



# **Volunteer Manual**

## **North East Seattle Together (NEST)**

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## **WELCOME TO THE NEST VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY**

Thank you for deciding to become a NEST volunteer. Your compassion and commitment will improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods for our older residents who –with your help--will be better able to stay safely in their own homes.

This manual is yours to keep, re-read, think about and refer to as you go about your volunteer activities. It has a wealth of information about our values, principles and expectations. This manual includes important information about what will be expected of you, and what, in turn, you can expect from NEST to support and guide your efforts.

If you have additional questions or encounter unexpected challenges, please contact the Executive Director, or the Member Services Coordinator for additional help. Never feel that you are all alone. Support and guidance are always available to you.

Again, welcome to the NEST Volunteer Community. Your willingness to share your time, strength and compassion is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,



Judy Kinney  
Executive Director  
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## **WHO WE ARE: NEST HISTORY AND MISSION**

North East Seattle Together (NEST) is a grass-roots community dedicated to ensuring that, as we grow older, we can continue to live safely and confidently in our own homes, in the neighborhoods we love. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit organization creating a “virtual village,” an innovative, new approach to “aging in community” that is inspiring neighbors across the country to organize, incorporate, and take charge. Our mission is to connect northeast Seattle residents to community resources and provide social and educational opportunities so that, as they age, members can live confidently in their homes and neighborhoods.

Our geographical boundaries in Seattle are north to NE 110st St., south to the Montlake Cut, east to Lake Washington, and west to Interstate 5. We cover the following neighborhoods: Bryant, Hawthorne Hills, Inverness, Laurelhurst, Maple Leaf, Matthews Beach, Meadowbrook, Ravenna, Roosevelt, Sand Point/Inverness, University District, View Ridge, Wedgwood, and Windemere.

NEST is strongly supported by volunteers. It is volunteers who share their strengths, skills, time, and friendship with others in the community. After a short training, volunteers will provide members of NEST with such basic services as transportation, friendly visits, social activities, and simple home maintenance. Volunteers may also choose to aid the administrative, public relations, and/or fundraising activities of NEST.

This training manual includes policies and procedures, important reminders, and standards and principles for volunteers. The same principles and standards apply to our Board of Directors, our officers, and our staff.

### **NEST CODE OF PRACTICE**

NEST makes every effort to tap into its rich network of volunteers, vendors, and community resources to respond to member requests and needs. Members can help NEST meet their needs by providing as much advance notice as possible.

Volunteer time is typically up to two hours at a time, though special arrangements can easily be made through the NEST office.

NEST encourages members to ask for assistance. NEST staff and volunteers will always first assess whether the request is most appropriate for a volunteer. If a request seems to fall in the category of neighborly support, then the volunteer coordinator will notify volunteers of the opportunity. If the task seems to be more than just that of neighborly support, NEST then taps into the vetted vendor network or community resources to meet the member's needs. The NEST staff will always explain why a vendor or community resource is recommended.

## **VOLUNTEER'S ROLE, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Volunteers are the heartbeat of NEST. There are many rewards to being a NEST volunteer. These include: enhancing the safety and stability of your neighborhood, strengthening community bonds among neighborhood residents, providing opportunities for new connections, and knowing that you are providing meaningful services to older residents.

You have the right to:

- Provide permission before NEST authorizes checks of your background or driving records.
- Be informed about relevant information (regarding a member's status or NEST policies) that may have an impact on your work.
- Find opportunities for meaningful volunteer work that is a good match for your skills and interests.
- Receive the orientation, training, and supervision necessary for your volunteer role.
- Receive constructive feedback on the work you perform.
- Say "No" to an assignment that you are not comfortable performing.

## **You have the responsibility to**

- Follow all NEST policies and procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which you are exposed while serving as a volunteer.
- Meet your volunteer commitments on time, and with a positive attitude, or provide advance notice so alternative arrangements can be made.
- Perform the work assigned to the best of your ability.
- Provide culturally appropriate services to members.
- Use NEST resources solely to implement NEST volunteer work and not for personal or business purposes.
- Notify NEST if you choose to terminate your volunteer work.
- Submit a Volunteer Service Report after each visit.

