



CONNECTIONS

by

Caring Circle

Manual

*Caring Circle Health & Wellness Society of Bowen Island
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CONNECTIONS VOLUNTEER MANUAL

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Introduction

Caring Circle has a broad vision of reaching out to our entire community in as many ways as needed with health and wellness support. Caring Circle's CONNECTIONS Manual is an aide for Volunteers who want to serve as a companion to those on the Island who are seeking social contact and connection. This Manual provides a guide for you as a Volunteer to optimize your experience in interacting with community members who invite you into their homes for visits.

Caring Circle's Vision

A Bowen Island community where all people feel safe, connected and healthy.

Caring Circle's Mission

We connect individuals on Bowen Island to health services, social programs, and each other – for free.

CONNECTIONS Program Overview

The purpose of Caring Circle's CONNECTIONS Program is to facilitate Islanders supporting one another by having Volunteers visit with those in our community who want social contact and connection. The objective for these visits is to provide companionship and to enhance emotional well-being.

Those requesting visits could be someone feeling isolated, a young parent wanting the company of an adult, someone experiencing temporary or long term mobility difficulties due to health issues, someone coping with feelings of loneliness, or someone who wants to share an intergeneration experience with a young family in the role of a grand-figure.

As a Volunteer going into peoples' homes, you are in a unique position to interact with people who are feeling isolated and to bring them companionship. In this Manual the term Volunteer refers to the person going into the home of someone who has requested companionship.

Registration & Referrals

This CONNECTIONS Program is freely offered to all members of the Bowen community. An individual wanting someone to visit may contact Caring Circle Resource Centre at 604-947-9100. Both Volunteers and those requesting someone to visit will register and be interviewed to determine skills and needs.

Caring Circle encourages Health Care Professionals on the Island to let clients and other residents know about this opportunity and refer them to Caring Circle where they see a need.

The CONNECTIONS Program is intended to supplement other services available in our Community and in no way duplicates or replaces existing in-home services such as respite work, personal support, preparing meals, or housekeeping.

As CONNECTIONS Volunteers are not trained health care workers, this Program cannot support those with severe mental, cognitive or physical disabilities. If you are unsure whether or not a person is a good fit for the Program, please contact the Caring Circle Program Director.

What is Volunteering?

A Volunteer is a person who offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task for an organization willingly and without being paid. Volunteering is an action taken by people who reach out to others in need.

Volunteerism is founded on the belief in the dignity and worth of each individual and a sense of responsibility for sharing our time and talents and includes a commitment to support and enhance community life.

Your Role as a CONNECTIONS Volunteer

Volunteers provide companionship to those wanting a visitor. The objective is to address the needs of the person you are visiting in ways that will enhance their emotional well being (e.g. reading together, play a game of cards, sharing a cup of tea, talking, looking through a photo album).

Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers will provide companionship within the parameters of Caring Circle's CONNECTIONS Program. As a Volunteer you are expected to:

- Visit the person you have been connected with on a weekly or monthly basis as agreed upon.
- Address the needs and interests of the person you are visiting by participating in activities of interest to them such as chatting, walking, touring or visiting places on Bowen (if they are independently mobile), playing games, reading, letter-writing, etc.
- Commit to confidentiality, respect, and dignity in all interactions.
- Keep a record of your visits and share these with Caring Circle on a regular basis.
- Obtain a Criminal Record Check from the RCMP and submit a copy to the Caring Circle Program Director.
- Should you be driving anyone as part of this Program, you must hold a valid BC driver's license, have \$3 million in third-party liability insurance and provide a Driver's Abstract of clean driving record from ICBC.
- On any excursion, a Volunteer would only use their own vehicle.
- Complete a mandatory Orientation Session and participate in CONNECTIONS training programs when offered.

Roles of Volunteer and Person Being Visited

In order to maximize a successful connection between the Volunteer and the person being visited, it will be important be clear about the roles of each person. By having an understanding of individual roles, each person can be more confident about appropriate personal and situational boundaries.

