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Recognize and prevent heat-related illnesses for Arizona's vulnerable population

PHOENIX – The Department of Economic Security wants to encourage you to make an extra effort and check on your neighbors and family members during these hot summer months. This is especially critical as record temperatures have already hit the valley. People ages 65 and older, infants and young children and people with medical conditions are especially susceptible to heat. It is important that steps be taken to ensure they remain safe during extreme heat conditions.

The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) has several home and community based services available to help protect the older and vulnerable population during these hot summer months. These services include adult day care, adult day health care, home health aid and personal care, among many others. Services are provided through partnerships between DES and Arizona's Area Agencies on Aging. Area Agencies on Aging coordinate services, and case managers determine eligibility.

DAAS also assists in providing energy assistance to low-income households through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP is a federally-funded program that helps low income households pay heating/cooling bills, minimize crises and make energy costs more affordable.   The program is available to Arizona residents through local Community Action Agencies.

Heat relief can also be found through many community efforts, such as the Maricopa Association of Governments' (MAG) Heat Relief Network – a network of service providers, faith-based groups, municipalities, businesses and caring citizens mobilizing to provide hydration and heat refuge for people in need.

When it comes to the older population, recognizing the symptoms of heat stroke is crucial. According to the Administration on Aging (www.aoa.gov), older adults aged 65 and older are more likely to experience heat stress than young people during hot weather. Older adults are not able to adjust to sharp changes in temperature as well as younger people and they are more likely to take prescription medicines that may weaken their ability to regulate body temperature.

The most common forms of heat-related illnesses that can affect the young and old alike are heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Heat stroke is the most serious illness that can be caused by exposure to extreme heat. Symptoms include: an extremely high body temperature, red, hot and dry skin, a rapid and strong pulse, a throbbing headache, dizziness and nausea.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) has several tips on how heat-related illnesses can easily be prevented for those of all ages:

- Drink plenty of water. It's important to stay hydrated. Don't wait until someone is thirsty to drink.

- Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or high levels of sugar. These types of liquids cause a person to lose more body fluid.
- Stay indoors and in an air-conditioned room as much as possible.
- Never leave infants or children in a parked car.
- Electric fans may offer some relief from the heat, but when the temperatures reach the high 90's, fans won't prevent heat-related illnesses. A better way to cool off is take a cool shower or bath or by spending time in an air-conditioned place.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing.
- Check regularly on those who are at greater risk for heat related illnesses. These include infants and young children, people aged 65 and older, people who have a mental illness and those who are physically ill, especially people with heart disease or high blood pressure.
- Visit at-risk adults at least twice a day, watching them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Avoid direct sunlight.

For more information about DAAS and a full list of the services it provides, please visit the Division's [website](#).

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