## **WHAT VOLUNTEERS DO**

### **HOW VOLUNTEERS ARE PLACED**

When volunteers fill out their application, they indicate the tasks they prefer to do. When a member contacts the office, the volunteer coordinator will then post the shift to our online calendar and notify volunteers as needed. From there, volunteers need only to check out the calendar and sign up. Volunteers may prefer to see the same members over and over for a variety of tasks; others may choose to do the same task over and over, with different members.

## **MEMBER SERVICES**

### **Member transportation**

Volunteer drivers pick up members, transport them to appointments, and return them to their homes. They may stay with the member rather than dropping them off, for instance when the member is doing errands. Drivers are needed for regularly scheduled trips, periodic trips, and last-minute trips. When appropriate, the volunteer driver will assist the member to and from the front door of his or her house or apartment, and help carry packages. Trips might typically include:

- Weekly grocery shopping
- Doctors' offices
- Churches
- Social and education events
- Airports

### **Other transportation**

Occasionally, the volunteer will perform errands that require driving without the member, such as returning library books, or picking up supplies.

### **In-home assistance**

Many routine activities become difficult or impossible for members as they grow older, and help with what were once simple household chores can mean the difference between a job safely done and an accident, and satisfaction or frustration. Tasks may include, but aren't limited to:

- Making simple home repairs
- Hanging curtains
- Changing light bulbs
- Flipping mattresses
- Moving furniture
- Technical assistance (e.g., computer, cell phones, TVs, etc.)
- Light housework such as filling a dishwasher, occasional vacuuming or laundry
- Yard and gardening advice and help
- Clearing walks
- Watering indoor houseplants or outdoor gardens
- Weeding and planting

- Recommending plants that are aesthetically pleasing and climate appropriate
- Organizational help, such as dealing with paperwork , or comparing vendors

### **Companionship/Visiting**

Sometimes, members may want companionship. Weekly visits to play cards, go to coffee shops or cafés, or even going through old photos can help provide a member with focus, and diminish feelings of isolation.

### **Health related assistance**

- Walking with members or observing an exercise routine
- Checking in with members through a phone call or visit

### **Home Health Care**

When personal assistance is deemed to be home health care, the member will be given a list of vendors or community service organizations. Home Health Care is defined as care needed when physical assistance outside of transportation and walking is needed.

NEST may recommend a professional for other tasks that are beyond volunteer responsibilities. NEST keeps a list of vetted vendors and community service providers for such purposes.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

Some volunteers may want to help NEST with organizational support as well as, or instead of, working directly with members. This includes support activities described in the following paragraphs.



### **Social and Cultural Programming- -Group Activities**

To live their lives to the fullest, NEST members must have opportunities to participate in a variety of social, cultural, and educational activities. NEST sponsors and recommends many programs, lectures, and other events each month. Volunteers plan, organize, and produce these social outings and get-togethers, and NEST encourages volunteers and members to suggest new programs and activities based on their own particular interests. Events might include:

- Movie, theater, and museum outings
- Educational neighborhood walks
- Pot-luck suppers
- Book events
- Educational talks and lectures
- Restaurant outings

### **Office Administrative Support**

Many people have worked in a business office, performed organizational and administrative tasks, and acquired skills that are essential to the functioning of an efficient organization. These skills are particularly helpful in being a part of some of the important tasks that are needed in the NEST office:

- Answering phones
- Bookkeeping and filing
- Processing forms and papers
- Entering data into data bases
- Managing the web site
- Writing and editing
- Serving on committees

## KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL VISIT

Visiting with a member, whether to assist in the home or provide transportation, will be one of the main ways that volunteers interact with members. The following are some helpful things to consider in making your visit go smoothly:

