

UATP, other agencies team up to fight isolation

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07/02/2020



In the wake of the pandemic, Area Agencies on Aging and two Centers for Independent Living in Utah will renew their focus on technology that fights isolation. They are bringing in more devices and collaborating with the Utah Assistive Technology Program to loan them to those who need it.

It's part of a federal program to ease isolation and address the need for food and transportation that arose due to COVID-19. The pandemic closed many senior centers and required staff members to offer services from home. Not surprisingly, one of the most-felt needs is for technology to help seniors and people with disabilities to connect virtually with friends, family, and medical providers. The CARES act has made funds available to the Utah Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) to support Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers, two Centers for Independent Living and UATP to help alleviate all those needs.

UATP's loan bank—and the loan banks of Roads to Independence and Ability 1st independent living centers—will include iPads, stocked with communications apps that can help seniors connect.

“As people are spending more time at home and less time with caregivers or other people, we are wanting them to turn to us to live that more independent life,” said Logan UATP coordinator Dan O’Crowley.

Whether he's working with an individual, a family or a professional looking to help a senior borrow a device, his advice is the same: Find out what the user's end goal is. If they are looking to borrow an iPad, how do they need to

communicate? Would they benefit from subtitles? UATP has compiled lists of [communication apps for at-home use](#) as well as [resources for learning and working at home](#).

Once the needs are identified, O’Crowley said he makes sure the iPad has the needed technology while also ensuring it is as simple to use as possible.

Independence-giving devices include a lot more than iPads, and UATP is ready to connect people with the high- or low-tech items they need, including aids to daily living and mobility devices. Contact [Dan O’Crowley](#) in Logan and [Cameron Cressall](#) in the Uintah Basin. Due to the pandemic they will provide services by appointment only. Some demonstrations can be offered virtually.

UATP's Salt Lake City facility is not open to new clients at this time.

In addition, independent living centers and UATP are all finding ways to continue helping their clients while safeguarding their health. Schedules and practices have changed due to the pandemic, so it is important to call before you come. (You can [find your local independent living center](#) on the Utah State Independent Living Council website.)

Utah's senior centers will also help address food and transportation needs.

For more information on how the pandemic affects UATP's services, [read this post](#).