

# VOICE OF EXPERIENCE



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Rocky Neighborhood Center | 200 S. Cruse Avenue | Helena, MT

Ph: 406.447.1680 | HELENA SENIOR CENTER

## A TRAGEDY OF SLOWLY BOILED FROGS

**Jim Marks**  
Area IV Agency on Aging  
Program Director

Recently, a lesson took me by surprise. I did not know that senior citizens commonly approach aging as individuals and not in groups. What's unexpected about this is that most folks facing challenges in their lives often join with others in similar circumstances. They embrace their identity as part of a group and work together to make good things happen for themselves. Conversely, collective action is rare among older Americans.

I am blind and spend a lot of my time working alongside others who are blind because, alone, I can achieve little, but when I lock arms with other blind colleagues, much can be accomplished. Now that I'm approaching my mid-sixties, I have to admit that aging seems like something that's happening to me, but the changes are so slow and steady in coming, I hardly notice. Sure, plenty have walked down the aging path before me, but somehow, experience and knowledge hardly get handed down. As a result, most of us are loners when it comes to aging.

Aging is like the proverb of the boiling frog. Throw a frog into a pot of boiling water, and it will spring from the pot. Put the frog into a pot of cool water and bring the pot to a boil slowly, the frog will find itself well-

cooked before it becomes aware of what's going on.

The consequences of the lack of self-awareness and peer-to-peer connections often are far from good for most seniors. For one thing, professionals, family members, and friends often speak for the elderly. Hard to have a voice if others are always speaking for you. Sometimes, it cannot be helped, but, in all cases, seniors should do for themselves what they can do for themselves. For another thing, older people tend to accept the unacceptable far too easily. For instance, aging shrinks choices in transportation, home health, and housing. Options drop not as an outcome of aging itself, but rather because society fails to do enough to support its elders. Older citizens should rage against these injustices and change society's behavior through collective action. "United we stand, divided we fall" applies to seniors as much as it does any other neglected crowd.

Rocky's Area IV Agency on Aging supports seniors as they avoid the tragedy of slowly boiled frogs. Mindfulness blossoms through connections with peers. Seniors who know who they are and where they are going always will exercise maximum control over their lives and be best off. While going at it alone may be occasionally feasible, it's oh so much more fruitful to collaborate with others. Our older years can and should be a wonderful time of life, and seniors working together promise the best chances at realizing the possibilities of aging well.