### What you should do

- Call the member the day before to confirm your visit.
- Explain who you are and your connection with NEST.
- Be on time and appropriately dressed. Please do not wear perfume or strong after shave or smoke while interacting with a member. The scent may trigger an allergic reaction or unpleasant response.
- Ask the member how you can be of assistance or what you can do for them in your allotted time.
- Keep your religious and political and other strong opinions to yourself unless you are asked, and then express yourself if you are comfortable doing so.
- Do not share your own frustrations with members. Listen, but do not add your worries to theirs. Remember, the visit is not about you.
- Be patient.
- In case of recurring visits, devise a suitable schedule for both of you, and let the NEST office know what dates you have arranged.
- Respect Privacy. What you see and learn when you visit a member must stay confidential. Please notify the Executive Director of any changes in the member's condition. Do not share such information with friends or other volunteers.

- After your visit, fill out your Volunteer Service Report found in the email you received with the members information. It is essential for NEST that you report hours, and the member's status. You can report online or use the paper report form, which you can mail or drop off at the NEST office.
- Refer back to the office when referral to a vendor or social service agency may be requested or, in your opinion, needed.

### **What you should not do**

- Administer medications, treatment or any type of medical care.
- Attempt to lift someone who has fallen (Do call 911 and then notify the NEST office).
- Attempt to lift someone even if they haven't fallen.
- Witness documents.
- Make personal phone calls, check your phone, write emails or texts during a visit unless absolutely necessary, and then keep it short.
- Give a member your personal phone number. All members' calls should go through the NEST office.
- Accept gifts of value; however, tea, coffee and small food items are acceptable.
- Refer members to other services or vendors. Please refer members to the NEST office instead.
- Assume you know what a member is like or what they want.

# INTERACTING WITH MEMBERS

## General Guidelines

- Give the member as much power as possible. Say, "How can I assist you?" instead of "How can I help you?" Also, at the end of each visit, say "thank you for allowing me to assist you."
- Clarify your role and time for the visit by saying "this is my role today and this is my time frame."
- Do only what you are asked to do.
- Enable members to feel and stay as much in control of their lives as possible. For example, a member may feel ashamed and embarrassed if you offer to clean up the kitchen.
- Do not make value judgments about the "right" way to take care of a house or to solve a problem. Remember: It is not your house and it is not about you.
- Notify the member (and the NEST office) as soon as possible if you are unable to keep a scheduled visit.
- For repeat visits: Establish a routine and keep to it.
- Remember that you can say "yes" or "no" to whatever a member asks you to do, and that they can say "yes" or "no" to your suggestions.

## Listening

It is important to realize that it might be easier for members to speak to volunteers than it is to share troubles with their family. Even in a caring family one can feel guilty about imposing troubles on children or relatives. Be an active listener. You may be one of very few contacts the member has with the outside world. Show a positive attitude and a lively interest in whatever members talk about.

## **Some Listening Guidelines**

Listen respectfully when members talk about their religious or political beliefs. Never argue with them, rather show respect for their views. Ask questions that indicate you want to understand them. DO NOT talk about your religious or political views unless the member specifically asks you.

Let members talk, but do not feel you have to come up with solutions to their complaints or problems, unless you think there is imminent danger.

In the case of imminent danger, call 911 immediately, and immediately report the situation to NEST staff.

Be prepared to listen and help the member feel understood. Patiently wait for your turn to express your thoughts. Repeat what you have heard to ensure that each member feels understood.

Talk about what interests the member even though it may not be what interests you. If you hear "stories" that sound like wishful thinking, don't try to challenge the anecdote. Instead say, "Tell me more about that."

## **Common listening mistakes**

- Steering the conversation toward a topic that you feel comfortable discussing. For instance, if a member talks about a particular interest that doesn't interest you, don't change the subject.
- Cutting off communication with a dismissive gesture or expression.
- Responding with impatience or disapproval.

