According to the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 was the first federal level initiative aimed at providing comprehensive services for older adults. It created the National Aging Network comprising the Administration on Aging on the federal level, State Departments of Aging at the state level, and Area Agencies on Aging at the local level. The network provides funding – based primarily on the percentage of an area's population 60 and older – for nutrition and supportive home and community-based services, disease prevention/health promotion services, elder rights programs, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and the Native American Caregiver Support Program.

Every May, the ACL leads our nation’s observance of Older Americans Month. The theme for 2021 is "Communities of Strength."

There are many things we all can do to nurture ourselves, reinforce our strength, and continue to thrive. Connecting with others safely is one of the most important—it plays a vital role in our health and well-being, and in that of our communities. From finding joy in small things and sharing our stories, to looking at the big picture and giving to others, join us in promoting the ways we are connected and strong.
BAY AREA HEALTH OFFICERS’ STATEMENT ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES
AC Office of Public Office of Affairs and Community Relations

As local health officers, we fully support all three currently available vaccines for COVID-19. All three vaccines are safe and have been shown to be highly effective at preventing symptomatic illness and hospitalization. The clinical trials for all three vaccines demonstrated that they were 100 percent effective in preventing deaths from COVID-19. There is also growing evidence that all three vaccines help prevent asymptomatic illness, too. This means that people who have been vaccinated are not likely to spread of COVID-19 to others who are not vaccinated.

There has been much debate about the advantages of one brand of vaccine over the other, but it’s difficult to compare their efficacy. The different brands of COVID-19 vaccines have not been studied in head-to-head comparisons. The vaccines have each been studied in slightly different groups of people and tested at different phases of the pandemic. The rates of community transmission and presence or absence of COVID-19 variants differed across studies.

What we can say with certainty is that all three vaccines provide levels of protection that are comparable to some of the best vaccines we have for other serious infectious diseases for which we routinely vaccinate people.

With COVID-19 continuing to circulate as we work toward community immunity, our collective medical advice is this: the best vaccine is the one you can get the soonest. The different vaccines have different storage requirements and with supplies of vaccine currently limited, the same brand may not be available at each vaccine site consistently.

If you have questions about vaccine, speak to your medical provider if you have one. You can also learn more about vaccines on the state’s COVID-19 website: www.covid19.ca.gov/vaccines.

This statement has been approved by health officers representing the city of Berkeley and the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma.

KEEP IT ON and KEEP IT UP!
OLDER AMERICANS MONTH SALUTES OAKLAND’S JANNY CASTILLO
Regina Silbert, Advisory Commission on Aging (ACA) Commissioner

May is Older Americans Month (OAM) and this year’s theme “Communities of Strength” is very timely in light of the events of this past year. Older adults have built resilience and strength over their lives through successes, failures, joys, and difficulties. Their stories and contributions help to support and inspire others. This OAM, we celebrate the strength of older adults, with special emphasis on the power of connection and engagement in building strong communities.

Janny Castillo is an older adult who has spent much of her career helping to build communities of strength in her backyard. Her story is the embodiment of the idea that the successes, failures, joys and difficulties of our lives can not only give us strength and resilience, but also inspire us to pay that forward to others who are struggling.

At a crucial time in her life, Janny and her four children found themselves in an unenviable situation—homelessness. With help from an organization called Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency, over the course of 17 months, Janny was able to obtain shelter space for her family, then transitional housing and finally a Section 8 housing voucher. The family moved into an East Oakland home, and after years of volunteering in her children’s school, she got a job working for the Oakland Unified School District. A career change landed her a job as an executive assistant at Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency, the organization that helped her and her children out of homelessness. She describes that opportunity as a “privilege”, and for the next 12 years learned everything she could about how to be a community organizer. During this time Janny created a housing preparation curriculum to help individuals and families secure affordable housing. Her experience there led her to a position with St. Mary’s Center of Oakland, where she has worked for the past seven years.

