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CONNECTING SENIORS ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES

Outreach Toolkit

Prepared by Seniors Hub and Welcoming Seniors' Spaces Projects
November | 2019



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TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

This Toolkit was prepared for agencies, organizations and service providers that have programs and services to meet the needs of seniors in the community. Though it was designed with non-profit organizations and volunteer boards in mind, it can also be used for other settings, such as housing sites with a high number of senior residents. The purpose is to help you:

- Assess the needs of your organization or community with respect to outreach;
- Develop and implement strategies to ensure that older adults feel welcome to all programs and services and that the organization's policies and practices support an inclusive and safe environment; and
- Build capacity within board, staff and volunteers to address outreach.

The Toolkit includes some essential activities and resources to help:

- Ensure facilities, programs and services are accessible, welcoming and inclusive to all;
- Build and sustain relationships between seniors and communities;
- Find isolated seniors and connect them with appropriate resources and services;
- Improve outreach to seniors living in rural areas;
- Assist seniors accessing community resources;
- Increase seniors' enrolment and participation in community programs and services;
- Identify the needs of seniors by learning about their community; and
- Support bidirectional learning about seniors and available community services.

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INTRODUCTION

Seniors often have great difficulty navigating resources and accessing the support services they need to live comfortably. The purpose of outreach is build intentional connections between individuals and community agencies to improve service access and delivery for all seniors.

Research has shown that the earlier organizations consider and implement outreach, the more likely it will contribute to successful outcomes. Timely outreach can help reduce conflict and eliminate surprises by identifying and addressing potential risks or concerns early in the service process. Skilled outreach is essential to ensure community supports are inclusive and responsive when working with isolated and / or at-risk seniors, including those who are aboriginal, immigrants, refugees, or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ2S+).

What is outreach?

Outreach involves staff providing a set of programs or services for seniors in their homes, at a library, a community or seniors centre, a Neighbourhood House, or elsewhere in the community. Outreach helps promote services beyond an agency location to reach individuals who may be unaware of what is available.

These services are typically focused on assessing the needs and challenges a senior faces and then providing appropriate information and referral services. Outreach workers meet with seniors in order to determine what their assets, needs and aspirations are. For example, do they need some information about their pension, or do they need to be connected to a particular service or program? What skill, resources and abilities do seniors bring to the table that can help achieve their goals as well as be beneficial to the community?

While information and referral are key elements of outreach, services can also include accompanying a senior to an appointment, participating in case conferences with other service providers, liaising with a senior's family or friends, as well as discovering emerging issues and challenges through the ongoing relationship with the seniors.

Outreach represents a vital piece in supporting the health and wellness of isolated older adults in our community by providing emotional support, social stimulation, health related education,

gentle exercise, and nutritional meal. As well, the respite afforded to caregivers whose loved ones access outreach, is a an important and practical means of providing support to this group.

Why is outreach Important?

As a non-profit organization, it is important to be engaged and relevant to the broader community where you are located. Being active in your area increases the recognition of your organization, and strengthens relationships with the people that make up the very community you serve. Outreach helps you:

- Build stronger relationships with the community and stakeholders.
- Address barriers and brings services to seniors.
- Create room for a “check in” with residents to gain a better understanding of their needs and priorities – allowing fears and frustration to be heard.
- Improve access to resources.
- Uncover previously unidentified community needs.
- Learn from residents and capture and share people’s stories of community and individual resiliency and success.
- Improve wellbeing of seniors through sharing of resources, ideas, stories and conveying messages of compassion and understanding.
- Understand community perspectives and make project decisions that are informed by and consider community needs.
- Reduce conflicts and eliminate surprises by identifying potential risks or concerns earlier.

What is a welcoming and inclusive, safe space for seniors?

A welcoming and inclusive space is a place where people acknowledge and respect diversity, recognize barriers to inclusion, and work to actively to meet the needs of seniors with varied and diverse backgrounds. Welcoming and inclusive spaces focus on facilitating the process of integrating seniors within their community.