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## HELENA DDC MENU

MAY 2020-MEALS SERVED FROM 11:00 – 12:30

For Additional Information Call 447-1680 Helena



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<p>Congregate meals in Helena have a full salad bar unless otherwise stated.</p>	<p>Low fat milk is served every day at congregate sites and delivered every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to Home Delivered Meals (HDM)</p>			<p>1 TERIYAKI CHICKEN BREAST BROWN RICE ORIENTAL VEGETABLES ASIAN CABBAGE PINEAPPLE</p>
<p>4 BEEF TACO CASSEROLE REFRIED PINTO BEANS TORTILLA CHIPS &amp; SALSA MEXICAN CORN MANDARIN ORANGES</p>	<p>5 HOMEMADE HAM &amp; BEAN SOUP BUTTERMILK BISCUIT SAUTÉED GREENS CARROT COINS</p> <p>FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>6 HOT TURKEY SANDWICH MASHED POTATOES STEAMED BROCCOLI CRANBERRIES</p>	<p>7 CHICKEN PATTY ON A BUN POTATO TRIANGLES PEACHES &amp; PEARS</p> <p>4-BEANS &amp; GREENS (HDM)</p>	<p>8 BIRTHDAY DINNER VEAL PARMESAN OVER ROTINI NOODLES YELLOW &amp; GREEN ZUCCHINI GREEN BEANS PLUMP PLUMS CAKE &amp; ICE CREAM *NO SALAD BAR*</p>
<p>11 SALMON PATTY ON A BUN MIXED VEGGIES SWEET POTATOES JUICY PEACHES</p>	<p>12 LAZY DAISY CABBAGE CASSEROLE GOLDEN CORN PINEAPPLE</p> <p>FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>13 BBQ CHICKEN BAKED BEANS GARDEN VEGETABLES WHOLE GRAIN ROLL APRICOT HALVES</p>	<p>14 SALISBURY STEAK STEAMED BROWN RICE VEGETABLE MEDLEY MIXED FRUIT CUP</p> <p>COLESLAW (HDM)</p>	<p>15 HAM &amp; SCALLOPED POTATOES GARDEN PEAS PICKLED BEETS MANDARIN ORANGES</p>
<p>18 TURKEY CHOP SUEY OVER BROWN RICE GREEN BEANS DICED BEETS MANDARIN ORANGES</p>	<p>19 CHEESEBURGER ON A BUN POTATO TRIANGLES BAKED BEANS PACIFIC VEGGIES APPLESAUCE</p> <p>FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>20 CHICKEN BREAST IN MUSHROOM GRAVY BUTTERED NOODLES GARDEN PEAS CARROT COINS CRANBERRIES</p>	<p>21 HAMBURGER &amp; SPANISH RICE JUMBLE CORN &amp; BEAN MEDLEY CAULIFLOWER</p> <p>FRUITED JELLO (HDM)</p>	<p>22 SAUSAGE GRAVY OVER FRESH BAKED BISCUITS BREAKFAST POTATOES MIXED VEGETABLES APRICOTS</p>
<p>25 CLOSED</p>	<p>26 CALICO BEANS CARROT COINS PICKLED BEETS WHOLE GRAIN ROLL</p> <p>FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>27 OPEN FACE PORK SANDWICH W/GRAVY MASHED POTATOES GREEN PEAS BAKED APPLES</p>	<p>28 ZITI NOODLES W/MEATBALLS GARLIC BREAD GOLDEN CORN JUICY PEACHES</p> <p>CARROT RAISIN SALAD (HDM)</p>	<p>29 ORANGE CHICKEN WILD RICE BROCCOLI &amp; CAULIFLOWER FOUR BEAN SALAD PINEAPPLE</p>

WE DEPEND ON YOUR MEAL PAYMENT FOR PROGRAM EXPENSES – THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP – EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS

USDA prohibits discrimination in the administration of this program. To file a complaint, write to Secretary of Agriculture, Washington D.C. 20250.

This menu has been reviewed and approved by a Registered Dietitian, Cassandra Drynan, RDN Cassandra Drynan, R.D.N.

Suggested donation for 60 years old and over \$5.00. Required charge for under 60 years \$7.00.

## COVID-19 UPDATE

The spread of COVID-19 has proved to be a very challenging time for all of us. We are making our best effort to adapt our services in order to deliver the greatest possible impact, while still following the most careful safety measures to date. Many of the Rocky staff has embraced working from home during this time, but many of our services have been deemed essential. Although we will only be able to re-open senior centers and our offices once state orders permit us to, we will continue to do everything in our capacity to provide our services in an adapted format.

Among our services offered to seniors, all of the Rocky Housing properties remain open, the Area IV Agency on Aging can be reached via phone or email for assistance, Meals on Wheels operations have ramped up to compensate for the suspension of congregate meals, Commodities will be delivered to all sites in May, and we have established a COVID-19 Relief Fund to purchase emergency supplies for the individuals and families we serve.

As we all continue to respond to this developing pandemic, we hope you and your family remain safe and healthy. Please take every precaution to ensure you are only spreading kindness. If we can offer any assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us at 406-447-1680.

