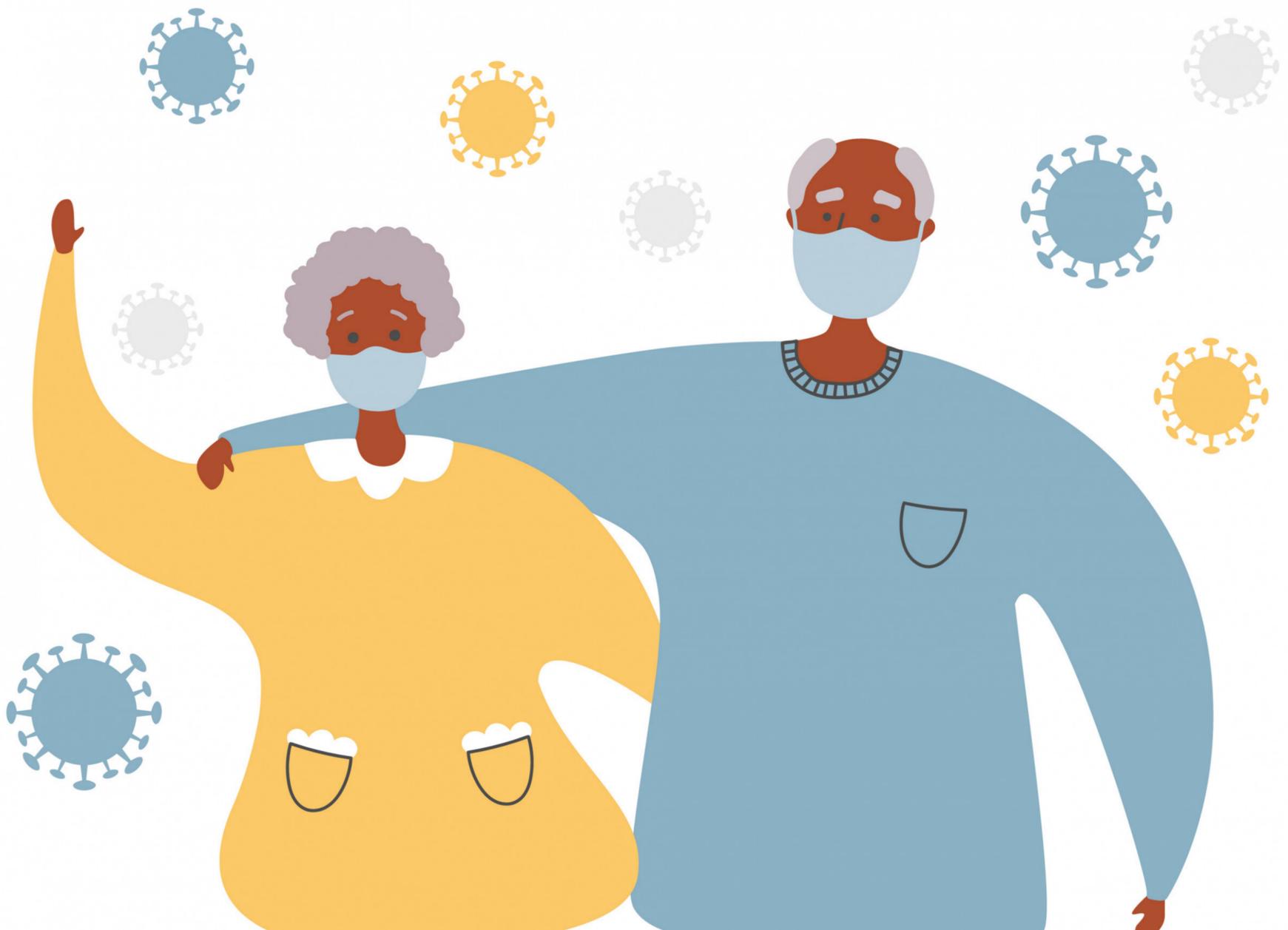


COVID-19 Local Grantees: Maintaining Community-Based Living in a Time of Uncertainty