Diversity must be considered as broadly as possible. Culture, language, ability, income, sexual orientation, gender, mental health, and other factors can be barriers to participation for individual seniors. By pro-actively addressing these factors, we can create spaces that intentionally connect people. Participants, volunteers and staff should all be involved in creating welcoming spaces that continue to evolve and develop as they grow and learn together.

Key concepts of integration

- Inclusiveness, sense of belonging, feeling of acceptance, making roots and connections, a sense of giving and taking.
- Staff, volunteer and participants all recognize and celebrate diversity.
- The community recognizes contributions.
- Having a voice that is taken seriously in a community in which one identifies as belonging and is recognized by all as a true community member.
- Ability to contribute to community, free of barriers, where everybody feels safe, where trust is present, and mistakes are learning opportunities.
- Creating intentional connections between participants, staff and volunteers helps integrate people more seamlessly.

Welcoming and inclusive spaces offer services in ways that are appropriate to meet the needs of all seniors. They create opportunities for older adults to share their voices, skills, talents and time. They cultivate mutual respect as they strive to engage people. They acknowledge injustice of the past and present, so that they can move forward with the benefit of everyone's strength.

Welcoming seniors' spaces create a safe environment where seniors feel welcomed and valued. In these spaces, seniors share a variety of enriching activities, talents, ideas and food. Programs are volunteer driven and volunteers are trained to facilitate outreach to isolated seniors, provide resources information and, in general, make vital connections.

Seniors' social isolation

Social isolation is measured by the quantity and quality of contacts, social roles and mutually rewarding relationships. Seniors who are socially isolated risk poorer health and earlier death than others. Connections are broken when partners, family and friends die, live far away or are otherwise unable to provide support. While social isolation impacts all age groups, seniors experience more difficulty overcoming barriers to making connections without skilled help.

Social integration and participation of older adults in society can be indicators of productive and healthy aging. Social support also has a strong protective effect on physical and mental health. However, roughly 30% seniors are at risk of being socially isolated or lonely.

What contributes to seniors' isolation?

In order to address the needs of seniors in your community, it is important to recognize the underlying causes of isolation and how they can create barriers for seniors to access needed programs and services. Barriers may include:

- Decreased physical and mental well-being
- Gender/sexual orientation
- Loss of spouse, family or friends
- Living alone
- Reduced social networks
- Transportation (loss of driver's licence, inadequate public transit, distance to programs)
- Housing
- Language and/or culture
- Income
- Education level

STEP 1: CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

If you want to start a seniors outreach program and are not sure where to start or how to prioritize issues, begin by conducting a needs assessment.

A needs assessment can help you determine the specific barriers that seniors in your community may be experiencing when trying to access your services. Seniors who face barriers or who feel unwelcome may not express their needs; they may simply not come to programs or participate in very limited ways. You may be aware of some barriers but not others, or not know how best to reduce or minimize them.

It is important to ask diverse groups of individuals what they would like to see happening at your organization and understand the factors that limit their ability to access the programs they need. A needs assessment also gives you the opportunity to have a conversation with your board, staff and volunteers about diversity and inclusion; you can gather information about how they understand the idea of a welcoming and inclusive space, how well they feel the programs are meeting the needs of others, and identify barriers and ideas to improve access.

The following methods will help you collect all the information needed.

Surveys: Surveys can be conducted by mailing questionnaires to selected seniors, by having a telephone conversation, by giving out hard copies of surveys at your organization or by posting questions on your organization's website or social media platforms. Survey questions must be simple and easily understood to capture relevant information.

Interviews: Interviews are very useful in obtaining more in-depth information about a person's opinion and perspective on their needs and experiences with accessing support. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or over the phone.

Focus groups: A focus group is a facilitated dialogue with a small group of people. The advantage of a focus group is that you can engage more diverse groups of people and participants can build on and add to each other's ideas.

What Questions Should You Ask?