St. Mary’s Center sits in a disadvantaged neighborhood with deep systemic issues with poverty and homelessness. It serves as a multi-cultural social hub for extremely low-income housed and unhoused seniors. The organization provides assistance with housing, food, money management and health referrals. They also manage three transitional houses for homeless seniors. As an organizer, Janny runs The Senior Advocates for Hope and Justice Program, whose focus is to train seniors to advocate for solutions to issues that impact them most. Senior advocates have participated in city, county and state campaigns that address hunger, preserve and expand affordable housing, increase economic stability, and decriminalize homelessness. Janny believes that those with lived experienced are the experts who can help create policy that more effectively improves outcomes and reduces the effects of poverty.
OLDER AMERICANS MONTH SALUTES OAKLAND’S JANNY CASTILLO (Cont.)

The Community Outreach and Services (COS) Dept. at St. Mary’s Center was born of the needs that surfaced when the pandemic hit. As Director of COS, through partnerships with local organizations and small restaurants, Janny manages the delivery of 700 plus meals and 200 grocery bags directly to individuals, families and settlement residents. Janny has also piloted a new program called We Connect which helps bridge the digital divide for seniors by providing desktop computers with personalized computer literacy lessons. Phase 2 will include purchasing devices to help more of Oakland’s seniors get connected to medical services, friends and family, and the wonderful online programming that St. Mary’s Center is offering during the Shelter in Place and Covid-19 pandemic.

Janny Castillo truly personifies this year’s OAM theme—“creating communities of strength”—and we salute her for her wonderful work.

FASTER PROCESSING OF DISABILITY CLAIMS FOR PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Sarah Kim-Lee, Social Security Regional Public Affairs Specialist, ACA Commissioner

Today, more than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s disease. Since the onset of Alzheimer’s can occur in people before they retire, it may strike during an individual’s working years; preventing gainful employment as the disease progresses.

As a result, people must come to grips with a devastating diagnosis while losing their salary and benefits. People with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers must figure out how they’ll pay for care. Our benefits and services are vital to people with early-onset Alzheimer’s who are unable to work and have no other source of income.

For over a decade, Social Security has included Alzheimer’s disease in our Compassionate Allowances program. The Compassionate Allowances program identifies debilitating diseases and medical conditions so severe they obviously meet our disability standards. Compassionate Allowances allow for faster processing of disability claims for individuals with Alzheimer’s disease, mixed-dementia, and Primary Progressive Aphasia.

You can read more about our Compassionate Allowances program at www.ssa.gov/compassionateallowances. To learn more about how Social Security disability insurance works, visit our disability page at www.ssa.gov/disability. Please share these resources with friends and family.
USING YOUR DIET TO DODGE DISEASE
Mary Louise Zernicke, AAA Senior Nutritionist

Here is a quiz to see how well you know which foods or supplements can help prevent which diseases. Good luck!

1. Which is LEAST likely to help prevent memory loss?
   a. Controlling blood pressure
   b. Filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables
   c. Keeping a lid on blood sugar
   d. Avoiding gluten
   e. Getting enough exercise

2. Saturated fat has been linked to all but one of these problems. Which one?
   a. Heart attack
   b. Breast cancer
   c. Belly fat
   d. Type 2 diabetes
   e. Arthritis

3. Which is the surest way for an older adult to get enough Vitamin D?
   a. Drink a daily glass of milk
   b. Take a daily supplement
   c. Eat an egg every day
   d. Spend 30 minutes outdoors daily

4. Which is LEAST likely to cause food poisoning?
   a. Mayonnaise
   b. Chicken
   c. Green salad
   d. Raw sprouts

ANSWERS:
(d) avoiding gluten. Some sources say that grains increase inflammation. But all the other choices are directly linked to increased risk for dementia.
(e) arthritis. The evidence is strongest for heart attacks but several studies indicate that breast cancer, Type 2 diabetes and increased belly fat are risks.
(b) a supplement. At least 600-800 IU of Vitamin D daily is recommended.
(a) mayonnaise. Despite its reputation, mayonnaise has been linked to fewer outbreaks of food poisoning that any of the other choices.
THE MANY THINGS YOU CAN DO ONLINE WITH SOCIAL SECURITY
Sarah Kim-Lee, Social Security Regional Public Affairs Specialist, ACA Commissioner

Are you looking for new ways to save time? Check out our online services available through your secure my Social Security account. We have lots to offer you online whether you receive benefits from Social Security or not.