HELENA DDC MENU 

JUNE 2020- MEALS SERVED FROM 11:00 - 12:30

For Additional information Call 447-1680 Helena



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<p>1 MONTANA PASTY w/GRAVY WINTER VEGETABLES GARDEN PEAS APRICOT HALVES</p>	<p>2 PORK &amp; VEGGIE STIR FRY BROWN RICE STEAMED CABBAGE  FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>3 PARMESAN CHICKEN BREAST BUTTERED ROTINI CREAMED SPINACH CARROT COINS PINEAPPLE</p>	<p>4 POTATO, VEGGIE &amp; CHEESE EGG BAKE VEGETABLE MIX WHOLE GRAIN ROLL SWEET PEACHES  TOSSED GREEN SALAD w/BEANS (HDM)</p>	<p>5 CLOSED  COOK'S TRAINING</p>
<p>8 FISH PATTY w/TARTAR SCALLOPED POTATOES HERBED CARROTS WHOLE GRAIN ROLL MANDARIN ORANGES</p>	<p>9 CHILI OVER TORTILLA CHIPS WITH CHEESE MEXICAN CORN CAULIFLOWER  FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>10 BAKED HAM MACARONI &amp; CHEESE MIXED VEGGIES GARDEN PEAS CINNAMON APPLESAUCE</p>	<p>11 SLOPPY JOES ON A BUN POTATO WEDGES BAKED BEANS SWEET PEACHES  COLESLAW (HDM)</p>	<p>12 BIRTHDAY DINNER OVEN BAKED CHICKEN WILD RICE PILAF SWEET YAMS GREEN BEANS JUICY PEARS CAKE &amp; ICE CREAM *NO SALAD BAR*</p>
<p>15 HUNGARIAN GOULASH GREEN PEAS PICKLED BEETS APRICOTS</p>	<p>16 SWEET-N-SOUR PORK WILD RICE GREEN BEANS CARROT COINS  FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>17 TURKEY NOODLE CASSEROLE MIXED VEGETABLES BRUSSELS SPROUTS FRUIT CRISP</p>	<p>18 SWEDISH MEATBALLS BROWN RICE WINTER SQUASH BLUSHING PEARS  TOSSED GREEN SALAD w/GARBANZOS (HDM)</p>	<p>19 CHICKEN PATTY ON A BUN BAKED POTATO WEDGES VEGGIE BLEND 4 BEAN SALAD</p>
<p>22 SALMON PATTY WILD RICE MIXED VEGETABLES GREEN BEANS SWEET PEACHES</p>	<p>23 PEPPER STEAK ROASTED POTATOES CAULIFLOWER MANDARIN ORANGES  FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p>24 CHICKEN A LA KING BUTTERMILK BISCUITS COUNTRY BLEND VEGGIES FOUR BEAN SALAD APRICOT HALVES</p>	<p>25 MEATLOAF MASHED POTATOES w/GRAVY WHOLE GRAIN ROLL MIXED FRUIT CUP  CARROT RAISIN SALAD (HDM)</p>	<p>26 CHILI DOG ON A BUN SWEET CORN CARROT COINS GOLDEN PEARS</p>
<p>29 BEEF STROGANOFF EGG NOODLES MIXED VEGETABLES PICKLED BEETS PINEAPPLE</p>	<p>30 HAMBURGER ON A BUN CARROT COINS BAKED BEANS  FRESH FRUIT (HDM)</p>	<p><i>Low fat milk is served every day in the Daily Dinner Club (DDC) and delivered every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to Home Delivered Meals (HDM)</i></p>	<p><i>Congregate meals in Helena have a full salad bar unless otherwise stated</i></p>	

WE DEPEND ON YOUR MEAL DONATION FOR PROGRAM EXPENSES – THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP – EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS  
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 This menu has been reviewed and approved by a Registered Dietitian, Cassandra Drynan, RDN Cassandra Drynan, RDN  
 Suggested donation for 60 years old and over \$5.00. Required charge for under 60 years \$7.00.

# CORONAVIRUS

www.cdc.gov

## What you can do:

- Stay home.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid close contact (6 feet, which is about two arm lengths) with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Call your healthcare professional if you have concerns about COVID-19 and your underlying condition or if you are sick.

## Stress and coping:

- Older people are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 which may

result in increased stress during a crisis.

- Fear and anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.

## Things you can do to support yourself:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories and social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

- Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call:

- 911
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

# COMMODITY FOOD FOR QUALIFYING SENIORS

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a program where seniors can receive regular allocations of free food every other month. The program guidelines mandate that the person receiving the food must be 60 years of age or older, a resident of Montana, and meet an income requirement. Food typically consists of canned fruit, vegetables, meats, juice, cereals, dry milk, shelf stable milk, cheese, pasta or beans, and peanut butter.

Rocky will have supplemental foods available for Helena-area senior citizens at the Helena Food Share, 1616 Lewis Street, Helena, MT. We are lucky to work with Helena Food Share to make the program more accessible to those individuals picking up the food. There is no charge for the food.

Persons 60+ will be certified to receive the food based on income and residency eligibility. For further information or questions, call Rocky at 406-447-1680.

