



## Guidelines for Neighborhood Outreach to Support Aging in the Community



*Caring Neighborhoods* aims to build awareness about the issues of aging in the community and to encourage local residents to form small, collaborative groups to reach out to their elder neighbors.

*Caring Neighborhoods is made possible by funding from Measure U*

**AgeTogetherNow.org**

City of  
**SACRAMENTO**  
Parks and Recreation  
OLDER ADULT SERVICES



## **Guidelines for Caring Neighborhoods Outreach**

### **Goals:**

- to promote independence and reduce isolation of elderly neighbors
- to strengthen community fabric through communication and relationships

### **General Model of a Caring Neighborhood**

Neighbors team up and form small, informal groups to offer social connections and a helping hand with small tasks for their elderly neighbors.

#### **Here's How it All Works:**

- Three or more neighbors join together to form a Caring Neighborhoods group as part of a Neighborhood Association, other community group or independently.
- A group leader is chosen to provide continuity and be the liason, if needed, with Older Adult Services (OAS).
- Flyers are distributed and posted on your block to inform neighbors that you are seeking to connect with elders as well as seeking additional neighbors for your group.
- Elder neighbors are contacted and offered assistance from the group according to the elder's needs and the group members' availability
- Neighbors take turns helping with a variety of specific tasks based on an agreed upon schedule.
- Meetings are held periodically (monthly, quarterly, etc.) and neighbors share stories, discuss ideas, adjust schedules and learn about new resources. OAS can provide advice on relevant issues about aging in the community and current resource information.

## **Getting Started: Three Steps to Establishing Your Caring Neighborhood**

Are you concerned about an elderly neighbor? Do you know others in your neighborhood who might be interested and willing to participate in sharing an hour or so a week to connect with the elders in your area?

### Step One: Neighbor Recruitment

- invite your neighbors to join you in starting a Caring Neighborhood
- create and distribute an informational flyer to your neighbors or use the program flyer available on the Caring Neighborhoods website
- write an article for your neighborhood association newsletter
- post a notice on your neighborhood association's website
- post flyers on bulletin boards in your neighborhood church, businesses, or community center

Your group can be large or small, but try to have at least 3 neighbors participate in order to share the time and tasks and avoid "burn-out".

As you engage neighbors, discuss ideas about how you and your neighbors would like to help. Many people may be interested in the idea, but need to see that there are others willing to get involved.

### Step Two: Caring Neighborhoods Organizing Meeting

- Host a meeting with interested neighbors to develop an action plan. Based on neighborhood needs, this may involve one or two meetings. Caring Neighborhoods information may be presented during a neighborhood association meeting. Interested neighbors may then decide to set up a subsequent Caring Neighborhoods planning meeting.
- Meetings can be held in a neighbor's home, community center, church, café, library, etc.
- Identify those elder neighbors who you think could use a little help or companionship. Members of your group may have concerns about specific elder neighbors. In addition, you may need to plan to do a little outreach by letting neighbors know that you are forming a group and ask if they know of someone who needs help or companionship. Other outreach methods may include distributing flyers in the neighborhood, conducting an informal survey by walking door-to-door and spreading the word that your neighborhood is doing outreach to elders on your block in order to see if your neighbors would like to participate or receive assistance from the group.

- Discuss with the group the needs of your elderly neighbors once you have made a connection with them, and how your group can help, keeping in mind that everyone has different schedules and available time. For example, you may be able to provide a friendly visit every other Sunday; your neighbor can visit each Tuesday; another neighbor can check smoke detector batteries or assist with other small household tasks periodically.

You may wish to discuss with OAS any referrals in your zip code from area service providers that are linked with Caring Neighborhoods.

Decide who will make the first connections with elders that may need help.

Designate a group leader for your Caring Neighborhood. This is helpful in maintaining organization of your group while providing a point of contact with OAS.

### Step Three: Implement your Action Plan

At this time, the group can determine individual availability and tasks that neighbors would like to provide. Your action plan determines how neighbors are matched with elders and a schedule is put in place. Decide upon a regular meeting schedule based on the availability and interests of neighbors. Meetings can be held monthly, quarterly, or periodically as needed.

OAS will make available current resource information about programs and services for Sacramento elders as well as ongoing technical support such as problem solving and linkage with formal services and supports.

**Your group is ready to begin!**

### **Examples of helpful tasks:**

Initially, establish if the elder has a family member nearby that can be called in an emergency and suggest the elder share with their family the Caring Neighborhoods flyer.

