

## Identifying Caregivers In Need of Supports

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Finding caregivers and families in need of volunteer support services requires organized outreach. Experience has shown that those most in need of services may be the least known to their community. Many are unable to attend religious services due to poor health or lack of transportation. Others may be ineligible for or unwilling to accept formal services. Many live in isolation with little or no support. In order to reach those who could benefit from your program, use several outreach strategies.

### *Community Outreach*

Publicize the program in the community through websites, weekly newspapers, radio and community television announcements. In addition, you may want to distribute flyers or brochures about the program throughout neighborhoods or housing units where people needing services may reside.

Ask local merchants to give flyers to their customers and/or put posters in their store windows. The more people know about the program, the more they will call for assistance - for themselves or for someone they know.

The formal service agencies are the greatest source of referrals. These providers often seek volunteers to help fill gaps that are beyond the scope of their services. (for example: doing errands, preparing meals, visiting or assisting someone in getting to an appointment.) Your ServiceLink office talks with family caregivers frequently and is another great source of referrals.

Networking with the formal service agencies is very helpful. As volunteers become more knowledgeable about the services available in the community and how to apply for them, they are able to help connect those they service with the available resources and to advocate for them.

### *Congregational Outreach*

Most congregations keep an active list of members who are homebound and who need regular visits. Often this list is helpful to start organizing a program within the congregation. In addition, a survey of the congregation may be useful in identifying members who are caregivers, what kinds of services are needed, and members who are willing to help.

Other means to locate caregivers in need of support can include:

- announcements during worship service or in the congregation's bulletin
- special flyers about the volunteer program that could be distributed with the bulletin
- referral cards that can be filled out and left at the end of worship services

Once caregivers in need of support are identified and interested in receiving services, a program leader from the congregation can arrange to make an initial home visit. The home visit allows the contact person to talk with the caregiver about the kinds of supports desired and to determine appropriate volunteer services as well as any needed referrals to other community agencies. Based on the findings of the initial home visit, the congregation contact person can begin asking volunteers to fill specific requests assistance.