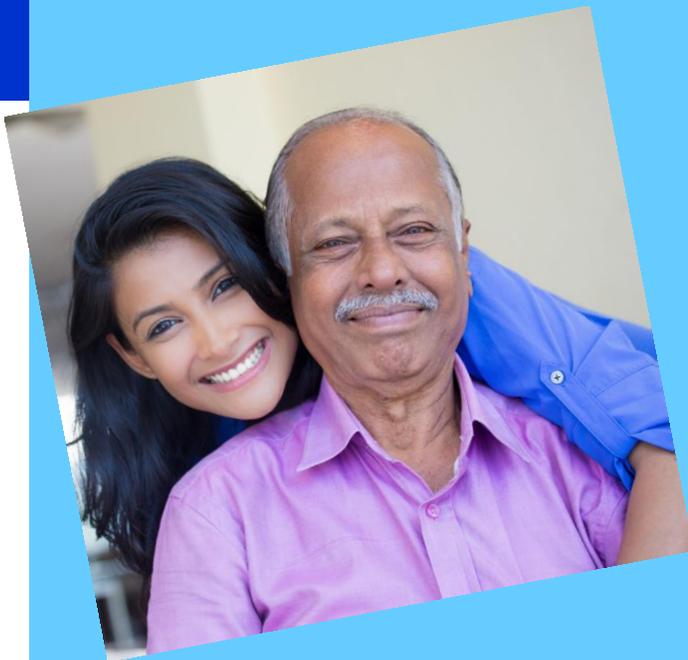


Neighborhood Friendly Visitor Program Volunteer Handbook



Diocese of Providence
Catholic Social Services of RI
August 2016

The Neighborhood Friendly Visitor Program Volunteer Handbook

Introduction



No one can have too many friends! However, in our neighborhoods and faith-based communities, it may be difficult to make friends, especially if one is homebound. **The Neighborhood Friendly Visitor Program** matches homebound elderly and nursing home residents with a volunteer who will visit regularly for an hour a week. During these visits, our volunteers may read, write letters, play games, assist with bill paying, share a snack or just relax and chat. Volunteers from faith-based communities can also help isolated individuals stay connected to their faith-based family.

Having a regular visitor can mean the world to a lonely, isolated senior. These visits provide much-needed friendship and support for those who may not have anyone else to depend on. *Imagine bringing sunshine into the life of a lonely, isolated elder or disabled adult.*

Thank you for sharing your time and talent!

Thank you for caring!

Welcome New Volunteer

This booklet will provide answers to some of your questions. But first, **welcome**, and be prepared to make a wonderful new friend. We know you have chosen this volunteer experience because you want to reach out and be involved. Following will be some **common sense tips** to help you on this journey. Keep in mind that your Volunteer Coordinator is always here to support you and answer any further questions.



Listening is a free gift you can give—and it is priceless. Doesn't it feel wonderful when someone actively listens to you? When you really listen to someone it helps to earn trust. The basis for good listening is, of course, respect. What your new friend has to say is important and your listening supports his/her dignity and self-esteem. You are paying attention in a genuine attempt to understand the other.

Active listening includes the following techniques:

- ❑ Look at your friend and do not turn away.
- ❑ Allow the speaker to finish without interruption.
- ❑ Accept by nodding and encouraging: "please go on".
- ❑ Clarify: "so you are saying"..."Do you mean?"..."Let me see if I understand.
- ❑ Summarize: "In the last few minutes you have been saying."
- ❑ Remind yourself you are not there to judge or to advise, but to be open and respectful.

When you are visiting with your friend, try to avoid the following...

- ❑ Avoid “why” questions along with trying to force the topic for conversation.
- ❑ Avoid preaching or moralizing: “you should” “you must”, etc.
- ❑ Avoid judging, criticizing or blaming or arguing: “you are not thinking clearly.”
- ❑ Avoid making promises you cannot keep.
- ❑ Avoid giving business or legal advice.
- ❑ Never administer medicine or physical care.
- ❑ Do not give your telephone number.
- ❑ Do not be discouraged if you feel the relationship is not the right match. After giving it a good try, call your Volunteer Coordinator if it continues to be uncomfortable.

Treat your friend with **respect, dignity and warmth**. You are a companion, not a counselor, a physician or a teacher!



***“It brings comfort and joy to those who are very lonely.
I go to bring comfort and come away comforted.”***

Ellen, Neighborhood Friendly Visitor



Volunteer Responsibilities

Every commitment has certain responsibilities. As a Friendly Visitor you are responsible to:

- ❑ Participate with enthusiasm and commitment.
- ❑ Be open about your expectations and abilities
- ❑ Agree to do only what you are able to handle and accomplish.
- ❑ Notify your Volunteer coordinator of any problems or concerns.
- ❑ Participate in the orientation process and request support from your Volunteer Coordinator
- ❑ Maintain confidentiality and privacy regarding agency information, clients and personnel.
- ❑ If you are unable to keep your visit, please call to notify your friend. They are waiting for you! Respect their time.
- ❑ Consider a phone visit in place of a regular visit if the weather is bad or if you are under the weather!