What is a boundary?

One aspect of boundaries is being able to sense an appropriate physical space which most of us are aware of in our daily interactions with each other. Another kind of boundary would be that of sensing what kind of action is appropriate.

The following list might help in clarifying roles and boundaries:

<i>What this Relationship IS</i>	<i>What this Relationship IS NOT</i>
The Volunteer can be an emotional support	The Volunteer is not responsible for being the principle provider of emotional support
A relationship where both individuals feel comfortable	The relationship does not continue if one or both individuals feel uncomfortable
The person being visited has their own resources to fill their needs	The Volunteer does not take on responsibility to fulfill the other's needs
This relationship is a conversation between equal participants	The Volunteer does not offer advice or solve problems
Both parties are energized by the interaction	Neither person should feel overwhelmed by the relationship
Each CONNECTIONS relationship is unique and unlike any other	Neither person should feel uncomfortable because this CONNECTION does not meet expectations

As an example, how might the Volunteer enter the home of another at the time of the first visit?

1. Remember you are a guest in this person's home and that this person will likely feel vulnerable when meeting you for the first time.
2. Act in a calm manner and be respectful of the individual's personal space. Sit a comfortable distance - a minimum of at least one arm's length is an appropriate distance - and do not touch the person except to shake hands unless they give you permission.
3. Initiate a discussion in which you both talk about your expectations for visiting and agree on basic guidelines.
4. Invite them to share with you any questions or concerns they may have.
5. Be respectful of both your time and the time of the person you are visiting by making the duration of the visit clear at the beginning and sticking to the agreed timing.

Communication

Effective visiting takes knowledge and skill, and requires patience, maturity and tact. Quality communication between you and the person you are visiting will help to create a satisfying experience for you both.

- Be conscious of listening carefully and allowing the other person to complete what they are saying
- By speaking clearly, in an even tone and listening carefully, you will be able to effectively communicate and enhance your personal enjoyment. Some people may have a hearing impairment, so please try to face the person when speaking to enhance the person's ability to hear and understand you.
- It is important, whenever possible, to communicate with the other person at eye level. Let them set the pace of the conversation.

- Give your whole, unhurried attention. Do not speak for them. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.
- Be sensitive to how you might initiate a conversation.
- Whenever appropriate, use the name of the person you are visiting.
- Reintroduce yourself even if you have visited them before as they may not remember your name.
- Be sure that the person understands exactly what you are saying. If you think your message is unclear, you may paraphrase or ask the person to repeat back what you've said, especially in regard to plans for future visits.
- If you think that the message may be forgotten give the person a note.
- Do not pretend to understand; repeat what you do understand and ask for clarification if you do not think that you have understood something completely.
- By being sensitive to the needs of the person that you are visiting and using common sense, you will be most supportive. For instance, you could ask people "Tell me, how can I help you?" or "Would you like assistance getting up out of your chair?" instead of assuming that they would like help.
- Be sensitive to the possibility of the need for quiet during the visit.
- Be mindful that some of the people you visit may be living with a physical, mental or cognitive disability and communicate appropriately.
- Be mindful that the person may be dealing with issues such as loss of family and friends, illness, pain, decreased mobility and transportation, boredom, isolation, loneliness or anxiety.
- It is important to know that you, as a Volunteer, may be the only one-on-one social contact that a person may have. They may confide in you about additional challenges that they are experiencing. You are a valuable resource to this person so do not ignore their concerns. However, it is important that you refer them to Caring Circle's Program Director rather than advise them or try to solve their problems yourself.

Guiding Principles

Health Care Professionals have established ethical values that can be helpful in working with others. The following guiding principles reflect those values.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is required. It is essential that a Volunteer does not repeat information pertaining to anyone they are visiting except to notify the CONNECTIONS Coordinator or Caring Circle's Program Director of serious concerns.

