



VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

Caring Connections

WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE SERVE

If you enjoy serving others, are compassionate, and value the company of elder individuals, you already have the basic skills needed to help us fulfill our mission! Our mission is to keep seniors safe, healthy and in their home as long as possible. Through utilization of our Transportation, In Home, and Life Enrichment support services, we focus on caring for mind, body and spirit. Our services are designed to enhance dignity and independent lifestyles for those transitioning through the aging process.

As the oldest non-profit organization in the county dedicated to exclusively serving the needs of the senior community, we are sensitive to this growing segment of the population in Elkhart County. We want to be a key participant in the reason people say this county is a great place to be during the advanced years of their lives.

PURPOSE OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

The primary responsibility of this position is to interact with seniors by telephone to prevent isolation.

Due to the pandemic, seniors right now are scared and choosing to stay in their homes away from others. Our very own Activity Center and Life Enrichment activities had to be cancelled until it is safe to bring them back. Lately, our clients' only human interactions have been doctors or Council on Aging caregivers and drivers. Even if they do have family, most have had to stay away from them out of safety. This population group is very vulnerable to COVID. To diminish the loneliness brought by isolation and the hopelessness brought by the media's endless coverage of COVID, we want to encourage their participation in new way, through conversations of happier times from the past and future. Your purpose is to give them something to look forward to and to remind them that they are valued. Think of them as your own parent or grandparent. It means the world to these people who have no one else.

BASIC AGREEMENT

- Council on Aging will provide you an individual's name and number.
- Establish a reasonable call time (recommended time between 8:00am-7:30pm)
- Respect if they do not want to talk at that time. Ask, "when would a better time for you to call"? The time should be convenient for both of you.
- You should not try to sell them anything, call them outside hours given, or treat them poorly.
- Make sure to call from the same phone number every time. This number should also be provided to COA in the event they contact us to inquire.
- Report any problems or questions to info@elkhartcoa.org or 574-295-1820 #220, Tina Fraley or #222, David Toney

WHEN YOU FIRST MAKE CONTACT

On behalf of COA, please

- Identify yourself as a Council on Aging volunteer.
- Thank the client for answering and remind them of your phone number. Make sure they know that this is the number you'll call from because they might not pick up numbers they don't know.

- Explain that, in the absence of the weekly Activity Center program, we are contacting our clients to simply check in on how they are doing. Also, there is no reopening date set at this time.
- Engage them in conversation topics, which interest them (see Conversation Topics below)
- Ask if they have friends, family, and or neighbors that give them assistance and check on their welfare. Please record this information and send it to info@elkhartcoa.org
- Ask if they are on Facebook. If they are, let them know that they can connect with us and watch for updates. Please record this information and send it to info@elkhartcoa.org
- Remind the client of COA's other services transportation, in home care, grocery delivery, resource referral, and Medicare enrollment counseling (which can be done by phone) – all info on our website

CONVERSATION TOPICS

It might be hard to strike up a conversation with someone you don't know, so here are some suggested conversation topics. You will quickly learn which topics bring them joy, which is our goal.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| • Recipes | • Music |
| • Family | • A simple "how are you doing right now?" |
| • Friends | • Holidays |
| • Careers | • Anything else that's appropriate and that comes to mind! |
| • Hobbies | |
| • Trips they have taken | |

Let them lead the conversation as they become ready. Some topics, such as politics and religion, typically invoke strong feelings. We recommend avoiding these conversations whenever possible.

STAY CONNECTED

- | | |
|---|---|
| • www.facebook.com/elkhartcoa | • https://www.linkedin.com/company/council-on-aging-of-elkhart-county-inc- |
| • www.elkhartcoa.org | • Join our email list |