

Implementation Plan to Help the Elderly Use Digital Technologies

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With the rapid development of information technology such as the Internet, big data and AI in China, digital services have been extensively applied, which has profoundly changed our way of life and production and improved social governance and service efficiency. At the same time, the elderly population is increasing fast in China, and many of them, not knowing how to get online or use digital phones, have encountered inconveniences in daily life, such as daily transport, seeking medical service and shopping. Unable to enjoy the conveniences brought by digital services, the elderly is faced with a widening “digital divide”. This implementation plan is developed to resolve the difficulties in the elderly’s use of digital technologies and enable them to better share in the results of IT development.

I. General requirements

(I) Guiding thought

Guided by the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, this implementing plan fully implements the spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, and earnestly carries out the decisions and deployments made by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council. Committed to people-centered development and meeting people’s ever-growing needs for a good life, this plan aims to promote the building of a digital society that fully takes into account the elderly’s needs and places equal stress on traditional service approaches and digital service innovations, so as to resolve the difficulties in the elderly’s use of digital technologies. While adapting to the requirement of strengthening pandemic prevention and control and promoting economic and social development in parallel, this plan focuses on matters frequently encountered in the elderly’s daily life and details elderly services, with a view to increasing the welfare of all people, including the elderly, and giving them a stronger sense of gain, happiness and security amid IT development.

(II) Basic principles

- Combining traditional services with digital innovations. Traditional service approaches familiar to the elderly should be kept in daily scenarios to fully meet the basic needs of elders who have difficulty using digital technologies. Technological innovations will be strengthened to provide more digital products and services that are suitable for the elderly, promote their applications, and make the elderly willing and able to use them. Efforts will be made to adapt digital management to the elderly on the one hand and continuously improve traditional services on the other, so as to provide more considerate and direct services for the elderly.
- Combining general application with classified promotion. Being problem-oriented and demand-oriented, we will adopt generally applicable policy measure to address prominent and common issues regarding the elderly’s use of digital technologies. Meanwhile, targeted and differentiated solutions will also be provided for elders of different ages, educational background, living environment and habits.
- Combining online services with offline channels. Online services need to be more user-friendly with full considerations for the elderly’s habits. Efforts will be made to optimize the procedures and simplify the formalities of offline channels to improve the service experience of the elderly.

When integrated with online services as a supplement, offline channels can effectively meet the elderly's basic needs.

- Combining resolving prominent problems with forming long-term mechanisms. The most prominent and urgent problems will be resolved first, focused on such frequent matters and service scenarios as daily transport and seeking health services, so as to truly meet the elderly's basic service demand. We will summarize and accumulate experience in this process, keep improving the digital services and supportive measures, and establish a long-term mechanism to effectively bridge the "digital divide" faced by the elderly.

(III) Objectives

Under policy guidance and the common efforts of the whole society, we will effectively address the difficulties faced by the elderly in applying digital technologies, and help them better adapt to and merge into the digital society. By the end of 2020, we will concentrate on having various traditional services in place, and roll out a batch of effective measures soon to address the most urgent problems in the elderly's use of digital technologies, so as to meet their basic living needs. By the end of 2021, we will enable the elderly to enjoy digital services more commonly and perfect traditional service approaches in parallel, focused on frequent matters and service scenarios in their daily life, including transport, seeking medical service, consumption, cultural and sports activities, and accessing public services. By the end of 2022, digital services will be more convenient for the elderly, who therefore can enjoy them more easily, online and offline services will be coordinated with higher efficiency, and a long-term mechanism will be basically established to bridge the "digital divide" faced by the elderly.

II. Key tasks

(I) Ensuring elderly services under emergency response

1. We will improve the "health code" management to facilitate the elderly in movement. In areas where people are at low risk of COVID-19 exposure, it's unnecessary to check the "health code" unless at the following special locations: airport, train station, long-distance bus station, port, and entry and exit port. Where the "health code" has to be checked, pandemic-related information will be automatically integrated in the code through technical means to simplify the operation and facilitate the elderly. Relevant procedures and checking services will be optimized and nationwide recognition of "health code" will be promoted to facilitate travel across provinces for the elderly. The "health code" is not the only certificate for passage. The elderly and other eligible groups can also provide valid ID card for registration, paper certificate for passage, and "travel itinerary" as an auxiliary certificate of their travel record. Areas and locations with the right conditions should set up "no-health-code lane" for elders who don't use digital phone and guide them to take health test. On the premise of fully guaranteeing the security of personal information, efforts will be made to connect the "health code" with ID card, social security card, elderly citizen card and citizen card, so that people will be able to be cleared for passage just by swiping a card or scanning their face. In case of bad outcomes due to improper "health code" management, the head of relevant unit will be held accountable according to relevant regulations. (The National Health Commission, General Office of the State Council, and Ministry of Industry and Information Technology will take the lead, and relevant departments and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

