



Guidelines

for Neighborhood Groups



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

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Older Adult Services enhances the lives of Sacramento's older adults age 50 and above by offering enrichment classes, fitness activities and services and opportunities to socialize and optimize the experience of aging. Other programs offered by Older Adult Services include the Triple-R Adult Day Program, 50+Wellness Program and other special events and activities offered at the Ethel MacLeod Hart Senior Center. Visit the Older Adult Services page in the Parks and Recreation section of www.cityofsacramento.org.

City of
SACRAMENTO
Parks and Recreation
OLDER ADULT SERVICES

Guidelines for Forming a Caring Neighborhoods Group

Guiding principles:

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

General Model of a Caring Neighborhood

With the assistance of the Caring Neighborhoods coordinator, 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.
- The group chooses a name (such as Boulevard Park Caring Neighbors or Caring Neighbors of Meadowview).
- A group leader is chosen to provide continuity and act as the contact person with the Caring Neighborhoods coordinator.
- 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. The Program representative may attend in order to help problem-solve, provide updated resources, and discuss any issues.
- The Caring Neighborhoods coordinator maintains ongoing contact with the group to provide technical support, problem solving, linkage with formal services and supports, outreach to local resources and updates on issues and relevant 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 help 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 Program Presentation and Organizing Meeting

- Host a meeting with interested neighbors to learn more about establishing your group and developing 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. Other outreach methods may include distributing flyers in the neighborhood, conducting an informal survey by walking door-to-door and spreading the word that a Caring Neighborhoods group is forming and you are looking to see if your neighbors would like to participate or receive assistance from the group.

- Discuss 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. You may be able to provide a friendly visit every other Sunday. Your neighbor can visit each Tuesday, and another neighbor can check smoke detector batteries or assist with other small household tasks periodically.

We can suggest ways to approach your older neighbors as well as review some of the challenges of making these connections.

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

Select a name for your group that reflects your particular community or neighborhood association. Name tags will be provided once you agree on a group name.

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 your Caring Neighborhoods Program representative.

Step Three: Implement your Caring Neighborhood 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.

The program coordinator will provide you with current resource information about programs and services for Sacramento elders as well as ongoing technical support such as problem solving, linkage with formal services and supports, outreach to local businesses and ongoing updated information about important issues and resources.

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 brochure.

- help with transportation to the grocery store, library, church or doctor appointments
- 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 center activities
- connect a senior with Paratransit services
- encourage hearing and vision tests
- 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 to ask for and/or receive help. Our society values independence and individualism. Some fear that asking for help shows weakness.
- how to set limits: supporting independence without creating too much dependency
- 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 ask for help from the program coordinator who can provide the linkage to resources, provide guidance, and assist 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.

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 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

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 important, your small group can make a big difference with minimal, shared commitment.

Older Adult Services
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