- help with transportation to the grocery store, library, church, doctor appointments, or neighborhood association meetings
- daily or weekly “telephone reassurance” calls
- assist with yard work
- household tasks (change light bulbs; check smoke detector batteries; take garbage cans to curb)
- share a meal or prepare an extra portion of dinner periodically for an elderly neighbor who lives alone
- grow an elder neighbor’s favorite garden vegetable in your garden
- care for an elder neighbor’s pet during a hospital stay
- establish a neighborhood watch group specific to elderly neighbors
- invite an elder neighbor to a neighborhood potluck
- share information about nearby senior center activities or other community activities
- connect a senior with Paratransit services
- stop by for a friendly visit once or twice a week. Bring along your dog if you think your elder neighbor and your dog would get along!

### **Examples of challenges you may experience as you get started:**

- unwillingness of elders to ask for and/or receive help. Our society values independence and individualism. Some fear that asking for help shows weakness.
- setting limits: support independence without creating too much dependence by being consistent and clear about time and task limits.
- maintaining respect for privacy: theirs and yours
- discovering that the needs are greater than you can address as a neighbor
- staying informed

Don’t hesitate to contact the City of Sacramento’s Older Adult Services for links to resources, guidance and assistance with problem-solving.

### **Identifying Elder Neighbors and Their Needs**

Some elders live alone and do quite well and may even resent being thought of as lonely and needing help. For some, however, simply sharing a conversation or an informational brochure may be a first step towards a helpful connection. Others will let you know that they are managing just fine. They may actually be a potential participant in the program as an elder “Caring Neighbor” who has the additional asset of being an elder themselves. On the other hand, refusing assistance may be a defensive reaction because many people do not want to

appear as if they cannot take care of themselves. They may fear having to move from their own home or apartment to a care facility and losing what independence they do have. This independence is what Caring Neighborhoods aims to support and enhance. In our society, we are taught that we should be able to take care of ourselves and keep our chin up. Yet most older Americans--two thirds of them by one projection-- do reach a point of dependency; a time when they need a hand with some everyday tasks or with being engaged with their surrounding community.

#### Some tips

- start with a friendly conversation; talk about something you may have already shared with your neighbor
- offer a Caring Neighborhoods flyer and let them know you and a few other neighbors have gotten together to check on their neighbors; you may be retired and can share that you want to offer some of your time in a helpful way
- use a specific activity to connect with your older neighbor: check the local community or senior center to see if there is something that might be of interest
- find an opportunity to offer a specific task that you may think someone needs help with if you feel there is trust
- let them know there are things they could do for others if you think that would help them receive assistance

#### **How can elder neighborhood residents contribute and connect with their neighbors?**

- participate in neighborhood association meetings or other civic activities
- share neighborhood history
- provide children with historical stories for school projects
- watch a pet for you
- share tried and true recipes
- keep an eye on neighborhood activities during the day

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Your group will reflect the needs of both the elders and the neighbors participating in the group. As groups throughout the City become established, it may be possible to link up and share ideas with each other. Over time, your group may change and evolve as the people involved change and needs for assistance change. But most importantly, your small group can make a big difference with minimal, shared commitment.

*Older Adult Services*

*Caring Neighborhoods Program*

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## **Sacramento Senior Resource Quick Guide**

AARP Senior Employment Program- (916) 483-5991  
AARP Driver's Safety Program- 1-888-227-7669  
Adult Protective Services-(916) 874-9377  
Area 4 Agency on Aging- (916) 486-1876  
Area 4 Agency on Aging Senior Employment Program- (916) 486-1876  
Del Oro Caregivers Resource Center- (916) 728-9333  
In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)- (916)-874-9471  
General senior resource information- 211 or (916) 498-1000  
Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)- (916) 376-8915  
Health Rights Hotline-(916) 551-2100  
Legal Services of Northern California (under age 60)- (916) 551-2150  
Loaves and Fishes- (916) 446-0874  
Mental Health (County) (916) 875-1055  
Meals on Wheels-(916) 444-9533  
Medicare- 1-800-633-4227  
Paratransit-(916) 429-2744  
Rebuilding Together (Safe at Home)- (916) 455-1880  
Resources for Independent Living- (916) 446-3074  
Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services- (916) 456-1980  
Sacramento Public Library- (916) 264-2770  
Senior Legal Hotline (age 60+)- (916) 551-2140  
SeniorLink- (916) 369-7872  
Social Security Administration- 1-800-772-1213  
Veterans Resource Center- (916) 393-8387