Consider including these questions in your needs assessment:

1. Are you a member of this organization and, if yes, why did you become a member and how long have you been a member?
2. What does outreach at this organization mean to you?
3. What is working well in terms of outreach here?
4. What are some of the barriers and challenges to outreach you have seen or heard about?
5. Do new and old participants feel welcomed when they first attend programs or visit this organization?
6. Are programs meeting the needs of participants as well as the community? If not, what program(s) would you like to change or add?
7. How can barriers or challenges to outreach be addressed?

Engaging isolated seniors

Isolated seniors can be identified in many ways; three options are outlined below.

1. Look within your existing membership and program participants for seniors who could be socially isolated due to factors noted above. This informal method can be a good starting point. In addition, you may apply a best practice approach and either map and/or identify targeted groups of seniors who might benefit from social inclusion initiatives.

2. Identify seniors at risk of isolation by building connections. Develop a network of organizations, senior leaders and volunteers to identify or ask existing members or participants to identify seniors who may be isolated or at risk of isolation. Consider asking:

- Do you know seniors in your neighbourhood or group who you feel might be socially isolated or want to be more involved in the community?
- Who are the other services providers that you should connect with? Health departments, medical offices, non-medical service providers, municipal departments

(libraries, recreational programs), housing providers, neighbourhood groups, and others can be referral sources.

- Are there local businesses that you could develop relationships with? This could mean having outreach volunteers visit coffee shops, restaurants, malls, or other locations to reach out to seniors.
- Do you know a senior who is part of your group who has not been attending as regularly as they used to?
- Do you know someone who has expressed concerns about an elderly family member, friend or neighbour?

STEP 2: ASSESS ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

A review or organizational readiness can help you assess how welcoming and inclusive your space feels to seniors from different backgrounds, different lifestyles and with a variety of needs and interests. The assessment should be conducted by people who are already familiar with seniors programs in your organization. These people could include board members, staff, volunteers, and program participants .

Apply an inclusive lens on your organization’s policy by asking the following questions using a response range of “Always, Sometimes, Not at all”:

1. Are policies written in plain and inclusive language?
2. Does the policy address the diverse needs of isolated seniors in your community?
3. Do the policies or the way they are implemented unintentionally create barriers, exclude or impact seniors unfairly?
4. Are there policies to address isolation or discrimination among seniors, participants, volunteers and staff?
5. Are staff, volunteers and participants aware of existing and new policies?
6. Are policies being implemented effectively?
7. Are participants aware of policies that address welcoming and inclusive spaces?

8. Do you provide ongoing training/support and have conversations that address these issues?
9. Does your organization have a working definition of diversity that includes culture, background, ability, gender, etc?
10. Have you concretely defined 'welcoming and inclusive' within your programs and services?
11. Is your organization/program committed to asking these questions regularly?
12. Are there barriers that prevent the implementation of policies?

Applying an inclusive lens to programs can help you explore how welcoming your current programs are, whether there are barriers that prevent some people from accessing your program and determining if new or different programs/approaches are needed to attract a broader demographic. The program review can be done by seniors and volunteers involved with developing, planning and implementing programs as well as staff members responsible for programming. A team approach to conducting a program view will ensure that a variety of perspectives are included.

STEP 3: DEVELOP A SENIORS OUTREACH PLAN

After completing a needs assessment and recruiting outreach volunteers, you will have a better understanding of what needs to be addressed as well as some ideas for moving forward. The suggestions from the needs assessments can be used to create an outreach plan that will assist with implementing these ideas. Staff, outreach volunteers and community partners can collaborate to develop these strategies.

Why do you need a seniors outreach action plan?

Creating an action plan with tasks and timelines will help define outreach goals, implementation strategies, implementation steps and tasks, needed resources and timelines for getting things done effectively. A plan can also provide a communication framework to share your commitment to outreach and build strategic support from groups within your

organization, program and community. A plan can also help make sure everyone is included and on the same page.

It is also very important to make sure your plan is realistic and considers available resources as well as participants’ capacity and passion for change. Your seniors’ outreach action plan can be a practical, living document that you modify and expand as you move forward. Use or adapt the following list of resources needed for outreach; be sure to include information about existing assets or skill sets as well as potential partners and sources.