## COMMODITIES SCHEDULE

	Lincoln, MT Wednesday, May 20 12:30 pm - 1:00 pm
Townsend, MT Monday, May 18 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Whitehall, MT Thursday, May 21 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
East Helena, MT Monday, May 18 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Boulder, MT Friday, May 22 9:30 am - 10:30 am
Wolf Creek, MT Tuesday, May 19 9:30 am - 10:30 am	White Sulphur Springs, MT Tuesday, May 26 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
Augusta, MT Tuesday, May 19 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Helena, MT @ Food Share Wednesday, May 20 8:00 am - 10:30 am
Elliston, MT Wednesday, May 20 9:30 am - 10:00 am	Thursday, May 21 8:00 am - 10:30 am
Avon, MT Wednesday, May 20 10:30 am - 11:00 am	

## VOLUNTEER FOR AREA IV

Are you self-isolating due to Covid-19 and wondering how you are going to get more groceries? Contact Area IV Agency on Aging of Rocky at (406) 457-7368 to learn more about their new service and find out if it will work for your situation.

Feeling isolated, bored or both? Join Area IV Agency on Aging in combating these two side-effects of the Covid-19 Shelter in Place order and/or self-isolation. We are looking for volunteers to make cloth masks for Rocky clients, staff and other Rocky volunteers. We would be happy to email or mail you the CDC's instructions and drop-off requires no human contact! We are also looking for people who love to talk - AND listen. - You might be self-isolating, but that doesn't mean you should be isolated. We are looking for people willing to call others who may be self-isolating. We provide the names, numbers, and prompts. You share conversation, heart, and time. Call Maria Murphy for more details at (406) 459-3471.



Good for \$1 off any movie or \$2 off any LIVE performance.

### Myrna Loy Theater Helena Senior Center MAY - JUNE COUPON

Sponsored by the Myrna Loy Center | Present in person at box office

- \* Not redeemable for cash.
- \* One coupon per customer
- \* Cannot be used during rentals, performances sponsored by other organizations or in conjunction with any special offers other than the senior rate.
- \* Can be used in addition to the senior discount.

## SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

May - June

\*These activities have been postponed until further notice.

### MONDAYS

9:30 am – Jennie’s Arthritis Exercise Class - Card Room

12:30 pm – Whist – Card Room

### TUESDAYS

9:00 am – Crafty Quilters – Card Room

9:45 am – Line Dancing – Dance Floor

12:30 pm - Hand & Foot - Parlor

1:00 pm – Pinochle – Card Room

1:00 pm - Cribbage - Parlor

1:00 pm – Bridge – Dance Floor

### WEDNESDAYS

9:00 am - Senior Advisory Council Meeting  
(fourth Wednesday of each month)

10:45 am – Tai Chi Exercise Class

12:30 pm - Hand & Foot - Parlor

1:00 - 3:00 pm – Bingo – Dining Room

### THURSDAYS

9:00 – 10:30 am – Coffee & Rolls – Dining Room

9:45 am – Line Dancing – Dance Floor

12:30 pm - Hand & Foot - Parlor

1:00 pm - Wood Carving – Dance Floor

### FRIDAYS

9:30 am – Jennie’s Arthritis Exercise Class

10:45 am – Tai Chi Exercise Class - Card Room

12:30 pm - Create-A-Craft - Card Room

### SUNDAYS

1:00 pm – Pinochle – Card Room

### HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ACTIVITY?

If you have an idea for an activity that isn’t currently offered, such as a dance class, card

## ROLLING, ROLLING, ROLLING!

By Rodney Applegate  
Senior Nutrition & Transportation  
Program Director

While most of our Rocky facilities are closed to the public and many staff members are working from their homes, Rocky’s Nutrition staff and volunteers are busy preparing and delivering meals to seniors age 60 and over Monday through Friday.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 forced us to temporarily close congregate meals at our senior centers, but our kitchens have increased their capacity to provide you a meal delivery option. If you – or a family member – are in need of a lunch, please contact us at 447-1680. Our suggested daily donation for seniors age 60 and over is \$5.00, but we never turn away any seniors for inability to pay.

For those receiving a home delivered meal, the process has changed slightly. In order to assure client and staff safety, our delivery staff will be bagging the meal, hanging it on your door and ringing the doorbell or knocking. Our drivers will then return to their vehicle and wait for you to answer. If you do not answer the door, our drivers will place a call to you, to assure you received the meal and that you are doing well.

