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Dear Elder Companion,

Welcome to the ElderHelp, Elder Companion Program (ECP).

The Elder Companion Programs provide a variety of meaningful opportunities for volunteers, which connect people to people. We hope you will find your experience as an Elder Companion Volunteer one of the most rewarding, fulfilling times in your life. You will make a difference in the lives of seniors by helping to alleviate the loneliness and isolation with your visits, and at the same time enrich your own life while providing a much-needed service in our community.

Your volunteer services will be recognized and appreciated, not only by the clients you will visit, but also by their families, service providers and the community.

The Elder Companion Program also works with the Panhandle Health Department's Senior Companion Program which offers a small stipend to low income seniors who want to volunteer as companions for their program. If you would like additional information on their program, please contact us at the number below.

We hope this ECP handbook will be of benefit to you. Please take the time to read it carefully. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call our office, 208 209-1143.

Thank you for your loving and caring heart, and your commitment of service and time.

Sincerely,

The ElderHelp Board of Directors and the  
Elder Companion Program Administrator

# ***ELDER COMPANION - PROGRAM HANDBOOK-***



## **“Volunteers Helping Elders”**

***ElderHelp***  
*“Being a Blessing on Purpose”*

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**The Elder Companion Program (ECP)** is a local program that provides volunteers with the opportunity to apply their life experiences, kindness and love in meeting community needs. Our volunteers empathize with the elderly and offer a simple act of friendship. Volunteers need good social skills – being able to chat and listen with interest – and a sense of humor. Drivers must be safe, competent, and able to support and assist clients who are frail.

Elder Companions serve one-on-one with the elderly, some of whom may have difficulty completing everyday tasks. They visit, go to local community events and senior centers, take trips to the library, assist with grocery shopping, and provide transportation to medical appointments. Most importantly they are someone to just be there and listen.

They can also alert doctors and family members to potential problems. Elder Companions may provide short periods of relief to primary caregivers. Because of the program, many of our senior citizens are able to live in their homes independently, and with dignity. Many Elder Companions serve clients for several years and form meaningful friendships.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

***“Being a blessing on Purpose!”***

The mission of the Elder Companion Program is to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for people in our community by assisting seniors who need person-to-person support because of loneliness, illness or disability.

The Elder Companion Program, sponsored by ElderHelp of North Idaho, Inc. (a non profit organization in Kootenai County) along with the support and endorsement of the Panhandle Health District’s Senior Companion

Program, provides services to the elderly, homebound or isolated seniors in Northern Idaho.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Persons may not be denied eligibility to become Elder Companions based on formal education, employment experience, citizenship, race, creed, color, age (except as provided by law), national origin, sex, disability, religious or political affiliation.

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The Elder Help Board of Directors shall serve as the advisory council for the Companion Program. The Board Members are representatives of the community, local businesses, the volunteers, and the sponsoring agency. Its purpose is to provide support and guidance for the program.

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

**Adult volunteer applicants must be 18 years of age or older.**

Volunteers under the age of 18 are welcome, but must be under the direct supervision of an adult volunteer at all times.

Volunteers must complete and submit an application to include: two references, emergency contact information, driver's license, proof of vehicle insurance and signed agreement to submit to a background check.

Volunteers must be physically and mentally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform volunteer service.

Volunteers must be willing to serve clients as mutually agreed upon and accept training and supervision as needed.

Volunteers may serve whatever hours they have available. As a guideline, it is suggested that a regular monthly schedule be established between the volunteer and their client. Monthly volunteer service hours are to be turned in to the program administrator.

