



Hello Neighbor...Connecting the Community

Older Adults at Higher Risk

The CDC has identified older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung, or kidney disease at higher risk for more serious COVID-19. This is likely because as people age, their immune systems change, making it harder for their body to fight off diseases and infection, and because many older adults are also more likely to have underlying health conditions that make it harder to cope with and recover from. Age increases the risk that the respiratory system or lungs will shut down when an older person has COVID-19 disease.

The CDC has emphasized that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure. That's why the CDC has recommended that people of all ages stay home as much as possible limiting close contact with others. While social distancing is extremely important in reducing exposure and mitigating the spread of the virus, isolation and loneliness can be a detrimental result. We, as a community, can all play a role in supporting older adults during this extraordinary time.

Reaching out directly, via telephone, to older adult residents to ask "How are you?" or "Is there anything in particular you need?" lets them know they are not alone and that someone cares. Wellness calls enable the sharing of trusted information, the ability to provide reassurance and an essential opportunity to connect with another human being.

This pandemic has taught us many things, but perhaps, most notably that we are social creatures and that connecting to others is crucial. Communities across the country are reaching out to older adults to offer telephone reassurance and to identify who may be in need of additional support. The most at risk older adults include those over the age of 80, living alone, experiencing food insecurity, have compromised health or multiple health conditions, are experiencing the negative effects of social isolation or those that are financially at risk.

The older residents that the staff of the Commission on Aging and Senior Center have called have been extremely appreciative and very excited to be able to chat. Keep in mind, for some, the reassurance call you give may be the only call an individual is receiving. Telephone encounters are most successful when volunteers identify themselves immediately using a friendly tone of voice and, engage in a conversation as opposed to merely seeking answers to the questions they need or want to ask. Additionally, reassurance calls provide a valuable opportunity to share information about available programs and referrals to appropriate resources.

Lori Contadino, MS
Director, Greenwich Commission on Aging

Hello Neighbor Program Overview

First Selectman, Fred Camillo will inform the Greenwich community through the reverse 911 system and Community Connections daily update on Friday, May 15th that the “Hello Neighbor” telephone calls to older adult residents will continue.

Volunteers will be assigned a roster of 20 individuals to call within a two-week time frame for the purpose of connecting, chatting and checking on their well-being.

1. Volunteers will make calls from the comfort and safety of their own home or location of preference. **Please do not call residents after 7:30 p.m.**
2. Volunteers are encouraged to use a warm, friendly voice and to identify themselves immediately. Ideally, volunteers should spend as much time conversing as feels comfortable or appropriate. For many participants, this conversation may be the only one they have all day. The time per call will vary dependent upon the older adult and their needs. Volunteers are encouraged to be patient and talk with the person as long as needed.
3. Volunteers are encouraged to call all residents they are assigned within a two-week period and ask questions from the **Hello Neighbor Guide**. Volunteers will record the date, duration of the call and all answers to questions asked on the **Call Log**.
4. If a resident shares a problem or mentions a concern, volunteers will refer to resource information they have been provided and record the issue on the **Call Log** along with a brief note describing the issue presented, the information shared and the action taken.
5. Problems or concerns identified by the Volunteer will be brought to the attention of the Commission on Aging or other authorized individual on the same day the issue is identified. Issues that fall into this category include, but are not limited to access to food, medication, health or medical issues.
6. If there is no answer, Volunteers will leave a voice message (if the ability exists) and will follow-up with a second call to the resident at another time. The failed attempt to reach the resident will be noted on the **Call Log**.
7. Volunteers will follow-up directly with callers if the resident is requesting general information that the volunteer does not know the answer to at the time of the call. All follow-up calls will be made promptly and a follow-up note documented on the **Call Log**.
8. After completing all calls, the Volunteer will email the completed **Call Log** to the Commission on Aging at agefriendlygreenwich@gmail.com.
9. **Residents have the right to expect that their identity, information and personal circumstances shared with a volunteer will remain private. Volunteers affirm that Information will not be shared with anyone other than the Greenwich Commission on Aging and/or other authorized individuals.**
10. A volunteer in need of assistance or guidance while working with an older adult should contact the Greenwich Commission on Aging or other authorized individuals at the email address or telephone number listed below. Messages will be regularly retrieved.
11. Volunteers will forward completed **Call Logs and/or Questions** electronically to the Greenwich Commission on Aging and/or other authorized individuals:

By email: agefriendlygreenwich@gmail.com

By telephone: **203-862-6707** Hello Neighbor Message Line

Hello Neighbor Sample Script

1. Hi, my name is: _____ (I am a member of the RTM in District "X") OR, I am one of over 100 volunteers with the Greenwich Commission on Aging calling residents in Town to say hello and to see how you are doing today.
2. We've all been asked to stay home due to the Coronavirus, how is that going for you?
3. Do you have family or friends nearby? Do you get to speak with them often? It's important for all of us to stay connected. Technology is so amazing. Have you ever used facetime? Zoom? (Commission on Aging has a team of volunteers through the CONNECTT program that can remotely work with individuals to teach them how to use their smart devices to facetime, zoom, etc...) If the resident wants help with this – make a note in your call log, and someone will contact them to assist).
4. Is there anything in particular you need?
Yes or No -*If yes, please elaborate! If you are asked a question and do not know the answer, tell the resident you will find out and get back to them.*
Concern over groceries and medication are quite common. You can ask, "How have you been getting your groceries/medications? If you had to venture out, do you have a mask?
If you sense this is an area of concern, email the name and contact information of the resident to: agefriendlygreenwich@gmail.com or leave a message on the Hello Neighbor line: 203-862-6707 and a staff member will contact the resident directly.
5. Would you like to receive a regular call to check in and chat??
Explain Bridging the Generations Program – regular calls at a mutually convenient time of day to chat.
Yes or No -*If yes, please note the best day/time of day to receive the call.*
Bridging the Generations program attached.
6. There are many enjoyable and engaging programs to participate in from the comfort and safety of your own home. You can participate by telephone OR via computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Would you like to learn more about these programs?
CONNECTT Program details attached.

Would you like me to have someone from the Greenwich Senior Center or CONNECTT program contact you?

Yes or No –If yes, basic information can be shared and someone from the Commission on Aging team will get back in touch with them.
7. Do you have any additional questions? Feel free to contact me in the future with any questions (share your telephone number) OR, if you have a question or need assistance with something in the future, call the Greenwich Commission on Aging directly at 203-862-6710 or 203-862-6700. **Please do not give residents the telephone number for the Hello Neighbor Message Line as we have established this line for the sole use of our volunteers.**
8. It was lovely to speak with you. Have a good day.

*All calls are confidential

**Remember to log all calls by completing the Call Log

***Forward issues and concerns to the Commission on Aging asap