



OUTREACH BEST PRACTICES

From the Welcoming Seniors' Spaces and Seniors Hub
Shared Learning Event, January 30, 2018

Suite 203 - 1111 Lonsdale Avenue, North Vancouver, BC V7M 2H4 | www.alliesinaging.ca



FUNDED IN PART BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S NEW HORIZONS FOR SENIORS PROGRAM.

What does Welcoming Seniors' Spaces do?

The Welcoming Seniors' Spaces is an opportunity to create a safe environment in which seniors feel welcomed and valued. In this space seniors share in a variety of enriching activities and meals.

There are eight Welcoming Seniors' Spaces around the Greater Vancouver Area – Burnaby, Coquitlam, North Vancouver and Vancouver. The agencies are – SHARE Family Services, North Vancouver Neighbourhood House, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, Burnaby Community Services and Burnaby Neighbourhood House as the lead organization. The program is volunteer driven in that volunteers are trained to facilitate outreach to isolated seniors, provide resource information and in general make relevant connections.

Who is involved in the Seniors Hub?

The South Vancouver Neighbourhood House operates the Seniors Hub program through trained volunteers. The Hub works within a networked service model that brings together seniors, community agencies, and different organizations to help engage and serve seniors. Seniors lead, govern, identify needs, and organize activities to meet those needs. Seniors gain confidence, socialize interculturally, learn new things, and create opportunities for isolated seniors. The network of partnerships has resulted in better coordination of services and activities.

What was the purpose of the Shared Learning Event?

The Shared Learning Event was hosted by the Welcoming Seniors' Spaces and the Seniors Hub. The audience was agency staff and volunteers for a total of 60 people. The goal of the event was to learn from each other what would make the best outreach practices, what else we should be doing to enhance the volunteer experience and create Welcoming Seniors' Spaces and support the Seniors Hub program.

We crafted focused questions and utilized a World Café methodology. Although all the responses are highly valued, for the interest of clarity we selected the questions and answers below.

Question: How do we address seniors' isolation?

Conduct an intake process – this will allow us to gather pertinent information as to the possible causes of the isolation and make the appropriate referrals. It will also help us with the program development and observe the changes in the senior which will provide information toward the theory of change.

Transportation for seniors is an issue – create an afternoon “how to” session covering only one subject, “the various types of transportation.”

- how to use the on-line trip planning (hands-on)
- how to access handy dart (have application forms)
- how to use taxi-savers (have samples)
- how to get an annual bus pass (have application form)

- All other transportation options that we might be aware of at the time
- Have and share the booklet, "When I am 64"

The outreach volunteers receive training on resources – have these trained volunteers host training sessions at one of the seniors' programs.

Create an annual session on program planning with about 5 or 6 seniors – outreach volunteers and program consumers.

Create hands-on education sessions – perhaps cooking for one or two. Bring back the art of embroidery. Organize outdoor exploration events e.g. walk in the park, create a neighbourhood walking bus which has the potential to attract seniors who are in their garden or looking out their windows.

Contact the various cultural organizations and encourage members to volunteer. These volunteers would be able to offer programs in their languages and attract isolated seniors from their community.

If we are able to gain access to buildings (high rises) deliver program information to the units or to mail slots. (Caution: this must be done with permission with someone in the building)

Question: What are your best and creative outreach strategies to reach isolated seniors?

Develop a relationship with the health authorities. Invite their home health personnel to meetings and program planning for the purpose of gaining referrals.

Drop off program brochures at all health professional offices – doctors, dentists, physiotherapist and all drug stores. Seek to do presentations at all community events.

Develop a relationship/partnership with the Better at Home team who could deliver brochures and resource material as well as make referrals.

Volunteer training - What do you feel worked best for you and what would you like to see more of going forward?

The historical information about the organization is important and that should be continued, however we find the sessions too long. Break up the modules into 2 hour sessions.

A monthly gathering would be beneficial and serve as on-going training. At these gatherings we could do case management, ask questions and have mini-trainings on relevant topics.

- Perhaps review the community resources in case there are any changes
- A session on how to ask questions
- How to use key transition words, (as mentioned, meanwhile, in addition, for example)
- Benefits of exercise (an exercise of choice done a minimum of 3 times per week)
- Topics on Alzheimers' disease
- Elder Abuse
- How to manage challenging situations
- Conflict transformation sessions

In the training sessions, hold a space for long-term volunteers to share their volunteering experience.

Send the training material in advance which will allow participants to review the material before the class.

Hold a space to share Canadian Culture to newcomers- make this a conversation as oppose to a lecture or workshop.

What features make a space feel welcoming (hint – social and physical). Choose a community gathering place that is familiar to you, what is it about this place that makes it a Welcoming space?

- Food – either free or very low cost
- Have a choice of activities
- Pleasant welcoming multilingual staff
- High visibility –bright lights and easy to read signs
- Affordable annual membership fees with flexible payment plan
- The director of the centre occasionally attend volunteer meetings
- Quiet corner with a comfortable chair, table and good lighting (to accommodate reading or quiet contemplation)
- Have gender neutral bathrooms and raised toilet seats
- Have a Welcome Poster and art on the wall
- Have a senior serve as a receptionist

What strategies would you recommend for volunteer recruitment?

- On all marketing material explain the many benefits of volunteering to the potential volunteer, the agency and the community.
- Create kits of volunteer information and host an annual volunteer information session
- Recruit from existing program participants
- Make sure there is a “job” for the volunteer
- In addition to “how to obtain” volunteers, facilitate a session on “how to keep” volunteers
- Host volunteer/staff relations workshops which will make the volunteer experience pleasant and encourage volunteer retention.