

The Agency for Health Care Administration remains focused on combatting the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. To that end, we are supporting emergency operations in the deployment of vaccines, with a focus on reaching underserved and vulnerable populations that may be having difficulty getting a vaccination. The Council could help by identifying and helping reach out to underserved groups in specific areas to connect them to vaccines and help with overcoming vaccine reluctance. In addition, we have concerns about individuals delaying necessary medical care, whether urgent or routine, because of pandemic fears. The results are preventable exacerbations of medical conditions, and in some cases hospitalizations or death. Continued messages that seeking healthcare treatment is not only safe but is critically important would be helpful. Finally, there is growing evidence that the stress and isolation caused by the pandemic is increasing mental health issues and substance abuse. Many resources are available, and messaging that it is ok to ask for help would be helpful.