

CAREGIVING IN 2020

*A message to caregivers from Jennifer Olsen, DrPH
Executive Director, [Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving](#)*

We recognize you are probably being inundated with information about [COVID-19 \(the Coronavirus\)](#). We also recognize the everyday demands of caring for your loved one is already a full-time job, without adding decision-making (during a pandemic).

Prior to joining RCI as its executive director I spent years engaging communities on how to best report and respond to emerging health threats. Given my understanding of infectious disease, I wanted to reach out with some tips on how you, as a caregiver, can take steps to be prepared.

Many of these ideas aren't new, but they are proven to work in keeping you safe and slowing the spread.

- WASH YOUR HANDS – We know this works and it works best when you do it for 20 seconds. We understand 20 seconds may be an eternity for your loved one. Try singing their favorite song. Singing 20 seconds while scrubbing hands may be more fun and engaging than counting it out.

- PLANNING FOR CLOSURES – In the event adult care facilities or senior centers close, develop an advance plan for how you will cover this time in your schedule.

- PLANNING FOR RESPITE – Create backup plans for taking a break in the event your usual routines for respite are disrupted. Try to continue to prioritize self-care. Keep your phone contacts up to date so you can stay in touch by phone or text (you need people to talk and laugh with).

- SUPPORTING EACH OTHER – Caregiving is an isolating experience. Check in often on your family, friends and neighbors who are caring for a loved one. They may need help running routine errands, like the grocery store or pharmacy. Or they may just need someone to talk to.

If someone living with you in your home is presumed or confirmed to have COVID-19, please read and follow the [CDC guidelines](#).

I was talking to Mrs. Carter recently about navigating COVID-19. She emphasized the importance of listening to the experts across government, science and medicine. And as always, she encouraged me to remind people how isolating and stressful aspects of caregiving can be. We know the best support to give a caregiver is simply to ask how they are.

A Note About Our 2020-2021 ADRC Workshops

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, workshops provided by the ADRC are moving online. We offer two choices – join either online by way of Zoom or by telephone. All events are free and open to all. As always, contact the ADRC about our upcoming schedule and for additional information at 253-798-4600.

Oh My Gosh-Now What?

More and more families are facing the long road of caring for a loved one with dementia. There is a lot of uncertainty before the diagnosis and in the early stages after the diagnosis. Take a look at the questions and the answers in this 6-part series for families and individuals starting the journey.

Sept 14 – What is Dementia?

Sept 21 – How the Disease Progresses

Sept 28 – Starting the Conversation

Oct 5 – Typical Behaviors

Oct 12 – Paying for Care

Oct 19 – Resources

Free sessions will be held on six consecutive Mondays from noon to 1 p.m. Each session will be presented by Kris Dowling, ADRC case manager, who works extensively with families dealing with Alzheimer's.

Attend any or all of the free workshop sessions. [Register online](#) or call 253-798-4600 to register or get additional event information.

2020 Alzheimer's Conference Moves Online

Many health conditions come on with clear symptoms such as pain, weight gain or loss, persistent cough, fever, discomfort, bleeding and the like. With Alzheimer's, symptoms often come on gradually, almost imperceptibly. Often those symptoms can remain hidden.

The annual 2020 Pierce County Alzheimer's Conference is usually held in-person. In order to make the Conference safe and accessible this year it will be an online event. The conference will provide useful information and practical skills for individuals and families dealing with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

The conference will offer one-hour sessions at 1:00 p.m. on the four Thursdays of September. This event is free but advance registration is requested at: www.PierceCountyWA.gov/ALZ or by calling (253) 798-4600. Event link and phone numbers will be provided at registration.

"These are incredibly hard times for families dealing with Alzheimer's and other dementias," said Aaron Van Valkenburg, manager of Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources. "Now more than ever there is a need for support, information and resources. The Pierce County Alzheimer's Conference has moved online to be safer and more accessible for the many families in our community who manage with the disease day in and day out."

The conference will be composed of four presentations:

Sept 3 – "Isolation During the Pandemic" with Marysusan Gibson-lotte, Certified Dementia Educator

Sept 10 – "Dementia Friendly Activities" with Benjamin Surmi, Director of People and Culture at Koelsch Communities

Sept 17 – "How to Handle Challenging Behaviors" with Laura Vaillancourt, Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Geriatric Mental Health Specialist

Sept 24 – "Legal and Financial Planning" with Meredith Grigg, attorney with the Northwest Justice Project and co-author of the "Dementia Legal Planning Toolkit," and Bryana Cross Bean, local attorney with focus on estate planning, long-term care planning, elder law, and probate

Each presentation will be one-hour and include time for questions and answers. Recordings of the presentations as well as supplementary resources will be available on the event website at www.PierceCountyWA.gov/ALZ.

Alzheimer's disease is currently the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. Researchers do not yet fully understand what causes Alzheimer's disease in most people. However, they continue to study a complex series of age-related brain changes, along with genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors to better understand the disease.

Just because a family member has Alzheimer's disease does not mean that others in the family will get it, too. Genetic factors can make people more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, but there is no guarantee someone will get it.

The 2020 Pierce County Alzheimer's Conference is sponsored by Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources in collaboration with the Health Care Providers Council of Pierce County, a local nonprofit organization.

For more information about the conference call the Aging & Disability Resource Center at (253) 798-4600 or (800) 562-0332.

Fall Prevention Day September 22, 2020

Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources (ADR) is partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Falls Free® Initiative to celebrate Falls Prevention Awareness Day on Sept 22 – the first day of Fall. This year's activities will focus on tips to prevent falls at home and in the community.

"The Mary Poppins Bag of Fall Prevention Tips" will be presented by Sandy Gatlin, Master Trainer and West Regional SAIL Coordinator.

Gatlin will take viewers through the house, around the yard and into the neighborhood to see the most common causes of falls and how to avoid them. This fun online event will empower older adults and those they care about to stay active, independent, and safe in their homes and communities.

The workshops are free, and no registration is required.

10:00 a.m. at <https://piercecountywa.zoom.us/j/98690465036> or by phone at 253-215-8782 or 888 788 0099 (Toll Free). Webinar ID: 986 9046 5036

7:00 p.m. at <https://piercecountywa.zoom.us/j/97825656633> or by phone at 253-215-8782 or 888 788 0099 (Toll Free). Webinar ID: 978 2565 6633.

For more information about this event contact the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center at 253-798-4600 for more information.