In addition to providing a hot, nutritious meal, Rocky is committed to making sure our clients are healthy and well. So, please answer your door or telephone when we contact you. If we are unable to make visual or telephone contact, we will notify your listed emergency contact or place a call to emergency personnel who will make a visit to your residence to conduct a safety check.

During these unprecedented times, we all have to look out for each other. Telephone your family, friends and neighbors regularly to make sure they are doing okay and to let them know that you are doing okay. If you are not feeling well, please seek medical assistance immediately.

The safety and welfare of you is our first priority. It is important to stay at home, maintain social distancing and stay healthy. We look forward to the day when you we are all again together for conversation and lunch in our dining rooms, to play cards with friends and to enjoy the atmosphere that Rocky is known for. Should you need help or assistance, please contact Rocky at 447-1680.

Stay healthy and safe!

# 2020 CENSUS

We are disappointed that the Coronavirus put a stop to our helping seniors complete the census at the Neighborhood Center in Helena and at the Augusta, Lincoln, Townsend, Whitehall, and Boulder Senior Centers. However, it is really easy to complete the Census.

You can respond online, by phone, or by mail. If you would like to use a computer, go online to [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov). All you will need is your unique Census ID that came in the mail. If you no longer have the form mailed to you, you can still complete the questionnaire – look for the link that says: “If you do not have a Census ID, click here.”

You can also call 1-844-330-2020 to answer the Census over the phone. If you do not complete the Census online or via the phone, a paper (mail) Census will be sent to you.

Remember, the 2020 Census will determine congressional representation, inform hundreds of billions in federal funding every year, and provide data that will impact communities for the next decade.

Please be counted.

Thoughtfully designed, affordable, and safe senior and disabled housing in Lewis & Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater counties.  
\*All phone numbers utilize TTY 711  
Learn more at [www.rmhc.net](http://www.rmhc.net)

<b>PTARMIGAN RESIDENCES</b> 1-406-461-9849 Helena, Montana	<b>PHEASANT GLEN RESIDENCES</b> 1-406-461-9849 Helena, Montana
<b>RIVER ROCK RESIDENCES</b> 1-406-461-9849 Helena, Montana	<b>ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT PROPERTIES</b> 1-406-438-7125 Augusta, Montana
<b>BIG BOULDER RESIDENCES</b> 1-406-438-5611 Boulder, Montana	<b>TOWNSEND HOUSING</b> 1-406-437-4411 Townsend, Montana

## PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST MEDICARE FRAUD

By Dena Burnis  
[www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

Medicare officials are warning beneficiaries that fraudsters may try to use the coronavirus crisis as an opportunity to try and steal their identity and commit Medicare fraud. “In some cases they might tell you they’ll send you a Coronavirus test, masks, or other items in exchange for your Medicare number or personal information,” the alert from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services says. “Be wary of unsolicited requests for your Medicare number or other personal information. Only give your Medicare number to participating Medicare pharmacists, primary and specialty care doctors or people you trust to work with Medicare on your behalf. Remember, Medicare will never call you to ask for or check your Medicare number.”

CMS urges enrollees to treat their Medicare information like it’s a credit card. Here are some tips the agency has for how to protect against being the victim of Medicare fraud.

- Medicare will never contact you for your Medicare Number or other personal information unless you’ve given them permission in advance.
- Medicare will never call you to sell you anything.
- You may get calls from people promising you things if you give them a Medicare Number. Don’t do it.
- Medicare will never visit you at your home.
- Medicare can’t enroll you over the phone unless you called first.
- Postpone unnecessary care.

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### **Postpone necessary care**

As hospitals are increasingly facing shortages in everything from protective gear to respirators to personnel, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is recommending that surgeries and other medical procedures that are not absolutely necessary be postponed. “The reality is clear and the stakes are high: We need to preserve personal protective equipment for those on the front lines of this fight,” CMS Administrator Seema Verma said in a statement announcing the recommendations. CMS officials say postponing elective procedures will free up personal protective equipment (PPE), hospital beds and ventilators. Dental procedures use a lot of the PPE that is increasingly in short supply and “have one of the highest risks of transmission” of coronavirus because of how close the dentist or his assistants have to get to their patients. “To reduce the risk of spread and to preserve PPE, we are recommending that all nonessential dental exams and procedures be postponed until further notice,” the CMS news release says.