## **VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Code of Conduct for Elder Companion Volunteers:

- 1. Accepting Money, Gifts & Gratuities:** Elder Companions are discouraged from accepting money, gifts or gratuities from any client, family or their visitors. Volunteers can accept reasonable reimbursement for related client transportation if it is freely offered by their client(s). All gifts or gratuities with a value over \$20 must be approved by the Elder Companion administrator prior to being accepted.
- 2. Keys:** Elder Companions are not permitted to have in their possession any keys belonging to any client.
- 3. Financial or Other Loans:** Elder Companions are not permitted to accept or make any financial loans to or from any client, nor are Elder Companions permitted to borrow any personal property from clients or their families. Elder Companion's shall not share personal financial information with a client nor shall the Elder Companion allow a client or a client's family to pay the Elder Companions financial obligations.
- 4. Sale of Goods or Services:** Elder Companions are not permitted to sell or solicit the purchase of goods, materials or services from clients. For example: Avon, Tupperware etc.
- 5. Personal Addresses:** It is left to the Elder Companions discretion whether or not they provide their personal phone number to clients or their families.
- 6. Client's Residence:** Elder Companions must not enter a client's residence in the absence of the client or a court appointed guardian.

- 7. Client's Vehicle:** Elder Companion's must not use a client's vehicle for any reason.
- 8. Proselytizing:** Elder Companions are not permitted to engage in religious proselytizing during the course of service as an Elder Companion without an invitation to do so, initiated by the client.
- 9. Medication Administration:** Elder Companions **MUST NOT** administer any medications.
- 10. Confidentiality:** Elder Companions must maintain information regarding clients and their personal living situations, addresses, phone numbers, and health issues in the strictest confidential manner.
- 11. Smoking:** Elder Companions must not smoke in a client's home. It is also advisable to be aware that clothing may carry the odors from being around someone smoking. We ask that you be sensitive to our elderly population in this regard.
- 12. Scheduled Visits:** Both the Elder Companion and the client must approve any alterations to their schedule.
- 13. Legal Issues:** Elder Companions are forbidden to be involved in ANY client legal issues, which might include becoming a part of a clients' will, giving personal advice concerning wills or becoming a client's Power of Attorney or Power of Attorney for Health Care.
- 14. Personal Property:** Elder Companions are not permitted to "use" ANY personal property belonging to a client or their family. For example the client's car, boat, chain saw, tools, clothing, jewelry, etc.
- 15. Food:** Elder Companions may not eat a client's food / drink without an invitation initiated by the client.

- 16. Phone Calls:** Elder Companions are not permitted to use a clients' telephone for personal calls. An Elder Companion may only use a client's phone for volunteer related conversations, and may not use a client's telephone for long distance calls for any reason. An Elder Companion may carry her/his own cell phone throughout the day.
- 17. Transporting Clients:** Elder Companions can transport seniors who are physically able to leave their home on their own in the Elder Companion's vehicle only.
- 18. Miscellaneous:**
- Elder Companions are not permitted to use or possess intoxicating substances during their volunteer hours.
  - Elder Companions will abide by all ElderHelp's "Elder Companion Program Rules, Regulations, Policies and Agreements".
  - Elder Companions may not falsify any information on the Volunteer Application Form.

## **ORIENTATION & TRAINING**

**Pre-service and in-service training will be provided for each enrolled Elder Companion. The orientation and training will include:**

1. Introduction to the program and the program sponsors.
2. Current information on project policies and procedures.

3. Training on such topics such as Alzheimer's disease, exercise, nutrition, diabetes and issues related to mental health and aging.
4. Various workshops with information on other community services that are available to help in becoming a better advocate for clients.
5. Monthly educational programs and training are provided and attendance is encouraged. Notices will be sent to Companions by mail or email with information on subject, time, date and location. This is an ongoing part of the volunteer service.

## **VOLUNTEER INSURANCE**

Each Elder Companion volunteer is provided with three kinds of supplemental insurance coverage at no cost. Insurance applies only when participating in scheduled program activities and services. The insurance is not a substitute for any insurance normally carried and volunteers will need to maintain personal insurances and those as required by law.

1. **Accident Insurance** - This covers the volunteer for personal injuries arising from scheduled volunteer activities. The insurance does not duplicate expenses paid by Medicare or any other valid and collectible insurance coverage. An accidental death and dismemberment benefit is also provided in this policy. Certain exclusions do apply.
2. **Personal Liability Insurance** - All volunteers are provided protection for a personal injury or a property damage liability claim arising from the performance of the volunteer's duties. This is in excess of and non-contributing with any other valid and collectible insurance the volunteer may have. Certain exclusions do apply.
3. **Excess Automobile Liability Insurance** - This coverage protects the volunteer against a bodily injury or property damage or automobile liability claim arising from related volunteer activities. This insurance is in excess of the personal automobile liability insurance that volunteers

are required to have on their personal automobiles. Insurance coverage for volunteers may have certain limits and stipulations.