NOTES:



Friend with Special Needs

Growing older brings with it some **conditions that need special understanding**. Here are some suggestions to make your visits more comfortable for you both.

For the hearing impaired:

- ❑ Speak at a moderate rate and at the same volume.
- ❑ Be clear without shouting.
- ❑ Use a slower rate for topic change or complex information (names, numbers, etc.)
- ❑ Face your friend so he/she can see your lips.
- ❑ If your friend uses a hearing aid, make sure it is on.
- ❑ Sit on the side of the “good” ear if this is the situation.
- ❑ Many hearing impaired people pretend to understand. If you believe this to be the case, tactfully repeat your statement, using different words. Try to clarify that you have been heard.

NOTES:

For the Vision Impaired:

- ❑ Ask if your friend would like you to describe things (weather, objects, surroundings).
- ❑ Please do not shout at the vision impaired.
- ❑ Utilize all the great resources at the public library. These include books on tape or large print books.



“I’m helping to fulfill the meaning of life, to be of service.”

Ralph, Neighborhood Friendly Visitor



For the stroke victim:

- ❑ Each stroke victim has different challenges.
- ❑ Paralysis often accompanies a stroke. It often leaves one side affected. It is most sensible to sit on your friend's "good side," since vision and hearing may be affected.
- ❑ Certain strokes make speech difficult. Be patient and let your friend struggle to get out the words. Ask "yes" or "no" questions. Give choices: "would you like candy or fruit?" Instead of correcting, clarify or restate what you think is being said.
- ❑ Many people make the mistake of assuming that the stroke victim is senile or confused. Very often intelligence has not been affected by stroke and it is particularly distressing to be treated as confused.
- ❑ If behavior is emotional or erratic do not personalize- it is part of the condition of stroke.

NOTES:

For the Confused:

- ❑ Great sensitivity is required for the confused.
- ❑ Remember to restate your name, purpose for the visit, etc, at every meeting. Genuine interest and caring can often touch a person's heart, even if memory is not stable.
- ❑ Gentleness is essential both in words and touch.
- ❑ It is not helpful to agree with impossible stories that might increase confusion. For example, if your friend says his/her mother visited this morning, you might respond with: "you must really wish your mother were here today."
- ❑ Attempt to find something about their past. The short-term memory may be affected, but persons can often talk about what happened in the past with logic and enthusiasm.



***"It helps you to grow as well and become closer to God.
You laugh when they laugh and cry when they cry."
Glenn, Neighborhood Friendly Visitor***

Your Contact Information:

Linda A'Vant-Deishinni, Elder Outreach Coordinator

Neighborhood Friendly Visitor Program

Catholic Social Services of RI

Diocese of Providence

Providence, RI 02903

401-421-7833, ext. 228

www.dioceseofprovidence.org

Church/Satellite Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Local Coordinator:

Address:

Phone Number:

Resources for Neighborhood Friendly Visitors

The following information is to inform you of services available to elders in Rhode Island. Referrals should be discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator.

United Way of RI – 211 (statewide info and referral)
(www.211ri.org)

"The Point" – RI's Aging and Disability Information and Referral Center: **462-4444**
(www.ThePointRI.org)

RI Dept. of Elderly Affairs: **462-3000**
(connecting all departments) **(www.dea.state.ri.us)**

- ❑ Elder Abuse Referrals: **462-0555**
- ❑ Home and Community Care Programs: **462-0570**
- ❑ Senior Companion Program: **462-0569**

RI Department of Human Services,

General information: **462-5300** (www.dhs.ri.gov)

- Providence: **222-7000**
- East Providence: **222-7311**
- Cranston: **462-5182**
- Newport: **851-2100**
- Warwick: **736-6511**
- Woonsocket: **235-6300**

[Case Management Agencies Assisting Elders](#)

Child & Family RI: **781-3669** (www.childandfamilyri.com)

East Bay Community Action: **437-1000** (www.ebcap.org)

Westbay Community Action: **732-4660**
(www.westbaycap.org)

Tri-town Community Action (www.tr-town.org): Cranston,
Johnston and Northern RI area: **349-5760**; South County area:
789-3016

Meals on Wheels (Providence): **351-6700** (www.rimeals.org)

[Nursing Home Ombudsman Program](#)

Alliance for Better Long-Term Care: **785-3340** (to report problems
experienced by nursing home and assisted living residents).
(www.stateomb@alliancebltc.org)

[Alzheimer's Association of RI](#): **421-0008** (www.alz.or/ri)

[In-Sight of RI](#): (services for the visually impaired) **941-3322**
(www.in-sight.org)

[RI Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#): **222-1204**
(www.cdhh.ri.gov)



“Isolation is the worst thing that can happen to the elderly. They need contact....it’s good for spiritual and mental stability.”

Elaine, Neighborhood Friendly Visitor

THANK YOU !!

