



NEWS COLUMN – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Emergency Broadband Benefit

**Nina R. Keller, Executive Director, Area Agency on Aging District 7
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Our Agency values the opportunity we have to provide our community with education and information surrounding helpful and beneficial resources. That is the main role of our Resource Center – to provide information and resources about home and community-based long-term care services and programs, as well as additional community resources for seniors and those of any age living with a disability. We are here to help you figure it out or help you get started with finding the answers to questions you may have about receiving services in your home and community or services and programs that can best support your living at home.

One new and exciting benefit we are learning more about is the Emergency Broadband Benefit that was recently authorized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). More information about eligibility requirements and application instructions are available online for this wonderful benefit that is sure to help so many in our area. Internet and broadband capabilities are vital in our society, especially now more than ever during the global coronavirus pandemic.

The National Center on Law and Elder Rights shares how the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a digital divide that exists for many older adults. Recent research indicates that low-income older adults, older adults of color, those living in rural areas, and other marginalized groups experience inequities in access to broadband internet and phone service. For older adults who already have great social or economic needs, technology barriers are exacerbating existing challenges.

It is reported that the Emergency Broadband Benefit will provide a discount of \$50 per month for eligible low-income households or \$75 per month for households on Tribal lands to cover internet bills, as well as provide discounts on some devices. This program can also be combined with Lifeline benefits. The FCC has developed Frequently Asked Questions for consumers, which provides information about eligibility and program details. Enrollment is expected to start by the end of April. Our website has a link to this information on our Home Page at www.aaa7.org under the “Happening Now” section. If you are interested in learning more, I encourage you to log on to our website for the information or feel free to call us to speak with someone who can share that information with you.

For more information or to speak with someone about home and community-based services in your community, call our Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277 or e-mail us at info@aaa7.org

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