



Helping People,
Changing Lives

Helping Hand

Welcome

Welcome to the fifth issue of the Helping Hand! You are receiving this newsletter because you are either a participant in CAHF's Volunteer Engagement Project or you have expressed interest in it. Every month, we share ideas and best practices, exciting news on the project, and examples of volunteers making a difference across California.

Is 1 Really the Loneliest Number?

DeAnn Walters

Director of Clinical Affairs and Quality Improvement

In skilled nursing facilities, our residents are surrounded by people every moment of the day.

Other residents, staff, vendors, visitors and volunteers are constantly nearby. So how can the residents we serve be lonely since they are not alone?

[A study](#) conducted in San Diego reports three time periods in a person's life where they report feeling moderate to severe loneliness. One of those periods occurs during the eighties. A person doesn't have to be alone to feel lonely and this state of mind can have severe health consequences noted in [this article](#). Many of these health issues are in the medical records of most of our residents.

Though not listed in the articles', suggestion for overcoming loneliness for residents in skilled nursing, having a volunteer spend time and developing relationships with residents, can help reduce feelings of loneliness. Attracting and maintaining a strong volunteer program can have challenges, but the rewards for our residents and the facility team are far greater.

Handbook Highlights

From [How to Create a Robust Volunteer Program in Your Skilled Nursing Facility](#)

Every year, thousands of people volunteer. A vast majority of these volunteers are eager to give of their time and effort simply because it helps others and their communities.

However, just because most volunteers act altruistically doesn't mean that volunteers don't need to be screened. We owe it to our residents to make sure that all SNF volunteers have been carefully screened and selected before they begin their volunteer work. Such screening should include a volunteer interview, check of references, and must include a background check.

SNF work is special and not suited for everyone. Volunteers who work with elderly skilled nursing residents should be special too.

Please refer to the handbook for information about **Volunteer Selection and Screening and Volunteer Application and Interview Forms!**

Upcoming FREE 2019 Webinars

Volunteer Retention

Wednesday, October 9

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PST)

Trudy Harris
Executive Director
Team Giving

Registration coming soon!

Volunteer Recognition

Wednesday, December 11

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PST)

Registration coming soon!

One (1) CEU available for NHAP, BRN and NCCAP (activity professionals)

Click [here](#) to register for live webinars on the CAHF/QCHF calendar.

Click [here](#) to register for recorded on-demand webinars.

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Free 2019 Topic Webinars

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Meg's Messages

Meg Thayer, Ph.D.
Geriatric Psychologist

The Detrimental Effects of Social Isolation



Former US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, went on national television in 2018 and declared loneliness as a “growing health epidemic.”

He said, “It turns out that loneliness is associated with a reduction in your lifespan that is as severe as the lifespan you see with smoking 15 cigarettes a day. We evolved to be social creatures, and thousands of years ago if you were connected to other people you were more likely to have a stable food supply and to be protected from predators. So when you're disconnected, you're in a stress state. When that happens chronically, it can have a profound impact on your health.”

Social isolation is as dangerous as smoking? So what is social isolation? It isn't necessarily a measure of how many hours a person spends alone or how many friends and other connections they have. Physical isolation is obvious, but emotional and psychological isolation can be just as detrimental.

Many people feel rejection or ostracism as debilitating social isolation as well, even if they are “around” others all the time. While a virtual lifestyle is not something our current cohort of older adults grew up with, internet socialization does not contain many of the important aspects of human communication and interaction, and cannot take the place of an actual physical and emotional connection.

Savvy skilled nursing facility staff know how beneficial group and individual interaction outside of direct caregiving can be for their residents, so it is no surprise that many facilities participating in the CAHF Volunteer Engagement Project have chosen volunteer goals that seek to increase deep, personal connections between their residents and volunteers from the community.

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