If you do not currently receive benefits, you can:
♦ Request a replacement Social Security card.
♦ Review your earnings history and see an estimate of your future Social Security benefits.
♦ Compare benefit amounts depending on what age you start receiving benefits.
♦ Apply for retirement benefits when you are ready.
♦ Check the status of your Social Security application.

If you already receive benefits, you can:
♦ Get a benefit verification or proof of income letter.
♦ Request a replacement Social Security or Medicare card.
♦ Set up or change direct deposit.
♦ Change your address.
♦ Get a replacement Social Security 1099 form (SSA-1099).
♦ Opt-out of certain mailed notices.

Your personal my Social Security account includes a secure Message Center where you can receive sensitive communications. For example, you can view your annual cost-of-living adjustments before you would normally receive them in the mail. You will receive both mailed and online notices unless you opt-out of receiving notices by mail that are available online.

We designed these online features to save you time. Create your personal my Social Security account today at www.ssa.gov/myaccount.

We offer many other online resources at www.ssa.gov/oneservices. Please let friends and family know they can access them from the comfort of their home or office, and on the go from their mobile phones.
Understanding Internet Connection Needs in Our Communities

The Alameda County Council for Age-Friendly Communities* is conducting a brief survey of older adults in our County to determine gaps in access to the internet and electronic devices, and the need for education and support to use those devices. Your responses to this survey are confidential and will help us find that information.

Please return completed surveys to a specified drop box if available, or send to: email: Internet.Survey@acgov.org or mail to: Internet Survey, c/o Chronic Disease Program, Alameda County Public Health Department, 7200 Bancroft Ave., Suite 202, Oakland, CA 94605

1. Please provide your Zip Code: ________________________________

2. Are you able to access the internet at least once per week?
   Yes ☐   No ☐   I Don’t Know ☐

3. If yes, where do you currently access the internet or go online? (Check all that apply)
   Home WiFi (wireless) ☐   Home cable internet access (wired) ☐   Senior Center ☐   Public Library ☐
   At Work ☐   Other: Please specify ________________________________

4. On which electronic devices do you access the internet and where? (Check all that apply)
   a. Desktop Computer ☐   If so, where do you use that device to access the internet?   At home ☐   Elsewhere ☐
   b. Tablet/iPad ☐   If so, where do you use that device to access the internet?   At home ☐   Elsewhere ☐
   c. Laptop Computer ☐   If so, where do you use that device to access the internet?   At home ☐   Elsewhere ☐
   d. Smartphone (iPhone, Android, other) ☐   If so, where do you use that device to access the internet?   At home ☐   Elsewhere ☐
   e. Do you use any other devices? If yes, please specify: ________________________________

5. Please indicate below whether or not you are comfortable with the following tasks. ☐ YES ☐ NO
   a. Doing an internet or Google search.
   b. Using an email account to connect to people and/or online services (send messages, photos, etc.)
   c. Using video applications such as Zoom, FaceTime, WhatsApp, YouTube, or other options.
   d. Accessing benefits such as CalFresh, housing, insurance, or other community resources.
   e. Shopping online for medication, clothes, groceries, etc.
   f. Banking online such as paying bills, checking account balances and credit card statements, etc.
   g. Using voice-activated features such as on Alexa or Google Home, or on a smartphone.
   h. Having a telehealth meeting with a doctor or other health care provider
   i. Using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

continued on reverse
6. Please specify any other tasks you do with your computer, tablet and/or smartphone: ______

7. Is there anyone else in your home who can assist you in doing any of these tasks?
   Yes [ ] No [ ] I Don’t Know [ ]
   If yes, please specify __________________________

8. Do you have any special needs that would affect the type of device you could use such as larger font, larger keyboards or screens, voice-activated software, etc.?
   Yes [ ] No [ ] I Don’t Know [ ]
   If yes, please specify __________________________