Reliability/Punctuality:

The Volunteer should be respectful of the time of the person they are visiting by turning up for all arranged meetings and arriving on time. You might want to call in advance of a meeting to confirm the timing. If unforeseen circumstances prevent you from meeting your commitment, you should notify both the person you were to be with and the CONNECTIONS Coordinator as soon as possible and, if appropriate, a replacement might be arranged.

Health/Safety Concerns:

If you have any health or safety concerns for someone you visit, you could ask them for permission to speak, on their behalf, to Caring Circle's Program Director. You should not feel responsible for the total well being of this person.

Your safety as a Volunteer is important. You are encouraged not to do any heavy lifting including transferring someone to and from a sitting position or in/out of a vehicle.

Hand washing is the best single way to prevent the spread of germs. To protect both of you, wash your hands before entering their home, after using the washroom, before eating, when handling or preparing food, before and after doing personal care, and after sneezing or coughing.

Inappropriate Behaviour:

Volunteers do not need to tolerate threatening or inappropriate behaviour. Use good judgment regarding your safety and the safety of the person you are visiting. It is your prerogative to excuse yourself from the situation or, if you judge that the situation has become critical, call 911 for ambulance or police support.

Beliefs:

Volunteers will not attempt to influence another's beliefs.

Banking/Money Handling:

Volunteers must not involve themselves in the financial affairs of any person they visit. If the need arises, Volunteers should direct them to banking personnel for assistance.

Remuneration:

Volunteers should not receive any form of remuneration for assistance or work done as a Volunteer for the CONNECTIONS program. If someone insists, ask them to consider making a donation to Caring Circle. To facilitate this, the Volunteer could accept the donation on behalf of Caring Circle and then give it to Caring Circle's Program Director.

Telephone:

We recommend that you turn off your cell phone when visiting.

Smoking:

Volunteers may stipulate that they be connected only with a person who does not smoke, or may ask that the person not smoke in their presence.

If Somebody Falls or is Injured

All people who are having someone visit their home as part of the CONNECTIONS program should fill out Caring Circle's **Emergency Contact Sheet** and have it prominently posted in the kitchen for emergency purposes. The Volunteer will bring this Contact Sheet during the first visit, and, if necessary, offer assistance with filling it out. If it is already filled out, the Volunteer will review the Contact Sheet with the person to ensure that the Volunteer is informed (e.g. next of kin, allergies etc)

If someone falls or is injured:

1. Stay calm.
2. Encourage and wait for the person to get up on their own.
3. Before acting, ask if you can help.
4. ***Do not lift anybody.*** You could injure your back or cause harm to the person you are lifting.
5. If the person cannot get up and you suspect an injury, call or send someone to call 911. Some may protest the need for an ambulance. If the person is in distress, it is recommended that you call for additional help from a paramedic or professional who is trained to help in emergencies. *Whenever possible stay with them.*
6. Keep them warm and comfortable until help arrives.
7. If the person is bleeding, use a clean cloth to apply direct pressure or have the person do it themselves.

8. If the person is conscious be sure to ask, “how can I help?” Often people with health issues may have prescriptions to help them in case of an emergency. These could be:
- nitroglycerine spray or tablets for chest pain
 - inhalers for breathing difficulties
 - snack for someone feeling faint from diabetes.

Although you may be asked to get these items for the person, it is best that they administer them themselves.

Insurance Requirement if Driving Another Person

Third-party liability coverage for claims of up to \$3 million is required if you are driving someone as part of the CONNECTIONS program. This should cover any liability in the event of an accident. You must hold a valid BC Driver’s License and provide a Driver’s Abstract of clean driving record from ICBC. On any excursion, the Volunteer would use only their own vehicle.

Credits: Caring Circle would like to acknowledge and thank the Sechelt Home and Community Care, Home Care Services of Vancouver Coastal Health for generously sharing information and documentation about their program.

Disclaimer: Caring Circle serves to co-ordinate successful and rewarding home visits but is not responsible for the actual visits, interactions and outcomes.