When listening, avoid answering with platitudes. Here are some examples to avoid:

- "You will find the strength"
- "Everything will work out for the best"
- "Keep your chin up"

- “Every cloud has a silver lining”
- “You’ll feel better tomorrow”
- “I know just how you feel”

### **What members sometimes think (but hesitate to say)**

- I am not helpless—maybe discouraged and faltering—but not helpless.
- When you do something for me that I can do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.
- When you accept as a simple fact I feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can feel safe confiding in you.
- I don’t want your advice—unless I ask for it.
- If you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn—and I’ll listen to you.

### **Maintaining Boundaries**

Boundaries are what make volunteers different from best friends or family. As a volunteer, you care about a member’s welfare, contentment, and safety but you should demonstrate your support through NEST’s volunteer structure.

*How do I know if I am crossing boundaries?*

- You lose objectivity, become resentful, or easily hurt by a member’s comments; or you become overly attached to a member.
- You feel that the member is your responsibility. You feel the need to “take over” and make decisions you are not being asked to make.
- After a visit you feel sad, depressed or anxious. You can’t stop thinking about a member’s situation.
- You feel it is your responsibility to save, cure, or rescue a member.
- You engage in activities or behavior that you keep secret from NEST.

- You can't say "no" to a member's request even though you know it is something you should not do.
- You are acting as if you were a trained psychotherapist, rather than a volunteer who is compassionate but not a mental health counselor.

### **Cultural Appropriateness**

Please be aware that members may come from very different cultures than you. They may be different in race, politics, religion, sexual orientation, first language, and so on. Don't assume that a member is like you. Be careful that your language and actions are appropriate for that member. This will be covered in some depth during training.

## **WHEN THERE ARE PHYSICAL OR COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS**

The NEST office will do everything it can to determine level of impairment prior to a volunteer assignment. However, if you get to an assignment, and the impairment is not what you are prepared for, please call the office before starting.

### **Visual Ability**

Changes in vision can affect a person's sense of control over her or his life. Visual impairment can cause an individual difficulty with activities such as driving a car, getting off a bus, writing checks or letters, preparing meals, reading the newspaper, watching TV, or doing crafts.

Some common forms of vision impairment experienced by older persons include:

- **Presbyopia.** A gradual decline of the eyes' focusing ability. It's a natural process that begins at around age 40, and is correctable with lenses.
- **Cataracts.** A clouding of the lens of the eye. This condition dims one's vision and increases sensitivity to glare. Surgery has been successful in treating cataracts.
- **Diabetic Retinopathy.** A blurring of vision, or in its extreme form, blindness, resulting from complications of diabetes.

- **Glaucoma.** An increase in the fluid pressure in the eye that can result in blindness if left untreated.
- **Macular Degeneration.** This disease causes a blind spot in the middle of the field of vision.

### **How to assist**

Be sure to ask what kind of assistance you can provide. For instance, would it be helpful if you read aloud or made labels to identify canned goods? Remember that all visually impaired people are not totally blind. Some have a limited amount of usable vision; others have vision that varies considerably from time to time.

Visually impaired persons should assist in planning whatever aid they are getting with the people who are helping them. Encourage independence when appropriate and possible. Be aware that newly blind persons may be more apprehensive than persons who have been visually impaired for some time.

Always make your presence known. Identify yourself when you visit a member; politely inform a member when others enter the room.

Talk directly to the person; do not confuse a lack of vision with an inability to communicate. Speak naturally without raising your voice or altering your normal tone. If you normally use gestures, you may continue to express yourself this way.

Don't be afraid to talk about what the member is not able to see. You may use the word "see." Seeing is a verbal image, and communicates itself as effectively to visually impaired persons as to sighted persons.

Speak freely about your surroundings. This helps identify sounds with objects, and helps the person become familiar with her or his surroundings. Mention seating arrangements in relation to others so that they can direct conversations to specific individuals.

Pay attention to light sources in the area; avoid standing between a light source and the member.

Identify any changes in ground level or steps. Avoid grabbing a member's arm abruptly to warn of a change in terrain.



