



Community Companion Guide

Guidelines for implementing a community level telephone reassurance program

Contents

- Guide Purpose..... 3
- Program Planning..... 3
 - Identify why this program would be beneficial for your organization. 3
 - Example..... 3
 - Who do you need to be involved to serve your designated population? 3
 - Example..... 3
 - Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers 3
 - How will you use the people you’ve identified need to be involved to meet the needs identified in your why?..... 4
 - Example..... 4
 - Creating a Registry 4
- Program Implementation 4
 - Call Questionnaire..... 4
- Additional Considerations..... 5
- Call Questionnaire Form Example..... 6
- Community Resources to Share..... 7
 - Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability..... 7
 - Medication Delivery/Pick-Up 7
 - Grocery Delivery/Pick-Up..... 8
 - Senior Shopping Hours..... 8
 - Delivery/Pick-Up Services 8

Guide Purpose

Many organizations provide services to older adults within the community that may be temporarily on pause due to COVID-19. If you are an organization who wants to work on reaching out to those you serve, here are some basic steps to implementing your own telephone reassurance program. These guidelines are only suggestions. Each community has its own needs and each organization has their own requirements that may need to be incorporated.

Organizations that may find this guide useful:

- Churches and religious organizations
- Community service organizations
- Non-profits
- Any organization that provides services to older adults

Program Planning

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly evolving and demands rapid response, taking the time to create a thorough program plan is still essential for successful implementation. Below are some steps and questions for you to think through when creating your organization's program plan:

[Identify why this program would be beneficial for your organization.](#)

How would implementing a telephone reassurance program identify with your organization's vision, mission or core values? Does the population you serve need this service?

Example

- A church is now unable to regularly see and check on older adults who may live alone and be experiencing increased isolation and loneliness.
- The purpose of implementing a church-level telephone reassurance program would be to keep track of all vulnerable older adult church members.
- Scheduling a call and check-in from a friend is valuable, can reduce feelings of isolation, and ensures the older adult has all their physical needs met (food, essentials, medications).

[Who do you need to be involved to serve your designated population?](#)

Do you have paid staff you can use to oversee the program? Do you need to recruit volunteers?

Example

- An organization identifies a need for two types of workers: program coordinators and volunteers.
- Program coordinators can oversee registering participants, registering volunteers, matching participants to volunteers, and keeping records.
- Volunteers can be in charge of calling registrants and reporting back to program coordinators.

[Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers](#)

- You can recruit volunteers several ways such as through social media and through organizational outreach such as paper newsletters or call chains.
- Create a program name and hashtag to put your program in the spotlight and be recognizable!
- Make sure you identify what skills and services volunteers need to have. Do they need internet? Smartphone? Computer? Ability to use a certain program?

- Targeted marketing to recruit volunteers is essential for getting the right people in the right role.
- Make sure the volunteer has resources available so if a participant expresses a need, the volunteer feels prepared to respond. For example, if the registrant states they need help getting medication, identify the role of the volunteer in helping meet that need.

How will you use the people you've identified need to be involved to meet the needs identified in your why?

How do you use all the people involved to implement the most efficient and effective program?

Example

- Volunteers and program participants can both sign-up online.
- Program coordinators review submissions and match volunteers and participants.
- Volunteers have a small training and start making calls!

Creating a Registry

- Creating a registry for program participants and volunteers can be a simple way to track all participant involvement and needs. A registry can be housed in a program as simple as Excel, Google Sheets, or a similar program. The purpose of the registry is to keep up with how many participants you have, how many volunteers you have, who is receiving calls, etc. The registry should contain the least amount of information needed to conduct a successful program – you don't want to be collecting personal information you have no use for.
- There are multiple ways you can get people registered and recorded in your registry. Here are some examples!
 - Use an online survey program such as Survey Monkey or Formstack
 - Have a designated phone number where individuals can call in and register
 - Host online webinars where individuals can get information on the program and sign up
 - Use mail-in forms

Program Implementation

You now have a program plan, volunteers recruited, and a way for people to sign-up! All that's left is to roll out your program!

You may want to start with a smaller group of folks to give the system a test run and work out any kinks. Once people start signing up, match volunteers with registrants and have them start making calls!

Call Questionnaire

Consider creating a call questionnaire form so that when volunteers call they have an outline for what to ask and check-on. An example call questionnaire is further down in this document, but here are some tips!

Tip #1: Only ask about needs you can respond to. If you ask if the participant has all the medications they need and they respond no, what comes after their response?

Tip #2: Think about questions specific to your organization. For example, if you are a religious organization, you may want to ask if the participant has any prayer requests.

