

Friendly Phone Call Program Instructions

Our Friendly Phone Call program started during the beginning of the COVID-19 public health crisis. During this time, we realized how much of an impact this program had on our clients and how important it is to continue these Friendly Phone calls. We are grateful that you have agreed to make phone calls to our clients.

While we are still in the midst of a pandemic and much has changed since the beginning, many of our clients are still being very careful with exposure to the virus and some of them have a lot less contact with other people than they did before the pandemic. In Milwaukee County all our clients are 60 years or older. In Waukesha County our clients are adults (18 and older) with disabilities and seniors 60 years and older. All our active clients are being offered Friendly Phone calls along with all our new clients.

Our goals with the Friendly Phone Call Program are to:

- Decrease social isolation and create a sense of calmness to reassure our older adults and adults with disabilities that they are not alone.
- Determine any urgent needs and refer client to connect directly with Eras trained staff as needed.

Survey/ Friendly Phone call documentation:

- After you finish speaking with the client or attempt a call, please complete the online survey through our volunteer portal within a week of the call: <https://eras.org/volunteer-login/>
- Staff will monitor and do follow-up on surveys if necessary.
- You can also find instruction videos on how to get logged on to the portal and how to document the calls here: <https://eras.org/volunteer-login/>
- If you do not have internet access, please contact us for alternative reporting options: Mary 414-488-6500 (Milwaukee) or Shannon 262-549-3348 (Waukesha)

In addition to the Friendly Phone Calls Eras provides the following services:

- **Transportation:** Transportation to medical appointments and other health related appointments, banks, tax preparation, etc. We need 7 days' notice unless it is an urgent need.
- **Groceries:** Our volunteers shop for and with our clients. We need 7 days' notice but please have the client contact Eras staff if they are out of food and we can assist.
- **Yard clean up:** We offer yard clean up in the fall and spring.

At times we also have volunteers to assist with lawn mowing, snow removal, and other services.



Discontinuation of phone calls

If you are no longer able to make phone calls to some or all of the clients assigned to you, please contact us as soon as possible so we have time to reassign these clients to another volunteer. Please also let us know the last date you will enter your surveys. In your last call to the clients please ask them if they are still interested in receiving the calls and send us a list of those clients. Let the client know that you are no longer able to call but Eras will be assigning a different volunteer to call them if they are still interested in receiving these calls.

When you call, please do the following:

1. Please check in with them to see how they are doing. Listen to their concerns. Share a story if appropriate. Good topics are: Gardening, pets, family, activities they enjoy, TV Shows, the seasons, crafts, etc.
2. Some clients still know us by our former program name: "Interfaith". It may help to initially state: "Hello, I am _____ a volunteer with Eras Senior Network, formerly Interfaith..."
3. Ask if they have any needs that Eras might be able to assist with and *refer them* to call Eras main phone numbers.
4. Establish a good time to connect weekly or biweekly depending on your availability and their preference. If you are open to calling more often that is fine as long as the client agrees to this. Please inform Eras if they do not want to receive any more calls. Sometimes seniors do not want to be a burden and will decline help. In that case, our staff will connect with them to determine their needs.

If a client reports any of the following:

- Symptoms of COVID-19 or other health issues: Please encourage them follow up with their primary care provider. If you are uncertain if they are able to do so, please let an Eras staff member know and they will follow up (see below for contact info). For **medical emergencies please call 911.**
- Scams: If they report they have become a victim of a scam, please ask them to contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) (Milwaukee: 414-289-6874 or Waukesha: 262-548-7848) or contact Eras staff and we will contact the ADRC on their behalf.
- Groceries, medication, yard clean up, transportation or other needs: **Please have them call Eras main phone in their county to request a volunteer.**
- Other concerns: Please have them contact Eras directly with any concerns or if there is an immediate need and the client is unable to call, please contact Eras on the client's behalf.
- Disconnected phone number/ client not interested in phone calls/ client has moved/ any other concerns: Please inform Eras staff.



Please remember that many of our clients have hearing issues so please speak clearly and loudly, with good phone reception. If you get an answering machine, please let the client know your name and that you are calling from Eras to check in on them. Also add that if they have any urgent needs to please call Eras (414-488-6500 (Milwaukee) OR 262-549-3348 (Waukesha)) and that you will be calling once per week to check in on them. You may dial *67 to have your caller ID blocked.

During your conversation, things may drift to discussing the COVID-19 situation or politics, but the goal is really to calm them and talk about other things. We do not want to focus on this and how anxious we are, or place blame on anyone - that just creates more anxiety. Some may try to point fingers and share frustration. It is not our job to change their mind, but to reassure them that we are in this together and they are not alone. Remember your goal is to have a light conversation. If a client has any requests for services have them call Eras staff directly.

Additional conversation starters:

1. Reminisce about the current season with sample questions below:
 - What was this season like when you were a kid?
 - What was the weather like during the current season?
 - What was this season's activities like?
 - How did this season make you feel?
 - Did you participate in any sports?
2. Information about events that occurred on this particular day in history: www.onthisday.com
3. Topics like a designated National Day to celebrate (Spinach Day or Cheesecake Day) then fun facts about the particular day: www.NationalToday.com and www.timeanddate.com
4. Bet you didn't know (fun facts) and trivia: www.Triviaboss.com and <https://www.suddenlysenior.com/impossible-quiz-for-seniors/>
5. Beautiful questions: Inspire someone to think a little differently, with no right or wrong answers. These questions do not rely on memory for someone to answer: <https://timeslips.org/resources/creativity-center/ask-a-beautiful-question>

Finally, your focus is on conversation, you will not be doing any other services for the client so enjoy! Thank you so much for taking the time to reach out to our clients. Please reach out to Eras staff if you have any questions or concerns.

Again, please refer the clients to us if they have any requests, concerns, or questions. We are here to help you and the clients problem solve, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us. **We can be reached by phone: 414-488-6500 (Milwaukee) and 262-549-3348 (Waukesha) or by email info@eras.org.**

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