

# Socialization Webinar Tip Sheet

Note: The following information is from a March 2021 ACL webinar series, Nutrition, Socialization, and Health & Well-Being. To view the webinars, visit [acl.gov/SeniorNutrition](https://acl.gov/SeniorNutrition).

*Purpose: Understand socialization challenges faced by the aging network, highlight the importance of community and connection for seniors, and discuss virtual programming to combat social isolation.*

## Senior Nutrition Program

The National Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) is funded by the Older Americans Act. The program provides older adults with meals and nutrition services and promotes socialization and health and well-being. [Learn more about the SNP](#).



## Importance of Community

A community is defined as a group of individuals who have a sense of connection. In a healthy community, people are socially supported and have access to resources to improve their lives. Providing a sense of community for older adults helps to improve their happiness, independence, and health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, communities were threatened with social isolation. With the help of technology and the intent to sustain the physical and mental health of older adults, community organizations were able to connect, and new communities were created.

## Virtual Community

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical distancing was necessary, aging network organizations expanded opportunities for seniors to socialize virtually. The network may want to consider keeping these activities in place even after the pandemic. One example of a successful virtual community that promoted socialization during this time is [Silver Linings in Old Bridge, New Jersey](#). When their meal site was closed to in-person events, their Facebook group was a way for members to communicate and enjoy activities together virtually, from the safety of their homes. Silver Linings started holding a variety of virtual activities, including online exercise classes, a weekly photo challenge, and online arts & crafts classes.

## Overcoming Barriers

When it comes to supporting virtual socialization among seniors, many SNPs face three common barriers: staffing, funding, and technology. To address staffing, SNPs should consider partnering with their site or senior center to deliver programming to homebound seniors or seek out volunteers to do wellness calls or assist during grab-and-go events. Funding limitations can be addressed through obtaining grants, partnering with local businesses and restaurants, or securing community donations. And, finally, SNPs should use a variety of technology platforms to help increase the likelihood of participation, including free social media platforms, computers, smart phones, and tablets. And for those seniors who are not comfortable using or don't have access to technology, they should be able to dial into a virtual event using their phone.

## Tribal Specific Barriers

Native tribes not only face the above barriers but also deal with additional barriers, such as geographic isolation, multi-generational households, and a lack of understanding about native tribe culture. Because native tribes often are located in rural areas, access to services, products, and resources can be difficult. The older population in tribes may also have the added stress and responsibility of raising grandchildren.

## Socialization Ideas

<b>Add culture to an activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a cooking activity that shares recipes for traditional foods</li> <li>• Have activities that involves using a native language</li> <li>• Play a phone game where elders respond to questions, which are pulled out of a hat, that relate to their culture</li> </ul>
<b>Car Bingo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a bingo game in a parking lot where participants remain in their car while playing</li> </ul>
<b>Grab &amp; Go Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use grab-and-go meals as a way to connect with participants</li> <li>• Incorporate local bands, care packages, connection to network services, and personalized notes</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch &amp; Learn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a virtual meeting during lunch to offer socialization time</li> <li>• Incorporate learning themes, such as foods that are served in a specific country or region or are from a specific historical period</li> </ul>
<b>Socialization Check-In</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a socialization check-in system as part of your meal delivery program where people can place a color-coded card in their window; a red card means they need a socialization check-in, a green card indicates they don't</li> </ul>
<b>Virtual Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct history lessons/"summer school"</li> <li>• Hold an event with a guest speaker</li> <li>• Start a weekly photo challenge</li> <li>• Offer sketching classes using a combination of a pre-recorded sketching assignment followed by live comments and feedback from an instructor via Zoom or another online platform</li> <li>• Post pre-recorded exercise videos and/or live classes via Facebook Live and/or Zoom or another online platform</li> <li>• Host Mindful Mondays with mental health posts and presentations</li> <li>• Host Trivia Tuesdays with trivia themed weeks or months</li> <li>• Host Technology Thursdays to teach an online course on the basics of technology</li> </ul>

## Resources and Tools

- Websites used for content (credit is given to sites when using articles/content)
  - [ACL.gov](https://acl.gov)
  - [NCOA.org](https://ncoa.org)
  - [SeniorPlanet.org](https://seniorplanet.org)
  - [AARP.org](https://aarp.org)
  - [idontmind.com](https://idontmind.com)
  - [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com)
  - [MyFreeBingoCards.com](https://myfreebingocards.com)
- Graphic Design Poster Creator
  - [Snappa](https://snappa.com)
- [ACL Senior Nutrition Program Community Tools](#)
- [Silver Linings at Old Bridge Facebook Group](#)
- ACL Resource Centers:
  - [National Resource Center on Native American Aging](#)
  - [National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders](#)
  - [National Resource Center for Native Hawaiian Elders](#)

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