## **ACCIDENT REPORTING**

**The safety of our volunteers is of utmost importance.** Please report any unsafe conditions you may encounter while providing volunteer services. Any injuries occurring during volunteer work hours must be reported immediately to the ECP staff administrator. Volunteer work hours include going to or from client's homes, providing transportation, visiting and doing errands for or with assigned clients during volunteer times.

## **APPROPRIATE ELDER COMPANION ACTIVITIES**

**Some examples of appropriate activities include:**

### **Personal care-**

1. Assisting client with walking, getting out of bed, getting to bathroom (**no intimate personal hygiene**), dressing and grooming.
2. Accompanying a person to a doctor or nurse for treatment.
3. Providing grief support.
4. Assisting in reality orientation/awareness.
5. Encouraging exercise, taking walks with client, providing information on exercise or recreation.

### **Nutrition-**

1. Preparing food, planning meals, doing light grocery shopping, labeling, and organizing food.
2. Provide health or nutrition information.
3. Accompanying client to a nutrition site.

### **Social and Recreation-**

1. Provide friendship / companionship, talking, listening, cheering up and playing games or cards.
2. Providing peer support.

3. Fostering and encouraging client contact with family and friends.
4. Accompanying client to a recreational or social event.

### **Home Management-**

1. Light shopping, doing errands.
2. Writing letters, reading, filling out forms.
3. Doing very light housekeeping or light gardening.
4. Providing information about community services, eligibility for services.
5. Information and Advocacy by helping clients receive needed services (food stamps, visiting nurse, SSI, Medicare, Medicaid, etc.).
6. Bringing unmet needs to the attention of the Elder Companion Administrator.

### **Respite care-**

1. Providing relief care to a family caregiver whom is caring for a loved one in the home.

## **INAPPROPRIATE ELDER COMPANION ACTIVITIES**

### **Some examples of inappropriate activities, but not limited to:**

1. Activities usually performed by doctors, nurses, or other professionals.
2. Fiduciary / financial guidance.

## **TERMINATION OF SERVICES**

### **Elder Companion Services may be terminated for any of the following reasons but not limited to:**

1. Any of the involved parties may terminate services at any time. The Program Administrator, with the input of the Elder Companion volunteer if appropriate, shall make or approve all termination of service decisions.

## **DICSIPLINARY ACTION**

Any volunteer may be subject to disciplinary action by the Project Administrator due to failure to perform duties in a manner acceptable to his/her supervisor or his/her personal actions that discredit the program.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

If the Elder Companion Program Project Administrator has reason to believe that a volunteer has violated provision(s) of the Program's Policies and Procedures, he/she has the authority to handle a situation as strongly as necessary at the time of the incident. This may include the immediate termination of the volunteer and if necessary the filing of legal charges with the appropriate authorities.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

A volunteer who feels that his/her rights have not been respected may request a grievance review meeting will be called by the ElderHelp Board of Directors.

## **THANK YOU FOR BEING A VOLUNTEER!**

We would also like to thank the following Community support and sponsoring organizations:

Corporation for National and Community Service, the Panhandle Health District, Area Agency on Aging, Aging Connections, Inland North West Alzheimer Association and ElderHelp of North Idaho, Inc.

*“The rewards of friendship and the opportunity to help others in need were being reaped by the companions, and the pain of loneliness and isolation were relieved in their clients.” Unknown*

*“What do we live for, if not to make life less difficult for each other?” George Eliot (1819-80)*

*“Enthusiasm -*

*One needs something to believe in, something for which one can have wholehearted enthusiasm. One needs to feel that one's life has meaning, that one is needed in this world.” -Hannah Senesh*

***ElderHelp Serving  
Kootenai County***



***IDAHO***

**ElderHelp**

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