Tip #3: Use this time to inform the participant of any important information. If you know of an upcoming tele-event or online support group the participant may be interested in, use the time on the phone to share that information.

Additional Considerations

As your work through your program plan and program implementation, your organization may identify additional needs that be addressed. Here are some additional questions to consider for your program:

- Do you need a quality assurance plan in place to ensure volunteers are following guidelines and meeting needs that arise?
- If a participant wants to cancel involvement, who do they contact?
- If a participant wants to be assigned a different volunteer, how would they request that?

Call Questionnaire Form Example

Date of Call _____

Older Adult Name: _____

Older Adult Phone Number: _____

Did you speak with the older adult registrant or a caregiver (if caregiver, designate relation)?

1. Are you able to get your medications at this time? _____

a. If not, do you need assistance with medication pick up/delivery?

b. Do you have refills available or do you need to make a doctor's appointment? _____

2. Do you have enough food/necessities to sustain you for the next week?

a. If not, do you need assistance with item pick-up/delivery? etc.) _____

b. What necessary items do you need? (milk, bread, paper products, etc). _____

3. Are you having any other issues that you need assistance with this time?

Volunteer Name: _____

Volunteer Phone Number: _____

Volunteer Feedback/Concerns/Observations during call: _____

Community Resources to Share

As volunteers identify needs of a program participant, your organization needs to know of resources available that may be used to meet those needs. Many pharmacies, grocery stores, and organizations have services that can be used to meet the needs of those in your community.

Below are some example resources that may be applicable to your community! Make sure to check out your local services being offered by grocers and pharmacies. These are only examples that are largely available across the state and is not a comprehensive list of resources.

Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability

If you need information on resources for an older adult in Tennessee, call the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability at 1-866-836-6678, email TN.Aging@tn.gov, or visit tn.gov/aging.

The Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability also has a webpage with specific COVID-19 info [here](#). For more information on COVID-19 in Tennessee, visit [here](#).

Medication Delivery/Pick-Up

Multiple pharmacies around the state are offering medication and supply delivery or pick-up (drive-thru). If a registrant is having difficulty securing medications, consider some ways in which you can use current pharmacy programs to meet that individual's needs. Look into your local pharmacy services as well!

Pharmacy	Service	Cost	Notes
CVS Pharmacy	Delivery and Rapid Pick-Up You can order essentials from the pharmacy store along with medications.	Rapid Pick-Up: Free FREE 1-4-day delivery on \$35+ orders. Can become a CarePass member (\$5 a month) to get FREE delivery all the time.	There are restrictions on medication delivery depending on medication type and insurance plans. Visit here for more information.
Walgreens Pharmacy	Delivery and Rapid Pick-Up You can order essentials from the pharmacy store along with medications.	Rapid Pick-Up: FREE Walgreens Express delivery – As soon as next day: FREE Standard online shipping - Delivery in 5-10 days: FREE Expedited online shipping - Delivery In 2 business days: \$12.95	There are restrictions on medication delivery depending on medication type and insurance plans. Visit here for more information.

		Overnight online shipping - Delivery in 1 business day: \$19.95	
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Grocery Delivery/Pick-Up

Multiple grocery stores around the state are offering senior shopping hours, or pick-up and delivery options. If a registrant is having difficulty securing groceries and essentials, consider some ways in which you can use current grocery programs to meet that individual's needs. Look into your local grocery store services as well!

Senior Shopping Hours

Store	Days	Hours
Aldi	Tuesday/Thursday	830am – 930am
Dollar General	Every Day	First hour of shopping
Kroger	Monday - Thursday	7am – 8am
Publix	Tuesday/ Wednesday	7am – 8am
Sam's Club	Tuesday/Thursday	7am – 9am
Target	Tuesdays/Wednesday	First hour of shopping
Walgreens	Tuesday	8am – 9am
Walmart	Tuesday	6am – 7am
Whole Foods Market	Every Day	8am – 9am

**Encourage all older adults to check with their local stores to confirm hours as store hours and services may vary by location.*

Delivery/Pick-Up Services

Store	Service	Cost	Notes
Kroger	Pick-Up and Delivery	Pick-Up: Free – normally there is a service fee, but it has been temporarily waived due to COVID-19. Delivery: \$9.95	For more information visit here .
Walmart	Pick-Up and Delivery	Pick-Up: Free on orders over \$35 Delivery: The delivery fee varies and is based on the time slot you book. The delivery fee for your individual order is shown at checkout. Delivery Unlimited: Free 15-day trial \$12.95 monthly \$98 annually	For more information visit here .