What do you need to start an outreach program?

- A. People to support the outreach by:
 - Acting as the contact person for outreach enquiries
 - Contacting seniors about programs and services
 - Finding the resources needed for to deliver an outreach
 - Doing communication and or promotional activities for senior programs in your organization
 - Meeting with isolated seniors and being their guide, connection and ongoing support to link with community resources
- B. Resources
 - Transportation
 - Participant’s fees or honorarium
- C. Program and promotional materials (e.g. flyers, brochures, social media and website)
- D. Training for all people involved in outreach
 - Design and manner of delivery
- E. Knowledge and Information about activities or programs that isolated seniors can be involved in outside of their home
- F. Identify anything else you think is needed

Consider using this table format to identify and plan how and when to secure all resources:

Resources (Type)	Sources: Where resources come from	Lead Role: Who and how	Amount: How much is needed	Timing: When is it needed	Status: Confirmed/ Not confirmed
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STEP 4: RECRUIT AND TRAIN OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS

Outreach volunteers can be key to the success of reaching and connecting with isolated seniors in your community. With effective training to increase awareness and support to reach out safely, appropriately and meaningfully, volunteers can be the eyes and ears in the neighbourhood where they live, shop, recreate or socialize.

Be sure to consider the diversity of your community when recruiting. Volunteers should represent the many language, cultural, mobility, and other groups that you want to reach.

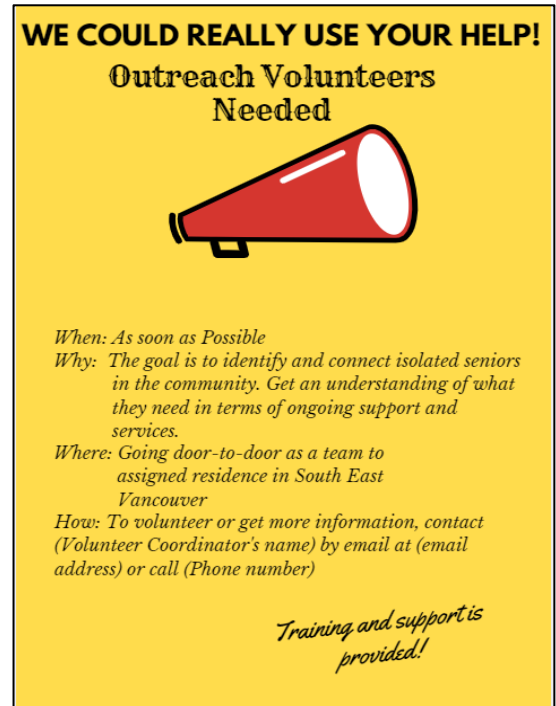
Staff roles are essential: the importance of assigning staff to support volunteers cannot be over-stated. In order to ensure that volunteers and the seniors that they are reaching out to are safe and that the volunteers are adhering to confidentiality, abuse prevention, conflict of interest and other necessary policies, they must have a staff liaison who can support them. In addition to check-ins, tracking and other information, monthly meetings allow volunteers to share information, ask questions, get support, report back and receive additional training that will help them support seniors.

An initial training package can be developed by the agency. However, it is important to consider the additional training that volunteers themselves may identify as being necessary for them to feel ready to be outreach volunteers. Ongoing training should also be provided to support the development of additional skills for volunteers.

Volunteer training

Here are some guidelines for providing outreach training to volunteers:

- Use the result of your needs assessments to determine gaps in knowledge and skills and design your training to address those gaps.



- Ensure the educator you select has a good knowledge of this area, and the skills to facilitate conversations and address resistance.
- To start with, focus on education to increase awareness. As you move ahead in your initiative, provide training that provides skills in areas such as communicating with diverse groups, handling conflict respectfully and applying inclusion to policies and programs.

Who should deliver the training?