9. What are your preferred learning methods? (check all that apply)
   One-on-one with a trained coach by phone and/or online [ ]
   A group telephone call [ ]
   In-person, with COVID-19 precautions [ ]
   Online group class [ ]

10. What is your age group?
    Under age 50 [ ] 50 to 64 [ ] 65 to 74 [ ] 75 to 84 [ ] 85+ [ ]

11. What is your gender?
    How do you self identify? __________________________
    Prefer not to state [ ]

12. What is your sexual orientation? (check all that apply)
    Straight or heterosexual [ ] Bisexual [ ] Gay, Lesbian or homosexual [ ] Questioning/Unsure [ ]
    Prefer to Self-Describe: __________________________
    Prefer not to state [ ]

13. What is your race or ethnicity? (check all that apply)
    Black or African American [ ]
    American Indian or Alaska Native [ ]
    Latino, Latina or Latinx [ ]
    Asian [ ]
    Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander [ ]
    Middle Eastern or North African [ ]
    White or Caucasian [ ]
    Other Race or Ethnicity: __________________________
    Prefer not to state [ ]

14. What is your household's monthly income?
    [ ] $0 - $2,000
    [ ] $2,001 - $4,000
    [ ] $4,001 - $8,000
    [ ] $8,001 - $10,000
    [ ] More than $10,001
    [ ] Prefer not to state

15. What is your preferred language: __________________________
    Prefer not to state [ ]

16. How many people are in your household, including yourself? ______
    Prefer not to state [ ]

17. Do you have any comments for us?
    __________________________

(Optional). Please provide your name and email address or phone number if you would like us to be able to contact you in the future about digital resources, if available.

Name: __________________________

Email address and/or phone number: __________________________

*The Alameda County Council for Age Friendly Communities coordinates efforts to effect policy and system changes that enhance the overall well-being of older adults who live in Alameda County, engaging leaders, consumers, and providers to develop and sustain a community framework that fosters healthy aging. The Council is a forum for expanding resources, services, and access to services and increasing collaboration among many stakeholders, including County departments, cities, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Please visit agefriendly.acgov.org/af-efforts/af-council for additional information.
**SSI = Supplemental Security Income**

**Eligibility:**
- ✓ Aged (65 and older)
- ✓ Blind (any age, includes children)
- ✓ Disabled (any-age, includes children)
- ✓ Must have limited income and under $2000 (Couples $3000) in assets

**Medi-Cal Health Insurance:**
- ● People who receive SSI are automatically enrolled in Medi-Cal

**Monthly SSI Benefits Amount:**
- ● Maximum amount varies on living situation. The maximum for single aged or disabled adult living independently in 2021 is $954.72 ($1,011.23 if blind), couples $1,598.14 ($1,749.19 if blind).
- ● Your living situation and other income affects your benefit amount.

**Benefits Payment date:**
- ● SSI benefits are paid on the 1st of each month (or the previous business day, if the 1st falls on weekend or holiday)

**References:**
- ● Disability Benefits 101 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI): [https://ca.db101.org/ca/programs/income_support/ssi/program.htm](https://ca.db101.org/ca/programs/income_support/ssi/program.htm)
- ● Social Security Administration: [https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/](https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/)

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**SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance**

**Eligibility:**
- ✓ Accrued Social Security work credits.
- ✓ Are no longer able to work due to a medical condition that meets Social Security’s definition of disability and will last for at least 12 months or longer.
- ✓ There is not an unearned income or resource limit - not required to prove financial need.

**Medicare Health Insurance:**
- ● Medicare benefits start 24 months after you receive your first SSDI benefit payment.

**Monthly SSDI benefit amount:**
- ● Your monthly SSDI cash benefits will be based on your Social Security earnings record. The more you have worked and paid in taxes, the higher it will be.

**Benefits Payment date:**
- ● SSDI benefits are paid on the second, third or fourth Wednesday, depending on your birth date.
SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance *(continued)*

Converts to Retirement Benefits:
- SSDI automatically converts to retirement benefits once you reach “full retirement age”, but benefit amount remains the same.