2. We will meet the basic needs of stay-at-home elders. As pandemic control measures become regular, we will organize, guide and facilitate urban and rural community organizations and various social groups to provide community and home services, and build or renovate a batch of community service centers or elderly service stations. These facilities will provide stay-at-home elders, especially the very old ones, empty nesters, disabled and left-behind groups, with a slew of services, including buying living necessities,

food delivery, booking household services, paying fees, registering for medicine delivery, home medical service, and mental comfort, which will basically meet the elderly's daily needs. (The Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, and National Health Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

3. We will help the elderly respond to emergencies. When necessary digital management and service measures have to be taken in response to emergencies like natural disasters, accidents, public health events and social security events, the emergency response plan should make overall considerations for the elderly's needs. Both online and offline emergency rescue and support services will be provided, including issuing emergency risk alerts, reminding of emergency shelters, providing "one-button call" emergency rescue, relocating and settling affected groups, and distributing disaster relief supplies, so as to help the elders in case of emergency response. (The Ministry of Emergency Management, Ministry of Public Security and National Health Commission, as well as local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(II) Facilitating the elderly in daily transport

4. We will improve taxi services for the elderly. Taxis shall continue to serve at hand-wave and shall answer calls for service more frequently. Car-hailing platform companies are advised to improve their car-hailing software, add the "one-button call" function, encourage phone reservation for service, and give priority to orders placed by elders. Areas with necessary conditions are encouraged to set up taxi-waiting zones and temporary taxi stops in hospitals, populous residential areas and important business zones, and provide convenient car-hailing services Leveraging information technology. (The Ministry of Transport and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

5. We will facilitate the elderly in taking public transit. While promoting mobile payment, e-ticket and code-scanning ride, public transit including railway, road, water transport, and civil aviation passenger transport should continue accepting cash, paper ticket, certificate and other credentials. We will make traffic cards nationally recognized and conveniently used, support eligible social security cards to also serve as traffic cards, and encourage areas with the right conditions to allow the elderly to take urban public transit with ID card, social security card, elderly citizen card or other credentials. (The Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, People's Bank of China, National Railway Administration, Civil Aviation Administration of China, China Railway and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

6. We will improve the quality of human services at passenger terminals. Window services at stations and ports for railway, road, water transport, civil aviation passenger transport and rail transit will be refined to facilitate the elderly in buying and printing tickets on site. Service windows at highway service zones and toll gates should provide consultation, guidance and other services and assistance for the elderly. (The Ministry of Transport, National Railway Administration, Civil Aviation Administration of China, China Railway and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(III) Facilitating the elderly in seeking health services

7. We will provide health services through multiple channels. Medical institutions and relevant enterprises should offer multiple ways of appointment registration either over the phone, online or on site, and create ways for families, friends and relatives, or household doctors to make appointment registration on behalf of the elderly. Medical institutions should provide a certain ratio of on-site registration quota, retain human service windows for registration, payment and printing of reports, and provide guides, volunteers and social workers to help the elderly secure health services. (The National Health Commission will be responsible for this.)

8. We will make it easier for the elderly to seek health services online. The procedures of online medical service will be simplified, and voice guide and human consultation will be provided for the elderly. Efforts will be made to connect online health services with the digital devices at medical institutions that are used for automatic registration, number taking and calling, payment, printing of reports, and medicine taking, so as to better combine online and offline services. Patients will be able to use ID card, social security card, electronic medical insurance certificate and other credentials to seek health services, and facial recognition and other technologies are encouraged in medical scenarios. (The National Health Commission, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, and National Healthcare Security Administration will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

9. We will provide the elders with better daily health management services. Community or household health service platforms will be established, on which household doctors, families and relevant market entities will jointly help the elderly receive such services as health monitoring, consultation and guidance, and medicine delivery, so as to meet their health needs. “Internet Plus Health Care” will be promoted to provide further consultation and follow-up visits to the elderly concerning their common or chronic diseases. (The National Health Commission will be responsible for this.)