Just as you make yourself known when you enter, make sure the member knows when you leave the room or end your visit.

## **Hearing Ability**

Hearing impairment is one of the most common sensory changes experienced by older adults. It results from a natural decline in hearing ability. Impaired hearing is more than just a physical problem. It affects our ability to communicate with others, isolates us from sounds of warning (fire alarms, telephone rings), and can diminish our enjoyment of sound-oriented activities (music, conversation). Hearing loss may cause an individual to withdraw from participation in life's activities because of the difficulties it creates in communicating with other people.

### **How to assist**

Be sure that you have the attention of a hearing impaired member before speaking. Face the person directly, and try to have light on your face for greater visibility of lip movements, facial expressions and gestures. Individuals with hearing impairments often rely on facial expressions and simple lip reading to understand what you are saying. If a member is sitting or in a wheelchair, you may want to kneel or sit next to the person.

Politely ask if there is something you can do that will enable the member to hear you better. Find out if the person hears better with one ear than the other, direct your voice accordingly.

Don't assume that members can hear you because they wear a hearing aid. Hearing aids make sounds louder, but do not always make words clearer. If you suspect that a hearing aid is not working, report this to the Executive Director.

Choose quiet, private places for conversations, if at all possible. Communication with hearing-impaired persons is much more difficult when there are other noises. So try to eliminate background noises as much as possible (e.g., TV, radio, dishwasher, group conversations, music, traffic).

Speak slowly, clearly, slightly louder than usual, and with more pauses. Shouting will not make your message any clearer, and may sometimes distort it. Talk in even tones at a low pitch. Higher pitched voices, more common in women and children, may be more difficult to hear.

Allow the member enough time to understand your message, and to respond. If the member does not understand you, try expressing the same idea in other words.

Hearing-impaired persons sometimes feel quite vulnerable. Do everything possible to be sure they know what is going on, and what the conversation is about. If a conversation is taking place that does not concern the hearing-impaired member, let the member know what is being discussed so she or he will not feel left out. Be sure to include hearing-impaired members in all discussions that concern them.

Encourage participation in activities and social interaction that do not require spoken communication, such as playing cards, doing puzzles, or taking walks.

### **Cognitive Ability**

While NEST is likely not a good fit for someone with moderate to severe cognitive impairment, there will be members who have mild cognitive impairment. This type of impairment can cause confusion, missed appointments, and frustration.

#### **How to assist**

Be sure to have the member write down when you are coming and call to remind the member of the visit both the day before and right before you visit. Say “Is this still a good day for you?”

Remind the member when you get there what she or he wanted you to do today to see if that has changed.

Make lists about what you did that day to leave for the member if the she or he wants you to.

Speak to the office about other ways to assist individual member needs.

### **Mobility Ability**

NEST members will have a full range of ability to be mobile using their legs and assistance devices. Your role is always about your own and the members’ safety.

## **How to assist with mobility**

- Always ask members to tell you exactly what to do to assist them. Don't assume you know what would be best for them.
- Make sure that members' walking aids are within their reach.
- When escorting members, ask them to describe how you can best assist them. If you are walking with a member, always stand slightly ahead rather than in back of the member.
- Be familiar with the features of the members' wheelchairs or walkers, as well as their capacity to manage without assistance. If a member does not need you to push the wheelchair, encourage independence.
- Do NOT assist members in moving from their wheelchairs to another place or vice versa. This is an example of a home health care need that should be provided by a vendor.

## **ASSISTING WITH SHOPPING AND TRANSPORTATION**

### **How to assist with Shopping**

- Set a specific day for shopping. Call the day before your date, and preferably the day of the visit to confirm your plans, both time and destination. Ask "is this still a good day for you?" If they don't answer the phone, go anyway. Also, The member may or may not want you present when shopping. Ask.
- Have a clear plan, including the number of errands you are willing to complete and stick to it. The current thought is that two stops can most likely be completed in one two-hour shift.
- When you return from shopping, ask the member if they would like assistance with unpacking and storing purchases. Your companionship may be just as valuable as the transportation and the items purchased.

