



Visiting Companions

Volunteer Service Training



VISITING COMPANIONS

What service is provided?

- This no-cost service connects a member with a caring visiting companion volunteer ready to create and enjoy an ongoing connection in-person.

Are there program requirements?

- 62+ years old
- Passes Friends & Co in-home assessment

How do members sign up?

- Fill out a basic interest form. The form can be filled out by the older adult, family, friends, or a professional referrer. They will then be followed up with by a Friends & Co staff member or a volunteer assessor.



VOLUNTEER ROLES AND DUTIES

ASSESSOR

- Calls new referrals and sign-ups
- Provides an overview of the organization and services
- Schedules in-home assessment
- Completes assessment questions with the older adult in-person
- Answers questions the older adult has and sets expectations for the service provided

VISITING COMPANION

- Visits with their visiting companion regularly
- Offers conversation, support, and friendship
- Notifies Friends & Co staff if questions or concerns arise
- Submits volunteer engagement reports

THIS IS YOU!

THE PAIRING PROCESS

- After completing the interest form, the older adult will be contacted by a staff member or volunteer assessor. They will set up a time to complete an in-home assessment with the older adult.
- Once the staff member or volunteer assessor has completed the necessary paperwork with the older adult in-person and verified the older adult is eligible for our Visiting Companion program, the older adult is ready to be matched!
- The pairing process can take 1-2 weeks. Upon pairing, you will receive an email with the following:
 - Visiting companion's name
 - City
 - Phone number
 - A short bio
 - Next steps
- Please note, the older adult or referrer will also be sent an email sharing they have been matched.



OUR OLDER ADULT MEMBERS

- Everyone is different and we celebrate this at Friends & Co! Some of our members are talkative, some are quiet. Some like to get out and about, and others prefer connecting at home.
- While we don't have a perfect pairing process, we do our best to pair people.
- We want all our older adult members and volunteers to feel supported and this means celebrating differences and being supportive to all!



CONTACTING YOUR VISITING COMPANION

- We ask that you call your visiting companion within a few days of receiving their name and contact information.
- When you call:
 - State your name
 - Share you are their new Friends & Co visiting companion
 - Let them know you are excited to visit with them
 - Determine how frequently you would like to visit and where
- Friends & Co asks that companions visit at least once a month. Most of our visiting volunteers visit 1-2 times a month, with some visiting more often. Please establish a schedule that works best for you and your older adult. Phone calls, emails, or cards between visits are also great ways to stay in touch!
- Companions visit at their homes, restaurants, libraries, and other fun places around town. Choose what works best for the both of you!



VISITING COMPANION EXPECTATIONS

- As a visiting companion volunteer, you are asked to provide conversation and companionship to the older adult you are matched with by visiting and chatting on a regular basis. Visits can include having coffee at their house, going bowling, playing a board game, or attending an orchestra concert. The possibilities are endless!
- As a visiting companion volunteer, you are **not** expected to provide transportation, food services, or medical advice. You are also not expected to run errands.
- It's perfectly fine if you want to meet outside the older adult's home! However, we encourage companions to meet directly at their final destination. While driving your older adult is not prohibited, please note that Friends & Co is released from liability for any injury incurred during volunteering, including travel-related activities.



COMMON TYPES OF CONVERSATIONS

HAPPY

"We talked about St. Patrick's Day. He said there was no party at the Care Center, but in honor of the day he wore his green sweatshirt!"

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

"Talked with her about her urgent care experience and family drama. She just needed to vent..."

SAD

"She was lonely today - cried about missing her boyfriend that had passed away."

CONVERSATION SCENARIOS

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER SOLUTION
Repetition	Patience and reframing, inquisitive inquiry.
Complaints	An empathetic, patient ear, and possible redirection.
Despair	Kindness, optimism, and patience. Questions directed toward solution-seeking.
Seeking advice	Instead of advising, encourage them to problem-solve and look at all possibilities.
Silence	Doesn't need to be filled right away! The caller may just need a moment to gather their thoughts. Wait before trying to fill it.



SUBMITTING ENGAGEMENT REPORTS

- By submitting engagement reports, our staff gains valuable insights into the progress of the pairing, and it provides an avenue for addressing any questions or concerns you may have. Additionally, these reports play a crucial role in our grant applications and funding efforts, as they demonstrate the impact of our programs.
- Engagement reports can be completed after each conversation or at the end of each month.

[To get access to the engagement reports, please click here to get your volunteer portal link.](#)

Make sure to bookmark the link for future use!



EXAMPLE OF AN ENGAGEMENT REPORT:

- **Volunteer Name:** George Jones
- **Hours spent with older adult:** 1 hour
- **Comments:** Robert and I met at his home and played checkers and talked about our childhood experiences.
- **Older Adults Name:** Robert Simon
- **Hours without older adult:** 0.25



STOPPING YOUR VOLUNTEER ROLE

If you need to stop or pause your volunteer role, please do the following:

- Inform your visiting companion
- After notifying your companion, please follow up with program staff who will in turn reach out to the older adult about getting rematched.



RESOURCES

- **For any emergencies, call 911!**
- National Suicide Hotline: Call 988
- Mental Health Chat Lines:
 - Minnesota Warmline: 877-404-3190
 - HERE4MN: 833-HERE4MN
- Additional Mental Health Resources:
 - www.mentalhealthmn.org
 - www.namimn.org
- For any information for senior related issues or care, call the Senior Linkage Line:
 - 1-800-333-2433
 - <https://mn.gov/senior-linkage-line/>
- Friends & Co Resource Guide: [Friends & Co Minnesota Resources Guide](#)



REFERING YOUR COMPANION TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

YOUR VISITING COMPANION...	POSSIBLE RESOURCES
Asks you to visit or speak too often	<p>You are welcome to speak and visit as often as you want but everyone has different schedules and boundaries. Healthy boundaries are a good thing so establish how often you plan to meet.</p> <p>Also, suggest calling Coffee Talk!</p> <p>Friends & Co's Coffee Talk line is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – Noon.</p> <p>Click here for more information about Coffee Talk!</p>
Shares with you they extremely anxious or depressed and don't want to be around anymore.	<p>We recommend suggesting the following resources depending on the situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Suicide Hotline: 988• Minnesota Warmline: 877-404-3190• Reference the resource guide for more mental health related resources
Is worried because they are running low on groceries and isn't sure how to get to the store or if they will have enough money to pay for things.	<p>It is always best practice to ask the older adult if this situation has happened before, and if so, how they have handled it in the past.</p> <p>Using the guide for resources in their geographic area, make appropriate referrals to other organizations.</p>

Have questions? Don't hesitate to contact us!

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Thank you for volunteering with Friends & Co!





Meaningful connections for older adults.