References:
- Disability Benefits 101 - Social Security Disability Insurance
  - https://ca.db101.org/ca/programs/income_support/ssdi/program.htm
- Social Security Administration
  - https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/

SDI = California State Disability Insurance

SDI provides short-term “wage replacement benefits” to eligible CA workers who are unable to work due to non-work-related illness, injury, or pregnancy.

Eligibility:
- Unable to work due to a non-work-related disability or illness, or
- Paid Family Leave (PFL) or
- Pregnancy
- Contributed at least $300 in wages subjected to SDI deductions during the 12-month base period of your claim.

Length of SDI benefit period:
- Temporary - replaces income for up to 52 weeks. (PFL – only up to 8 weeks per year)

Benefit Payment Date:
- First payment is usually within 2 weeks of claim filing, and then paid every 2 weeks until benefit period is over.

References:
- Disability Benefits 101 - California State Disability Insurance
  - https://ca.db101.org/ca/programs/income_support/sdi/program.htm
- CA Employment Development Department - https://www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/
- Legal Aid at Work - https://legalaidatwork.org/factsheet/state-disability-insurance-sdi/
“AND THE PEOPLE STAYED HOME… AND MADE NEW CHOICES”
Marjory Tilley, Medication Safety Program Manager, Senior Support of the Tri-Valley

During this remarkable time most of us face spending more time within the walls of our home. The shelter-in-place order was deemed necessary to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The effects of the shelter-in-place order become more apparent each day as we make new choices about living.

Alameda County health care professionals continue their vigilance in evaluating data; providing direction; setting policies; and providing direct health care services to those in need. Cities make wise choices to protect the health of its residents; and businesses move forward to safely provide needed services. We are at home culling through massive amounts of data and information. Such a time as this provides a pause, a time to decide what is important and to select choices that move us closer to our goals.

We all would agree that we wish to live and age in a healthy manner. Are the choices you make today moving you towards that purpose? As we become choosier and accept and embrace responsibility we generally see overall, improved health behaviors.

Most older adults take medications to control chronic health conditions. The effectiveness of a medication depends on it being taken as directed by the prescribing doctor. The management of one’s medication regimen is a self-care activity that has purpose and impacts healthy living.

Older adults in Alameda County, sheltering-in-place can select a new safety choice that focuses on healthier living by enrolling in a vital medication safety program. As we age, we are much more likely to be prescribed more than one kind of medication. This increases the risk for drug interactions, mix-ups, and potential side effects. Evidence tells us that when a patient is actively involved in their care and treatment it can improve outcomes.

Consider: How important to your well-being are the medications you take every day; Do you and your doctors have an up-to-date list of all your medications (including over-the-counter medications); When was the last time you reviewed each of the medications with your doctor; Do you understand how and when you should take each of your medications.

Medication safety programs for older adults in Alameda County supports wellness in the home while providing older adults benefits & unique features including: strategies to manage medications; use of evidence-based protocols; an up-to-date medication list that can be shared with family members; safe medication disposal guidelines; computerized medication risk assessment screening and alert processing; a comprehensive report that can be shared with providers; pill dispenser and education about compliance.
“AND THE PEOPLE STAYED HOME… AND MADE NEW CHOICES” (Cont.)

The goodness of your new choice to enroll in a medication safety program will be a pleasant surprise. This purposive action of safety and self-care is an investment in your well-being. A new good choice to identify, assess and review your medication regimen.

To learn more about medication safety programs contact Alameda County Emergency Medical Services’ Senior Injury Prevention Program Coordinator, Carol Powers at (510) 618-2050 or call the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging at (510) 577-3530.

ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING RECRUITMENT AVAILABLE

The Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging (ACA) is poised to take on many challenges in the coming years. With the County applying to be an “Age Friendly County”, and the State having produced a “Master Plan for Aging for California”, your Commission needs your help. We have openings for new Commissioners to help us take on these new challenges. Help us to help our older citizens by giving your time and your voice, to make Elderhood a positive experience for all the residents in Alameda County.