- If there are people in your organization that are experts in outreach, they can design and present the education internally.
- If you don't have an expert within your organization, you can hire an outreach consultant to provide training.
- You can use a combination of the above and use a train-the-trainer approach. What this means is you can get an outreach educator to train staff or volunteers to provide training. This helps to sustain volunteer outreach training.

Here are some ideas for training topics.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Foundation concepts of outreach | • Policies: Confidentiality, conflict of interest, safety |
| • Knowledge and skills for carrying out outreach | • Community programs and services |
| • Seniors' isolation and elder abuse | • Self-care |
| • Developing Welcoming and Inclusive Spaces | • Communication and boundaries |
| | • Diversity and inclusion |

Volunteer Retention

To ensure success it is important to retain your volunteers. Take time to celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge when each new connection is made and seniors move from isolation to inclusion. Appreciate each other's time, skills and talents especially volunteers.

How can you celebrate together?

- Have a conversation together as a way of debriefing

- Cook, eat, dance together and make it a learning experience
- Story telling is a great way to involve people in personal experience
- Get feedback from people
- Dedicate ongoing staff resources to supporting volunteers

STEP 5: EVALUATION

Program evaluation is essential in order to monitor initial development and community impacts of your outreach efforts. Embarking on an outreach program is an evolving process and requires adequate time and resources. It is important to evaluate, record and report measurable progress of activities and strategies at regular intervals to be sure you are headed in the right direction. Evaluation can be conducted by your outreach committee or by organizational staff working on outreach. If possible, engage professional evaluators to establish meaningful measures and processes and provide support. Evaluation should consider:

- Leadership commitment
- Board, staff, committee, volunteer and seniors diversity
- Decision making processes
- Sense of belonging
- Program fit and efficacy
- Communication and outreach
- Training

Seniors' Outreach Evaluation Questions

1. What three things did you find most useful from this outreach project?
2. What aspects of this outreach project can be improved on?
3. Do you have the appropriate tools to provide effective outreach for seniors? Please explain.
4. Are there any issues or topics that you would like more information on?

REFERENCES

Edmonton Seniors Sector Outreach Worker Toolkit

<http://www.seniorscouncil.net/uploads/files/OutreachManual.pdf>

Welcoming and Inclusive Communities. A toolkit for Saskatchewan Communities

http://mcos.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/wic_toolkit_final_july_2017-1.pdf

Welcoming & Inclusive Communities Toolkit

<http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Welcoming-Inclusive-Communities-Toolkit2.pdf>

Community Outreach on Planning & Development

<https://www.calgary.ca/PDA/pd/Pages/Community-Outreach/Community-Outreach-on-Planning-Toolkit.aspx>

Rural Veteran Outreach Toolkit & Workbook

https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/docs/western-region/toolkit/Rural_Veteran_Outreach_Toolkit3_0.pdf

Door-to-Door Outreach Toolkit: A Strategy for Building Community Connection & Wellness Post-Disaster

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-prov-mhpip-post-disaster-door-to-door-outreach-toolkit.pdf>

Social Isolation Among Seniors: An Emerging Issue

https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2004/Social_Isolation_Among_Seniors.pdf

Refugee Welcome Here Toolkit

<https://ccrweb.ca/en/outreach-toolkit/home>

Community Outreach Toolkit

<https://www.census.gov/partners/toolkit.pdf>

EXAMPLE: Outreach Volunteer Application Form

Seniors Outreach Volunteer Application Form

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Phone #: _____ Mobile Phone #: _____

E-Address: _____ Emergency contact (Relationship): _____

Contact person phone #: _____ Doctor (name): _____

Doctor Phone #: _____ Care card #: _____

Important medical information (allergies, medication): _____

Birthdate: _____ Hobbies & interests: _____

Education Level: _____ Previous Volunteer experience: _____

Work experience: _____ Language (s): _____

I am willing to attend orientation and training *f* yes *f* no special workshops *f* yes *f* no

TIME AVAILABLE:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM							
PM							

Flexible *f*

Short Term *f*

Ongoing *f*

Do you have any personal needs, preferences or dislikes may affect the volunteer work you do?

yes *f* no *f* If yes, please elaborate _____

REFERENCES Name: _____ Telephone #: _____

Name: _____ Telephone #: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

EXAMPLE: Community Resource Card

Pocket-size resource cards are used in some communities for Outreach Volunteers to connect with seniors they meet and to distribute at information fairs or other community events.

