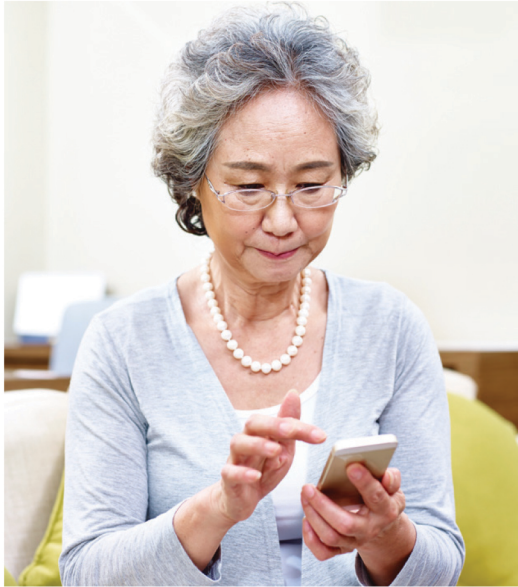


Combatting Ageism During Uncertain Times

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to develop, the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) and its sister-City agencies are working together to distribute information and guidance to keep New Yorkers of all ages safe. For older New Yorkers who are high risk of contracting the virus, COVID-19 has brought not only anxiousness around staying safe and healthy, but sentiments of ageism.

During uncertain times, it's up to all New Yorkers to support each other and adhere to government recommendations, including social distancing and increased hand washing. Now more than ever, older adults will rely on the communities they helped build for support.

It's important that we focus on the facts to combat fear. Though older adults are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, we know that viruses don't discriminate. I encourage all New Yorkers to be mindful of underlying sentiments of ageism that permeate conversations related to COVID-19.



So, what can you do to help older New Yorkers?

All New Yorkers can call their older family members, neighbors, and friends to see how they are doing. As older adults are told to practice social distancing and stay in their homes, opportunities for social isolation increase. Research has

shown that homebound older adults are more likely to experience social isolation, which is linked to higher blood pressure, more susceptibility to flu and other infectious diseases, and earlier onset of dementia.

DFTA also has services that support social engagement among homebound older adults. Our Friendly Visiting program pairs older adults with screened and trained volunteers for weekly visits. Right now, the Friendly Visiting program has transitioned to telephone-based visits. Instead of visiting older adults in their homes once a week, volunteers call their Friendly Visiting matches 2-3 times a week for conversations.

No matter how you are supporting older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, we thank you. As a City, we are stronger when we come together and support each other. For all COVID-19 updates, call 311 or visit the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Website: <https://on.nyc.gov/33t9EBG>



Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez is Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging. Prior to joining the de Blasio administration, she served in executive leadership roles with AARP, EmblemHealth and other organizations. She also served as New York's first Latina Secretary of State.