Prepared by No Wrong Door Virginia



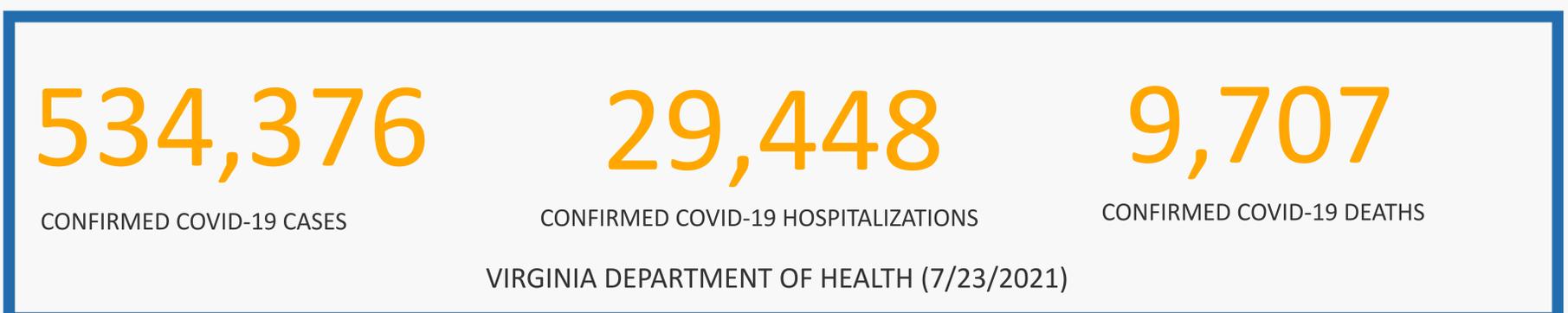
COVID-19 Local Response Efforts

As COVID-19 moved across the country in 2020 and into 2021, the aging and disability services networks quickly pivoted to support and assist community members with navigating a pandemic environment that impacted living environments and daily routines and threatened physical, mental, and social health. Across the Commonwealth, people with disabilities and older adults needed information about COVID-19, as well as support in securing personal protective equipment (PPE) and accessing COVID testing and vaccine information. Additionally, combatting social isolation and loneliness were top priorities in supporting people's health and well-being. Similarly, the pandemic environment also created challenges for meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, and medical care.

When Virginia was selected by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) to receive critical relief funds for COVID-19 Pandemic response, No Wrong Door Virginia (NWD) issued a call to local NWD partners to provide critical and lifesaving supports to Virginians. Through critical relief funds for COVID-19 pandemic response, a total of \$115,000 was issued to seven NWD partners for COVID-19 response efforts. Ultimately, these seven local grants served 29,919 Virginians by:

- improving No Wrong Door COVID-19 response
- deploying options counseling
- combatting social isolation information and referral
- combatting social isolation through social isolation through new models of service delivery
- supporting outreach and marketing efforts of No Wrong Door self-directed tools
- developing local innovative services or structures

COVID-19 VIRGINIA INDICATORS



COVID-19 LOCAL GRANTEEES

These organizations received COVID-19 response sub-grants:

- [Access Partnership](#)
- [Bay Aging](#)
- [Endeppendence Center, Inc.](#)
- [Junction Center for Independent Living](#)
- [Prince William Area Agency on Aging](#)
- [Resources for Independent Living, Inc.](#)
- [Valley Associates for Independent Living](#)