For interest or questions pertaining to the ACA, please call the Area Agency on Aging Director, Jennifer Stephens-Pierre, at (510) 577-1966.
MEET THE ALAMEDA COUNTY ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING (ACA) COMMISSIONERS

I’m very happy to have been chosen to lead off a new feature of the Senior Update. We’ll be featuring short bio’s of your Commissioners in the coming issues of the Update. As the chairperson of the Advisory Commission on Aging, for Alameda County, I have the honor of introducing myself first.

For thirty-five years I’ve been a resident of Oakland CA. I was born and raised in The Bronx, New York, and started my career in Broadcasting back in 1964, working in the technical and production side of the industry for both ABC and NBC. I came out to Oakland in 1985, with my wife and two daughters, to work for KRON TV. My career has taken me to wonderful places, including a year and a half stay in Jerusalem, to help initiate the first TV station in Israel. I’m still working, very part time, consulting for Advanced Systems Group, in Emeryville CA.

I’ve always had an interest in volunteering and giving back to my community. In some ways, I get more satisfaction from that part of my life, than my professional work. The type of volunteer opportunities I’ve had are varied, and mostly follow the different stages of my own development. In the 1970’s, I joined an organization, Community Sex Information, that provided telephone counseling, mostly to young women, who were seeking information on how to find a safe place to have a legal abortion, while so many States had restrictive abortion laws. I also served as a Community Rep on the Board of Directors of the Manhattan Health Plan, an HMO in New York City. While my oldest daughter was in High School, I served as president of the PTA for two years. More recently, I’ve been a volunteer with Ashby Village, part of the Village movement that provides the means for older adults to be able to age in place, in their own homes and communities, with the support of volunteers that help them with issues that might otherwise force them into moving to an assisted living facility. I help teach members how to use technology to get the most from their personal devices, and the internet, which helps to avoid isolation issues involved with aging.

In 2005, my wife was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s Disease. She passed away in 2012. We both were active in the Alzheimer’s Association, Carol was an eloquent speaker and advocate for the Association, and served on the first Advisory Board for the Early Onset of the disease. After her passing, I served on the Board of Director’s for the Northern California/ Northern Nevada chapter, for six years. The last two as Vice Chair. It was in my capacity with the Association that brought me to an Alameda Board of Supervisors meeting. At that meeting I heard that the Advisory Commission on Aging was looking for new Commissioners. That was about 18 months ago.
**Senior Information**

Phone: 1-800-510-2020  
http://seniorinfo.acgov.org

**Proud Core Partner of the:**

The Alameda County Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) is a collaboration between your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), The Center for Independent Living (CRL) and Community Resources for Independent Living (CIL) to implement a No Wrong Door (NWD) system of entry. The primary goal of ADRC is to assist Alameda County residents in navigating and accessing Long-Term Supports and Services (LTSS), and in providing our community with highly visibly and trusted resources for people of all ages, disabilities, and income levels. ADRC is a person-centered system of delivery and strives to provide consumers with objective and impartial information on a full range of LTSS options that will assist them in making informed decisions and meeting personal goals.

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**Senior Update Editorial Board:** Ramil Rivera, Diarra Pigg, Regina Silbert, Christine Servier, Mary Louise Zernicke, Delbert Walker

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**Insert Page 1:**

The Alameda County Council for Age-Friendly Communities is conducting a survey of older adults in the County to ask about their access to the internet, electronic devices and need for education support to use those devices. This anonymous survey is a way for older adults to make their voices heard, find gaps in access, and help make Alameda County a more age-friendly community. The County hopes to reach as many Alameda County residents who are age 50 or older as possible. Please complete and return the enclosed survey, or visit agefriendly.acgov.org to take the survey online! Your responses are confidential.

**Insert Page 2:**

The enclosed “know your benefits” flyer is an ADRC effort to assist family members and informal caregivers in understanding the types of benefits their loved ones and care recipients are receiving.

**Upcoming Meetings:**

- **Advisory Commission on Aging**
  - April 12, 2021
  - May 10, 2021
  - June 14, 2021

- **Information & Assistance Roundtable**
  - May 28, 2021