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## **San Francisco's Institute on Aging Teams Up with the California Department of Aging to Extend Friendship Line Services Throughout California**

SAN FRANCISCO, April 24, 2020 — [Institute on Aging](#), one of California's largest nonprofits dedicated to health and community programs for older adults and adults living with disabilities, today announced a partnership with the [California Department of Aging](#) (CDA), to expand resources and establish the new ***Friendship Line California*** in order to better support lonely and isolated seniors throughout the entire state of California. This includes the addition of a new dedicated toll-free number — **888.670.1360**.



While Institute on Aging's [Friendship Line](#) is the only accredited, 24-hour toll-free crisis line in the country for people aged 60 years and older, and adults living with disabilities, it primarily functions as a "warm line" to provide a friendly listening ear and emotional support for seniors facing loneliness, isolation or anxiety, including listening to their increasing fears and concerns about COVID-19.

Under the new agreement with the California Department of Aging, the Institute on Aging has received funding to expand Friendship Line services following the initial shelter-in-place mandate in California issued on March 16, 2020.

Both the new Friendship Line California (888.670.1360) and the longtime established Institute on Aging Friendship Line (800.971.0016) will take inbound calls, as well as offer pre-scheduled outbound call service, with both lines operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. New, first time callers are encouraged to dial the Friendship Line California first. Referral sources such as medical professionals, social workers, case managers, and even family or friends who may know lonely seniors are encouraged to share the new toll line number as well.

“We want to give the state of California credit for recognizing the deep impact of the pandemic on isolated, older adults, as well as the extraordinary risks and challenges that these circumstances present to this particular subset,” said Dustin Harper, Chief Strategy Officer for Institute on Aging. “Institute on Aging is grateful to have an opportunity to support seniors throughout California during this unprecedented time.”

Friendship Line California will be initially staffed by nearly two dozen staff members, many of whom previously worked for the [Alzheimer's Association](#) and have relevant experience and skills. All were trained by the Institute on Aging for their new role.

“Older adults are heroes for being the first in California to stay at home, but they can't risk falling into social isolation while in physical isolation,” said Kim McCoy Wade, Director, California Department of Aging. “We want make it easy for all older adults to dial the Friendship Line California at any time – to have a friendly conversation, when they are feeling a little lonely, or when in crisis – and help them continue to stay home while also staying connected in the tough and uncertain months ahead.”

Institute on Aging's Friendship Line was originally founded in 1973 by Dr. Patrick Arbore, a nationally recognized expert in suicide prevention and social isolation issues. “At its core, Friendship Line provides the human connection that binds us to life,” said Dr. Arbore.

## **About Institute on Aging**

Founded in 1975, Institute on Aging (IOA) is one of California's largest community-based nonprofit organizations providing comprehensive health, social, and psychological services for older adults and adults living with disabilities. IOA's mission is to enhance the quality of life for adults as they age, by enabling them to maintain their health, well-being, independence, and participation in the community. Long considered one of the most innovative and diverse organizations of its kind, Institute on Aging annually touches the lives of more than 20,000 older adults and adults with living disabilities and their families each year through programs designed to alleviate isolation and enable seniors to continue living independently in the community. Learn more at [www.ioaging.org](http://www.ioaging.org).

## **About the California Department of Aging**

The California Department of Aging leads innovative programs, planning, and partnerships to support the well-being of all older adults and people with disabilities, families, caregivers, and communities. In partnership with our network of 33 Area Agencies on Aging across the state, we offer older Californians a wide array services including: home delivered and congregate meals; help finding employment; supportive services to assist older individuals as well as younger adults with disabilities to live more independently; promote healthy aging and community engagement; and support family members in their vital care giving role. Learn more at [www.aging.ca.gov](http://www.aging.ca.gov).

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