Improved Organizational Capacity

Among the grantees, 72% reported that the work conducted with these grant funds helped to improve external partnerships. Resources for Independent Living (RIL) reported new strategic partnerships with Bridging RVA, Richmond and Chesterfield school systems, VCU School of Nursing, Virginia Supportive Housing, and Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging. They stated, “There is no doubt that relationships with other non-profits have improved during this time. Agencies have a better understanding of what we do and the inverse is true, as well. We have also generated a tremendous amount of goodwill for our agency because of this program.” Prince William Area Agency on Aging (PWAAA) reported a new partnership that supported certified nursing assistants (CNAs) working in home care through sharing of COVID-19 safety and transmission information, COVID-19 scam information, and social activity suggestions. Likewise, Access Partnership shared that grant activities helped to strengthen the relationship with their local area agency on aging as well as local government agencies, as they worked together to provide medical supplies and equipment, food, and other resources to community members. Likewise, 72% of grantees also reported improved internal operations as they streamlined processes and documentation, modified staffing patterns, updated technology systems, and began succession planning. Sixty percent reported improved crisis and business continuity planning. Several grantees conducted an optional COVID-19 Rapid Self Assessment that helped inform team planning, community needs assessments, service modifications, and workforce adjustments. Sixty percent reported improved data entry processes and identification of new funding sources to sustain their work.



Reassurance and Support

All grantees reported that funding helped them to educate older adults and people with disabilities about COVID-19 in direct response to frustration with misinformation about the virus or lack of access to PPE, testing information, and vaccine access. According to RIL, “Early on, many people with disabilities had questions about the virus, its impact, method of transmission, and how to potentially access community resources in the pandemic. Having the latest information from the Virginia Department of Health and the CDC in our information and referral packet helped address some of the uncertainty.” These initiatives served not only to provide critical information at the time of greatest need, but also alleviated fear, anxiety, and experiences of feeling alone or forgotten. For example, Junction Center for Independent Living (JCIL) shared, “We received a number of calls thanking us for considering them; that someone was thinking about them met a basic human need during this time of uncertainty.”

Providing Home-Based Supports

Junction Center for Independent Living (JCIL) received a referral from an adult child on behalf of a parent who was transitioning back home after a stay in a rehabilitation center. The initial request was for assistance in building an access ramp at the mother's home. The first conversation between the son and an options counselor revealed that his mother also needed assistance with activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living. The options counselor partnered with the rehabilitation center's discharge planner to complete a personal care screening and a Medicaid application. By the time of discharge, his mother had received personal care, Medicaid, and an access ramp was in process.

Preserving Community Living

Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL) worked with a family of two who were at risk of nursing home placement and who desired to avoid that. Both family members had mobility challenges that prevented them from leaving their home. As a result, they each struggled with social isolation. In partnership with local organizations, VAIL was able to secure home repairs, yard clean up, and an access ramp so that the couple was able to safely go outside to visit with others on their porch and in their front yard. As a result, they were able to avoid nursing home placement, safely leave their home, and visit with friends and family while maintaining social distance, which increased their socialization and decreased their isolation.

Technology Opportunities & Challenges

For many Virginians, the digital divide, which existed pre-pandemic, contributed to even greater experiences of social isolation and loneliness during the past eighteen months. JCIL reported that "rural Virginia has a large digital divide, particularly as it relates to social isolation. There is a lack of internet infrastructure and/or technology to accommodate virtual platforms. There is no internet coverage in some areas and people either do not have or cannot afford computers or other smart devices." Grantees described how, for many people, the telephone became a primary way of receiving supports. According to the Endependence Center (ECI), "When it was realized that interacting in person was the leading cause of how people could obtain the virus, the biggest question was, how will people carry out the necessary activities of daily living. ECI worked to identify what and how COVID-19 was impacting our participants. We saw that it was transitioning to a life that would occur virtually or over the phone rather than in person for many." Technology proved a challenge for grantee organizations, as well. RIL, for example, reported, "We realized that our current bandwidth was too small to support a significant video experience...Some of our laptops were so old that they weren't making replacement batteries for them anymore, and we ended up purchasing new ones...We could have used an IT person in the spring and summer when we were updating technology.