(IV) Facilitating the elderly in daily consumption

10. Traditional financial service approaches will be kept. No unit or individual shall refuse cash by way of provisions, notices, announcements or bulletins. Service personnel shall improve their face-to-face services. Payment with cash or bank card shall be accepted at retailers, restaurants, department stores, parks and other locations frequented by the elderly, and to pay water, electricity and gas bills and administrative fees. Supervision of the payment market will be intensified to rectify and straighten up discriminatory behaviors such as the rejection of payment with cash or bank card. Self-service venues can provide channels of cash payment or means of conversion to facilitate consumers. (The People’s Bank of China, National Development and Reform Commission, State Administration for Market Regulation, and China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

11. Online shopping will be made more convenient. The system of standards and rules for fintech will be perfected, and financial institutions, non-banking payment agencies and online shopping platforms are urged to streamline the procedures of user registration, bank account binding and payment services. Elder-friendly mobile banking APPs, such as in large characters, in voice, in ethnic languages or with simpler interfaces, will be developed to make mobile banking products more usable and secure, so that the elderly can easily use them for online shopping, food ordering, household service, fee payment, and other daily consumption. Platform companies need to take technical measures to ensure the security of online payment for the elderly. (The People’s Bank of China, National Development and Reform Commission, State Administration for Market Regulation, China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, and China Securities Regulatory Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(V) Facilitating the elderly in cultural and sports activities

12. Services provided by cultural and sports venues shall be more elder-friendly. Parks, sports or fitness venues, cultural centers, libraries, museums and art galleries that require reservation shall retain human service windows and hotline service and keep a certain amount of unreserved entry or on-site ticket purchase. They should also provide necessary guide information and human services when the elderly need to enter cultural and sports venues or tourist attractions, obtain electronic explanations, participate in fitness competitions, and use digital fitness devices. (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, General Administration of Sport of China, and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

13. More digital channels will be opened for the elderly to participate in cultural and sports activities. Public cultural and sports organizations as well as cultural, sports and tourism enterprises are guided to provide more digital products and services suitable for the elderly and carry out a variety of traditional cultural and sports activities. In view of the general cultural demand for square dancing and folk singing, we will promote the development and design of elder-friendly digital APPs to facilitate the elderly in socializing and entertainment. Explorations will be made to enable the elderly to conveniently enjoy such digital services as online sightseeing, online games or exhibitions, and motion-sensing exercises with the help of VR and AR technologies. (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Administration of Sport of China, and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(VI) Facilitating the elderly in public services

14. “Internet Plus government service” APPs will be improved. Leveraging the national government service platform, we will further push government data sharing, better government services, and make it convenient to handle frequent service items concerning the elderly, such as qualification for social insurance and collection of allowances and subsidies, so that the elderly don’t have to travel much. Government service platforms of various levels should be able to authorize agents or allow relatives and friends to handle relevant matters for the elderly who don’t use or don’t know how to operate digital phones. (The General Office of the State Council will take the lead, and relevant departments and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

15. Necessary offline channels should be provided. For frequent service items such as medical service, social security, civil affairs, finance, telecom, postal service, complaint letters and visits, entry and exit, and fee payment in daily life, offline channels shall be retained and extended to the grassroots level to facilitate the elderly. Service halls and community service facilities should have a rational layout and provide guides and reception windows, serve the elderly first, and promote “one-stop” services to further improve the elderly’s experience. (Relevant departments and local areas will be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(VII) Facilitating the elderly in the use of digital products and service APPs

16. More elder-friendly digital devices will be provided. Work will be done to make digital phones and other digital devices more elder-friendly by offering big screens, big characters, large sound volume, large battery capacity and easy operation. Active efforts will be made to develop digital devices such as digital assistive devices, digital household appliances, health monitoring, and elderly care. We will release the catalogue of promoted digital health and elderly care products and services, carry out pilot and demonstrative projects of applications, and push for the consistent elder-friendly betterment and upgrade of digital devices. Standards for digital health and elderly care devices and equipment will be formulated and public testing platforms will be established to enhance the capability of designing, developing, testing and certificating elder-friendly products. (The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Civil Affairs, National Health Commission, and State Administration for Market Regulation will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

17. Internet applications will be improved to be more elder-friendly. We will launch a special campaign to renovate websites and mobile APPs, especially those closely related with the elderly’s everyday life, including government service, community service, news, social communication, shopping and financial services, so that they can obtain information and services more easily. Functions like interface interaction, content reading, operating tips and voice assistance will be improved, and enterprises will be encouraged to provide “easy mode” or “elderly mode” for relevant APPs and include elder-friendliness renovations as part of daily maintenance. (The Ministry of Information and Information Technology,