## **How to assist with transportation**

- Telephone the day before as well as the day of the scheduled visit to confirm the time of the appointment.
- Make sure you have allowed enough time to arrive at your destination promptly.
- Always make sure the member's seat belt is fastened.
- If the appointment will not last too long (in your judgment) please wait so that you can drive the member back home. If the appointment will take too much of your time, make arrangements to return later or contact the NEST office to discuss alternative ways for the member to return home.
- If the member requests an additional stop on the way home (to a pharmacy for instance), you may make the additional stop if it is convenient; if it is not convenient, don't hesitate to say no.
- If you wish to drive the member to another appointment, notify the Executive Director. The member and volunteer must schedule their next appointment through the NEST office.
- Do not give members your telephone number. If members learn your phone number through Caller ID and telephone you, please ask them to call the NEST office number to schedule their next appointment. Also report such calls to NEST staff.
- If you are unable to keep an appointment call the office as soon as possible.

## **IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTICE THESE RED FLAGS**

The following information will help you decide if you need to consult the Executive Director about professional help for a member. Trust your intuition.

As an outside visitor, a volunteer may be the first to notice the member's uncharacteristic behavior, unkempt appearance or bizarre expressions. These might indicate serious underlying problems. In an older population, extreme

anger, hostility and agitation could indicate emotional, mental, or physical ailments. Marked personality changes are not a normal part of aging, and might be indicative of a problem.

The following is a partial list of red flags to help you notice signs of trouble. These are some of the changes in behavior that may indicate members are in need of additional help. Seek consultation from the Executive Director if you observe:

- Changes in mood
- Confusion or disorientation
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Changes in physical health
- Neglect of environment
- Neglect of personal hygiene
- Suicidal thoughts or wishes

## **GUIDELINES FOR AN EMERGENCY**

Any time you are feeling uncomfortable as a volunteer it is ok to call and consult with NEST staff. Although it is usually ok to leave if you are uncomfortable, if you are noticing any red flags (listed above) or experience one of the emergencies (listed below), you should consult with NEST staff prior to leaving.

- During business hours, call the NEST office at 206-525-6378.
- After 5pm and on the weekends, call Judy Kinney directly at 425-208-2894.
- If you are unable to reach Judy or NEST staff, call the crisis line at 206-461-3222.
- When in doubt, it is better to call for help including 911.

If an emergency occurs when you are visiting the member, it is important that you remain calm. Focus on helping the member, and on notifying the proper authorities who can provide assistance.

### **When the member does not answer the door**

- Check the premises then call the member on the telephone. If no one responds, call the NEST office to report the situation.
- Do not enter the home if no one answers the door.

### **If a member has a fall**

- Do not attempt to pick someone up as you may injure yourself as well as the member. If the member becomes unconscious, do not try to move her or him.
- Call 911 immediately for emergency assistance. Do not take the member to a hospital.
- Do not attempt to handle an emergency situation on your own. Always telephone 911 immediately. Be sure to notify the NEST office of the emergency.

## **SAYING GOOD-BYE**

As a volunteer, you may need to terminate your services for a variety of reasons. Communication plays an important part in bringing closure to any relationship. It is especially important because your bond with the member may have deepened over time, and you may have become an important part of that person's life. Here are some guidelines:

- Prepare for your departure by telling the person in advance that you will be ending services with them. Sudden changes can be confusing, bewildering, and sad especially if the member has come to expect your visits over a period of time.
- Do not give the person false hope for your return. It is more painful for the person to be left hanging, anticipating your return, than it is to be told about the end of the relationship.
- Express your own sadness to the member about ending the relationship. Using "I" messages can help the other person to express their own feelings. This sharing can help to bring the relationship to a peaceful and successful closure.

**Note:** *Be sure to discuss any changes in your availability with the NEST staff.*