They also enjoy the little anecdotes I’ve shared – such as the confused squirrels outside my window when their tree was trimmed prior to the tree being removed. More time is given for each call for this type of simple conversation.*

*One of the caregivers in our group worked, the other was in her home with limited contact with her grown children. She said she looked forward to meeting together using zoom, and it gave her the opportunity to open up about her loss in caring for a daughter with disabilities, and new health diagnosis for her husband.*

*There was a lot of uncertainty about what was going on with her husband and the lifestyle changes he (they) needed to make to keep him healthy.*

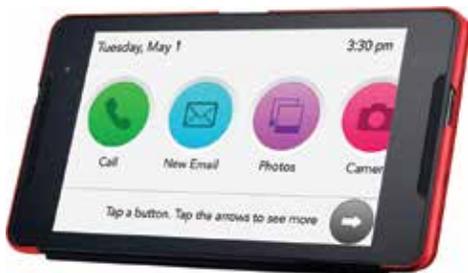
*Utilizing Zoom has also opened up the Aging Well Series to many who would have been unable to attend in person – either due to physical limitations or the travel time to come for a 1.5 hour presentation and discussion.*

**-Aubury Krueger-Kutchara, Connections Area Agency on Aging**



## INTRODUCING “GRANDPADS”

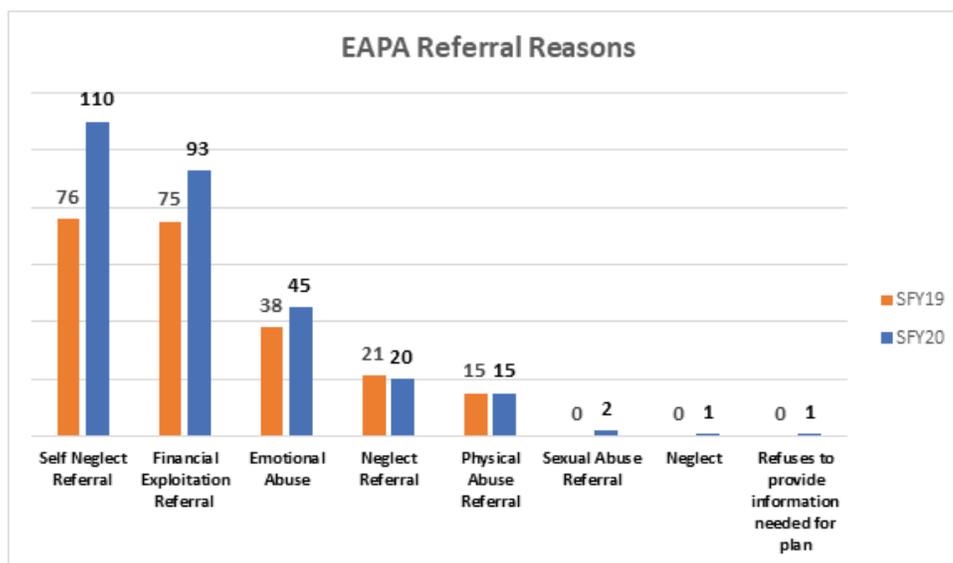
*“One of our caregiver clients received a grandpad from our agency. Her spouse went to skilled nursing facility to gain strength after COVID. While there, she was able to talk to her family and actually see her family who live 6 hours away. Her family was also able to keep better visual on how she was doing, but also how their dad was doing in the nursing home. This device has been a Godsend to not only the caregiver, but to her family who would worry incessantly about how she is, and also how lonely she is not being able to see grandchildren and new baby great grandchildren. She did not know how to use any type of technology and doesn’t even have a cell phone, but was able to understand how to use the Grandpad. Now her family all use the app to communicate. It has been wonderful for their entire family. Her husband is home now, and they continue to use the Grandpad to see and talk to their family during COVID and the holidays.”*



**- Stacia Timmer, COO, Elderbridge Agency on Aging**

# Elder Abuse Prevention

Iowa AAAs responded to nearly 290 referrals for assistance to address elder abuse during the pandemic. (April - Nov 2020)



*"In working in the field I have noticed an increase in EAPA referrals. I have seen a significant rise in self-neglect cases I believe are directly related to COVID-19. Most of my clients are unable or too scared to go out. The requests for in-home services and home-delivered meals has sky rocketed. I have also noticed an increase in mental health/emotional stress related calls. Most of the calls I have received are self-referrals, they are lonely and isolated. Most of the calls are from those who just want to talk to someone. I have a woman I am working with that calls me three to five times daily, she has refused any mental health assistance referrals I have offered to her, but just needs some emotional support. I am also working with a client who has suicidal tendencies, we are addressing this situation the best and most appropriate way we can for his health and safety. With these new types of calls/referrals coming in we are scheduling more mental health and behavioral health trainings to be available to us.*



*Another challenge we face is being closed to the public at this time. Many of my clients who need assistance use to come into the office to meet with me either due to the "abuser" being in the home or not feeling comfortable with having anyone in their home (hoarding issues). With COVID restrictions and the risk of them being out in public, it has become difficult to find a safe place to meet.*

**-Theresa Davison, Adult Rights Specialist, Milestones Area Agency on Aging**