HEALTH SERVICES		Vancouver Central Intake & Referral for Home and Community Services 604-263-7377	Passport Office 1-800-567-6868
Ambulance Billing	1-800-665-7199	UBC Dental Clinic 604-822-2112	Service BC 604-660-2421
Canadian Red Cross: (Medical Equipment Loan Services)	604-301-2566	VCC Dental Clinic 604-443-8499	Service Canada (Pension, OAS, GIS) 1-800-277-9914
CNIB Vision Loss	604-431-2121	South Vancouver Health Centre (Older Adult Services, immunizations) 604-321-6151	Canada Revenue Agency 1-800-267-6999
Health Insurance BC (MSP, Pharmacare & Disclosure Directives inquiries)	604-683-7151	Vancouver Community Audiology Centre 604-659-1100	Ombudsperson 1-800-567-3247
Vancouver Coastal Health General Inquiries	604-736-2033	Vancouver Mental Health Emergency Service & Crisis Line 604-874-7307	Public Trustee of BC 604-660-4444
Health Link BC (Speak with a nurse, pharmacist, dietician in 130+ languages)	811	(Intervention for mental health crisis/emergencies)	SIN Program 1-800-206-7218 then press 3
Mental Health Access & Assessment Centre (services for non-emergency mental health/substance use problems)	604-675-3700	Western Institute for the Deaf 604-736-7391	Work BC 1-877-952-6914
Mid-Main Health Centre (low-cost dental clinic)	604-873-3002	Tetra Society (Custom-built Assistive Devices) 604-688-6464	TRANSPORTATION
Philips Lifeline Alert	604-872-5433	GOVERNMENT OFFICES	South Vancouver Better at Home Program (transportation, light yard work, shopping shuttles for seniors with mobility challenges) 604-324-6212 ext. 141
South Community Health Centre (Older Adult Services, immunizations)	604-321-6151	City of Vancouver 604-873-7011	BC Ferries 1-888-223-3779
		Consumer Protection 1-888-564-9963	HandyDART Information 604-575-6600
		Government of Canada (Information, Programs & Services) 1-800-622-6263	HandyDART Consumer Advocate 778-772-4431
			TransLink Route Information 604-953-3333

Limited Mobility Parking Permit Program	604-718-7744	Representation Agreement Resource Centre	604-408-7414
Senior Bus Pass Program (for low-income seniors)	1-866-866-0800	Southeast Vancouver Seniors Arts & Cultural Society	604-325-0163
INFORMATION & REFERRAL		South Vancouver Community Policing Centre	604-717-2940
Arthritis Answers Line	1-800-321-1433	South Vancouver Neighborhood House	604-324-6212
Arthritis Society of BC	604-714-5550	COMMUNITY CENTRES	
BC 211 (information about health & human services, Multilingual)	211	Champlain Heights	604-718-6575
BC Alcohol & Drug Information & Referral (Multilingual)	604-660-9382	Killarney	604-718-8200
BC Bereavement	604-738-9950	Sunset	604-718-6505
BC Human Rights Tribunal	604-775-2000	PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCHES	
Heart & Stroke Foundation	604-736-4404	Champlain Heights	604-665-3955
Lawyer Referral Service	604-687-3221	Fraserview	604-665-3957
Law Students (UBC) Advice Program	604-822-5791	South Hill	604-665-3965
Legal Service Society (legal aid)	604-601-6000	TAX CLINIC	
Police Non-Emergency	604-717-3321	Sikh Community Resource Centre (Year-round clinic)	604-322-5613
		For more info, http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/vlntr/clncs/vancouver-bc-eng.html	

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