



Return to In-Person: Guidelines for Volunteers

August 2021

We are continuing to monitor the latest developments and recommendations around COVID-19, and thought it was a good time to again share our latest guidance for volunteers regarding visiting, helping or escorting older adults. **All of our programs are continuing to operate in person, although we are still offering televisiting as an option in our Friendly Visiting program. We are also continuing to ask that all staff, elders and volunteers continue using masks indoors, maintain a safe distance, and to increase ventilation whenever possible regardless of vaccination status.**

Please keep in mind that different buildings, assisted living centers, nursing homes or communities may have different rules or guidelines. Please make sure to follow those guidelines, defaulting to the more conservative approach. For example, even if a building allows you to visit without a mask indoors, we ask that you follow our more conservative guidelines and wear a mask.

Please be advised that staff will likely ask you your vaccination status before setting up a match, escort or help. This information is used for planning purposes only and will not be shared with anyone without your written consent, nor will it be the basis for any decision about overall participation. If an elder asks about a volunteer's status, we will direct the elder to you so they can ask you directly at which time you may choose to share your status. Please keep in mind that it may take more time to find opportunities for volunteers who are not vaccinated due to specific requests by some elders or other factors such as location.

We also request that the day before a match, help or escort that the volunteer review the screening questions for themselves (see attached). If you experience any of the symptoms or have been in contact with someone who tested positive, we request that you postpone the visit/help/escort and contact your Coordinator.

We also want to stress that if you or the elder are uncomfortable at any time, the visit/help/escort can stop. If you have any questions or concerns, Coordinators are here to support you, answer any questions, or navigate difficult conversations.

Friendly Visiting:

For new matches, staff should be doing most home intakes and visits with elders in person. We will likely continue doing the volunteer interview and/or training process online through the summer and perhaps into the fall.

For existing matches, staff will be reaching out over the summer and fall to meet elders and volunteers who have been matched since March 2020 (i.e. who we have not yet met in person).

There are several hundred of you so we ask for your patience as our staff works to balance new matches and stewardship of our existing matches.

Anyone who is currently matched may ask the elder if they are interested in visiting in person. Remember you can take a walk, run an errand together, or visit outside as well. If visiting in person, we ask that you:

- Let your Coordinator know (see our website for staff list <https://www.fw4elders.org/about-us/contact-us/>). If you have already returned to in-person visiting, again please let your Coordinator know!
- Use a mask indoors regardless of your vaccination status. We also encourage maintaining social distance whenever possible and/or keeping a window open. We also encourage you to consider meeting outside whenever possible.
- While we recommend continuing the use of PPE and social distancing while outdoors, we leave this decision up to the parties involved. At any time, any staff, elder or volunteer can ask that all COVID related precautions be used.

If you or your elder is hesitant to begin in person visits, please let your Coordinator know. **In addition, all elders or volunteers should know that continuing to engage in the program over the phone is an option.** In some cases though, we may need to rematch you or match the elder with an additional in-person visitor.

Friendly Helping:

If doing a help indoors, we ask that you use a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status. We also encourage maintaining social distance whenever possible and/or keeping a window open.

If doing an errand or help outdoors, we recommend continuing the use of PPE and social distancing while outdoors, but we leave this decision up to the parties involved. At any time, any staff, elder or volunteer can ask that all COVID related precautions are used.

We also encourage you to arrange a contactless pick up/drop off whenever possible when doing errands. Some ideas are to check if:

- You can arrange ahead of time where to pick up the errand list (e.g. taped to the door) and necessary funds.
- The elder can arrange pre-payment or use of a card.
- Knock when you arrive to leave items by the door or on a chair/table outside the elder's door.

If you find yourself in need of a mask, gloves or face shield (great for an elder who's hard of hearing and may need to see your lips), please feel free to reach out to your Coordinator.

Medical Escorts:

This program will not experience significant changes. We will ask you to continue using a mask, social distance when possible, and use hand sanitizer when accompanying an elder on an escort.

If you find yourself in need of a mask, gloves or face shield (great for an elder who's hard of hearing and may need to see your lips), please feel free to reach out to your Coordinator.

Screenings and Risk Assessment

Prior to any in-person visit, a FriendshipWorks staff member or volunteer should conduct the attached self-assessment as well as the following assessment of the recipient or volunteer with whom they are planning to meet.

Prior to any visit, ask the following question:

1. Who else will be present in the residence at the time of the in-person visit?
2. In the past 14 days has anyone in the residence had symptoms of COVID-19?

These could include:

- a. Fever or chills
- b. Cough
- c. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- d. Fatigue
- e. Muscle or body aches
- f. Headache
- g. New loss of taste or smell
- h. Sore throat
- i. Congestion or runny nose
- j. Nausea or vomiting
- k. Diarrhea

3. If yes, have they reported these symptoms to their doctor or received a COVID-19 test?

In the event that one of the parties for the visit **answers yes to any of the above COVID symptoms and has not been cleared by their doctor or a negative test result, the coordinator should postpone the visit, help or escort** until the party is able to be cleared by a doctor, has gone 14 days asymptomatic, or has received a negative test result.

If any member of the household is confirmed to be COVID-positive, the visit/help/escort should NOT take place and the Coordinator will make efforts to reschedule when the home is once again COVID-safe.