Connecting Via Telephone

Prince William Area Agency on Aging reported that Mrs. T., a 73-year-old participant in the home-delivered meals program prior to COVID-19, found herself quite isolated when her daily delivery switched to monthly delivery during the pandemic. Divorced, living alone, and having been diagnosed with cancer and Parkinson's, Mrs. T had come to rely on the daily meal delivery for nutrition and social contact. Through a community partnership of several agencies, a daily checking program was implemented targeting people who lived alone. Mrs. T. enrolled, and she remains enrolled. She reports that the 12:30 daily call gives her a chance to talk about her health, share stories about her dog, and keep up with what is going on in the world. She waits for the call every day and expresses that the calls are important to her and keep her connected.

Accessible Housing

The Endependence Center, Incorporated (ECI) began working with a 49-year-old male with a physical disability who reached out because COVID-19 had impacted his ability to live in a safe environment. He was homeless and unable to stay in a safe environment that allowed him the ability to avoid being around people. ECI assisted him with moving into an accessible, affordable household, as well as supported him in managing his personal finances and securing food on a regular basis.

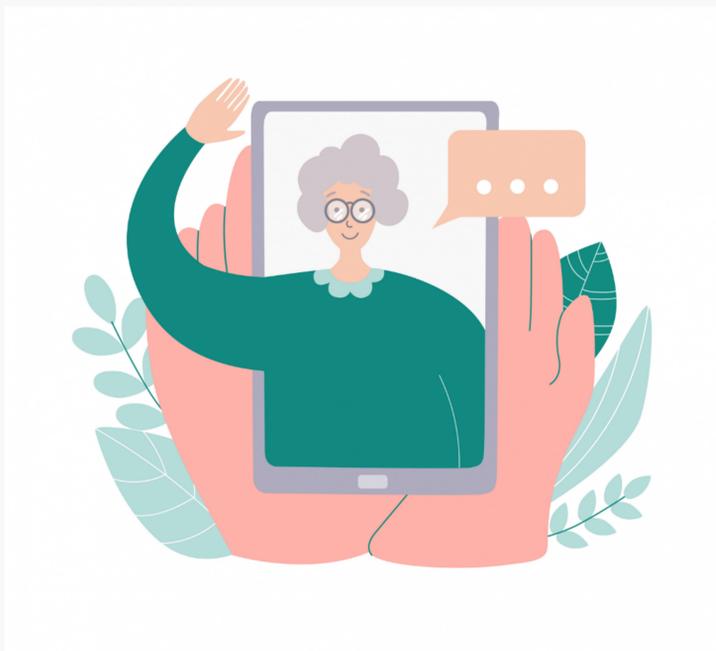
Meeting Basic Human Needs

For many older adults and people with disabilities across the Commonwealth, the pandemic disrupted the regular supports and structures that had enabled them to meet their basic needs prior to COVID-19. Grantees assisted Virginians with food security, access to medicine and medical equipment, and housing stability.

Housing Stability

A 28-year-old man contacted Bay Aging for assistance for himself and his younger siblings, ages 12 and 15. The children's housing and safety had been disrupted by their mother's untreated substance use. The older brother had initially relocated his brother and sister to live with him, his wife, and children, but the stress of the pandemic and changing home environment caused the marriage to crumble. A full-time worker making \$2,100 monthly, he was paying \$1,800 monthly for lodging at a local motel, which had become an unsustainable financial burden. Bay Aging was able to quickly provide financial assistance to bridge the lodging costs until better living arrangements could be secured. "You saved our lives. You saved our lives. Thank you," the brother said.

Conclusion



This report shares the accomplishments of seven local organizations, the community needs identified through their work, and stories of Virginians assisted through these efforts. Through a diverse, multi-pronged approach, NWD continues to address reported barriers to vaccine access and education, while connecting Virginians to critical wrap-around services for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and their families. COVID-19 funding allows NWD to amplify and expand our efforts through Options Counseling, Assistive Technology, vaccination site accessibility, low and no tech registration and education, public marketing and outreach, and transportation.