Ohio Department of Aging launches free check-in service for older citizens

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Columbus, Ohio – The Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) yesterday announced a free, daily check-in by phone service for Ohio's older residents to ensure their well-being amid the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency and beyond. The program was announced during Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's daily news conference.

The "Staying Connected" service is open to Ohio residents age 60 or older who have a valid phone number. Those living alone in the community are encouraged to consider enrolling.

"During a time when physical distancing has become necessary, we must create ways to maintain social connectedness," said ODA Director Ursel McElroy. "The impact of isolation has been linked to higher risks for serious physical and mental conditions, so I am pleased we can

provide these check-ins at a critical time."

"Especially during this very challenging time, we encourage older Ohioans to sign up for the Ohio Department of Aging's Staying Connected phone program. This program will help reduce isolation and support the health and wellbeing of older adults in our state," said Robert Cornwell, Executive Director, Buckeye State Sheriff's Association.

The automated service, which is available 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week, contacts participants each day within a one-hour window selected by them during sign-up. After confirming the caller is OK, it offers to connect the caller with the local Area Agency on Aging for information about services or assistance.

If a participant does not answer after three attempts, a call is placed to an alternate contact, if one is on file. After multiple failed attempts to reach the participant and the alternate contact, a call is placed to the non-emergency services line of the local sheriff's office.

Eligible Ohio residents can learn more, or sign up, by visiting www.aging.ohio.gov/stayingconnected or calling 1-833-ODA-CHAT (1-833-632-2428).

For more information on Ohio's response to COVID-19, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH.

About ODA – The Ohio Department of Aging serves and advocates for the needs of Ohioans age 60 and older, as well as their families, caregivers and communities. Programs include home and community based long-term supports and services, as well as initiatives to promote health and wellness throughout the lifespan. Visit www.aging.ohio.gov.