Ministry of Civil Affairs, People's Bank of China, China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, and China Securities Regulatory Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

18. Better telecommunications services will be provided for the elderly. Pilot projects of universal telecom services will be carried out continuously to popularize mobile network in administrative villages and enhance broadband coverage in elderly care institutions and activity centers in remote areas. We will implement targeted fee reduction, and guide basic telecom enterprises to offer more preferences for the elderly, reasonably lower the charge for cellphone and broadband services, and launch more telecom services that the elderly can afford. (The Ministry of Information and Information Technology, Ministry of Finance, and State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

19. More training will be organized. Seeing that the elderly have a hard time using APPs in daily life, we will convene industrial training organizations and experts to hold special training sessions to help them become more capable of operating digital applications. Friends and relatives, village (residential) committees, elders' associations and volunteers will be encouraged to assist too, and manufacturers will be guided to design and produce easy instruction manuals and video tutorials for products and functions frequently used by the elderly. (The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, National Health Commission, State Administration for Market Regulation, China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, and China Securities Regulatory Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

20. Digital technology courses will be provided for the elderly. Improving the elderly's ability to use digital technologies is listed as a key part of elderly education. We will help the elderly understand new things and try new technologies through experiential study, trial use, experience exchange and mutual help, so that they can better merge into the digital society. We will urge educational institutions to develop omni-media courses for the elderly, and help the elderly become more proficient in using digital technologies through elderly universities (schools), elderly care providers and community education, with both online and offline approaches. (The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs, and National Health Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

III. Supporting measures

(I) We will refine the working mechanism. An inter-departmental joint meeting mechanism, with the National Development and Reform Commission and National Health Commission taking the lead and relevant departments of the State Council taking part, will be established to clarify the division of duties and promote the work in a holistic way. Local areas shall establish corresponding coordination and promotion mechanisms, take detailed measures, and make sure the tasks are all earnestly implemented. Different areas and departments shall strengthen coordination and information sharing to advance the work through clear division of duties and close interaction. We will move faster to establish a long-term mechanism to bridge the "digital divide" faced by the elderly. (The National Development and Reform Commission and National health Commission will take the lead, and relevant departments and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(II) We will improve laws and regulations. The formulation and revision of laws and regulations concerning cash payment, protection of consumers' rights and interests, prevention of fraud and elder-friendly renovation will be accelerated to truly protect the elderly's legitimate rights and interests when using digital technologies. Local areas shall promote the formulation and revision of regulations to better meet the elderly's daily needs in transport, medical service, consumption and public services. Efforts will also be made to speed up the formulation and revision of standards and norms on digital products and

services and further highlight their elder-friendliness. (The Ministry of Justice, People's Bank of China, and State Administration for Market Regulation will take the lead, and relevant departments and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(III) We will reinforce supervision and implementation. All areas and departments should set a clear timetable and roadmap, take work records and implement tasks, and timely track and analyze the progress and effects of policy measures implemented, making sure that they are well put into practice. Third-party evaluations will be carried out regularly to evaluate how elder-friendly public services are in each area, and the results will be included in the overall evaluation of efforts to actively cope with population aging. (The National Development and Reform Commission and National Health Commission will take the lead, and relevant departments and local areas will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(IV) We will ensure information security. The collection and use of personal information by digital products and services will be regulated. A range of security safeguards and risk control measures will be adopted to intensify technological monitoring, supervision and inspection, and illegal or unpermitted acquisition of personal information will be exposed and dealt with in a timely manner. We will implement regular comprehensive supervision, work more closely with the media and other social forces, and make full use of tip-off and complaint hotlines to crack down upon telecom and network frauds and other illegal activities to make sure the elderly can enjoy digital products and services securely. (The Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and Ministry of Public Security will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)

(V) We will disseminate the concept of elder-friendliness. Helping the elderly merge into the digital society will be made a key point in the education about the national condition of population aging. We will make positive publicity and supervise public opinions to foster a social atmosphere of respecting and caring for the elderly. A "digital elderly" program will be launched, and the resolving of the elderly's difficulties in using digital technologies will be made an integral part of the efforts to build elder-friendly cities, communities, and environment. Best practices and typical cases in different areas will be publicized and reported on and experience exchange will be organized. (The Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, and National Health Commission will jointly be responsible according to their scope of duties.)