

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 17, 2020

**Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EMERGENCY**

Virginia, MN - As of March 17, 2020 the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) remains open for business, however the safety of and health of our customers, employees, and community are of the utmost importance to us.

Like most of you, we at AEOA, are learning more about COVID-19 every day. We will continue to monitor the guidelines and adjust accordingly. At this time we are putting measures in place to respond to the current needs.

As a community action agency, providing over 70 human service programs across the region, we feel it is our responsibility to continue to offer critical community services to those in need within Northeast Minnesota. Our commitment to you is to continue to provide the essential services in a safe and effective manner. We ask that you be patient and respectful to the needs of our whole community.

We are following the recommended measures and guidelines as closely as possible to assure the safety of our employees and customers.

- We are taking precautionary steps to disinfect common areas regularly.
- We request customers call ahead before coming into the office.
- We request customers postpone or cancel appointments if they are sick, have a cough, or have a fever, if these appointments cannot be performed by phone. We are working with program funders to adapt program guidelines to allow for alternative delivery of services where applicable.
- The following programs have been adjusted:
 - Head Start classrooms are closing under the Governor's guidance for schools.
 - Tax-Aid sites are closing.
 - Food Shelves are moving to a pre-boxed service where customers will drive up and receive their food. Customers should call ahead to reserve their food box.
 - The Minnesota Power Conservation Improvement Program is closed until further notice.
 - Additional program closures and adjustments may occur as the situation unfolds.
- Employees who are showing symptoms of illness are requested to stay home.
- All non-essential staff travel, and any non-essential meetings, will be curtailed until further notice.
- Staff are being provided access to online tools to perform meetings electronically rather than in-person.
- AEOA has an Emergency Response team that is meeting daily to address the ever-changing situation.
- Up-to-date information will be available on AEOA's website at www.aeo.org.

We understand that changes in services may create a hardship for those we serve. We are putting parameters in place to allow staff to stay in contact with our customers as appropriate. AEOA has numerous funding streams with varying responses to the pandemic which guide our decision making. We request patience from our customers and community members during these trying times.

We are continuing to monitor the situation and as developments occur, the measures AEOA takes may change based on the most up-to-date guidance from various resources.

AEOA's staff are passionate and dedicated to serving our most vulnerable neighbors in their time of need. We believe in our ability to continue to serve our communities at this time of crisis. Northeast Minnesota has a strong history of collaboration and cooperation, thank you for your efforts and understanding as we work together to navigate this crisis.

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About the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

AEOA is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency with 55 years of experience with a myriad of human service programs offered to economically and socially challenged residents of Northeast Minnesota. AEOA's work revolves around the causes and consequences of poverty with the mission to strengthen communities by providing opportunities for people experiencing social and economic challenges. Programming includes employment and training; Head Start; housing services; rural transit and senior services. Annually, the Agency touches the lives of over 35,000 people.