CMS officials also made it clear that the guidance they are issuing is based on recommendations — not requirements. “The decision about proceedings with nonessential surgeries and procedures will be made at the local level by the clinician, patient, hospital, and state and local health departments,” the CMS statement says.

Beyond the urgency of a procedure and the availability of beds, PPE and staff, federal officials suggest that doctors and patients consider the health and age of patients, “especially given the risks of concurrent COVID-19 infection during recovery.”

Here are some examples of procedures CMS officials recommend be postponed and those that could proceed:

- Postpone: Outpatient surgery and procedures for illnesses that are not life-threatening. Procedures include: colonoscopy, endoscopies, cataract surgery, carpal tunnel release surgery
- Consider postponing: Conditions that are not life-threatening but could be life-threatening in the future. These procedures require a hospital stay. Procedures include: knee replacement and elective spine surgery; elective angioplasty; low risk cancer procedures.
- Do not postpone: Most cancer procedures; transplants, cardiac procedures for patients with symptoms, limb-threatening vascular surgery, neurosurgery.

### **Telehealth options expanded**

As federal officials continue to urge Americans — particularly older adults — to stay in their homes to stem the spread of the coronavirus, President Donald Trump on Tuesday said telehealth options for Medicare recipients are being expanded and made easier to take advantage of. “Medicare patients can now visit any doctor by phone or video conference at no additional cost, including with

commonly used services like FaceTime and Skype,” Trump said at a White House briefing. The administration is also relaxing federal health privacy laws so providers can use a wider variety of technologies to treat their patients remotely. “These changes allow seniors to communicate with their doctors without having to travel to a health care facility so that they can limit risk of exposure and spread of this virus,” Seema Verma said at Tuesday’s briefing. “Clinicians on the front lines will now have greater flexibility to safely treat our beneficiaries,” she added.

Medicare has been gradually ramping up the use of telehealth in recent years. But while Medicare Advantage plans have been allowed to offer liberal telehealth benefits for several years, beneficiaries of original Medicare have had more limited telehealth benefits, amounting to brief virtual check-ins. And beneficiaries would not generally be able to get telehealth services in their own homes. About 40 million Americans are enrolled in original Medicare.

Tuesday’s announcement will allow all Medicare beneficiaries to “see” their doctors remotely for the kind of routine checkups and monitoring of chronic conditions that would normally be done in a provider’s office. A Medicare enrollee, for example, who has diabetes, can now confer with his or her doctor without leaving the house, and a medical professional can order a new medicine or refill a prescription without needing to see the patient in person. Nursing home residents will also be able to have telehealth consultations with their doctors.

And, while regular Medicare copays will apply to telemedicine visits, CMS officials say that during the coronavirus emergency, providers can waive or reduce cost sharing for telehealth visits. “Clinicians on the front lines will now have greater flexibility to safely treat our beneficiaries,” Verma said in a statement announcing the telehealth expansion.

### **Medicare benefits during the outbreak**

Government leaders have already outlined a number of ways Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D plans can be more flexible when it comes to certain costs related to COVID-19. Here are some ways CMS says Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D can potentially “mitigate the impact on the health care system” and help speed up access to care, especially for high-risk populations:

- Waive cost sharing for COVID-19 tests.
- Waive cost sharing for COVID-19 treatments in doctor’s offices or emergency rooms and services delivered via telehealth.
- Remove prior-authorizations requirements — this is when approval from Medicare is required before a certain service is provided.
- Waive prescription refill limits.
- Relax restrictions on home or mail delivery of prescriptions.



Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.  
Helena Senior Center  
PO BOX 1717  
Helena, MT 59624-1717



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## COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

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We have established a specific fund for COVID-19 to purchase emergency supplies for the individuals and families we serve. Emergency supplies include items such as toiletries and shelf-stable groceries.

Making a contribution to this fund will make a major difference in the lives of those in your community most acutely affected by the spread of COVID-19. To make a contribution, you can visit the following link on our website: [www.rmhc.net/COVID.html](http://www.rmhc.net/COVID.html), or contact Kathy Marks at [kmarks@rmhc.net](mailto:kmarks@rmhc.net) or 406-457-7323. Your generosity is a tremendous act of kindness.



Kathy Marks  
Operations Director  
Room 208C  
Neighborhood Center

