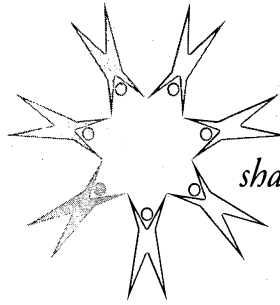


Department of Human Service Programs



sharing resources...building community

RECEIVED
97 APR 25 AM 8:47
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

Jill Herold
Assistant City Manager

To: Robert W. Healy
From: Jill Herold
Date: April 28, 1997

Childcare

Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Community and Youth

Community
Learning Center

Coordinating Council for
Children, Youth and Families
(Kids' Council)

Council on Aging;
Elderly Services

Low Income
Fuel Assistance

Multi-Service Center;
Homeless Services

Office of Workforce
Development

Planning & Development

Recreation

RE: COUNCIL ORDER #001, dated March 1, 1997, regarding vial of life program and COUNCIL ORDER #012, dated April 14, 1997 regarding plan for contacting senior citizens and disabled persons to determine if they are in need of assistance

There are currently several different efforts underway to address the needs of senior citizens and disabled persons who may not be able to communicate their needs for assistance. Those programs are described below.

The "Vial of Life" program was begun in October, 1988, as a joint program between the Cambridge Council on Aging and the Cambridge Hospital. The program is aimed at Cambridge residents who are age 60 and over, or who have a disability. The original program involved a "vial" which was a plastic cylinder containing a medical information form, including important information such as medical history, diagnosis of conditions and any medications the individual may be taking. The vial was attached to a shelf within one's refrigerator and a label was placed on the outside of the refrigerator indicating participation in the program. The emergency rescue workers, when responding to a person's home, could open the vial and access important information if the individual could not communicate with them due to illness or injury.

In October of 1995, the Council on Aging modified the program to "File of Life", maintaining the same important medical emergency information, but in a different format. The change was made because the vial stored in the refrigerator was sometimes hidden or lost, and therefore not easily accessible. The File of Life is a small carrying case approximately 4" x 5", with a magnetized back so that it can be attached to the front of one's refrigerator. All pertinent information is placed in the fold-away card which is placed inside the case, readily visible to EMT's or others on the outside of the person's refrigerator. The File of Life also comes in a wallet size.

Both types of files are available free of charge from the Council of Aging Director of Client Services to any Cambridge resident who is age 60 or over, or who has a disability. One can call or visit the Council on Aging at the citywide Senior Center to request a File of Life. The Council on Aging promotes this program through all its outreach mediums; in our service brochure, our health fairs, etc.



The Council on Aging is also involved in two projects, one soon to be implemented, and one still in the development phase, which would establish a network to be in regular contact with seniors living alone who may need assistance.

The first effort is "Carrier Alert" a formal program of the U.S. Postal Service, which involves a partnership between the local postal service and the Council on Aging. The Postal Service does the initial outreach mailing, enrolls participants and provides the information to the Council on Aging. The letter carrier is aware of which households on the route are part of the program by a simple sticker or similar label at the point where mail is delivered. The sticker would generally be placed inside a mailbox, so that it would not be visible to the general public.

If the letter carrier finds an accumulation of mail and has not received notification that an enrolled person is away, the Carrier Alert Process is initiated. The postal service alerts the Council on Aging, which first attempts to reach the enrolled individual. If the individual cannot be reached, then the Council on Aging will attempt to reach the individual's emergency contact person, using the information from the individual's enrollment form. If the emergency contact person cannot be reached, the COA will be responsible for sending a person to the home to check on the well-being of the person.

The Council on Aging, Cambridge Postal officials and the Cambridge Consumer's Council have met several times to discuss offering Carrier Alert in Cambridge. We will be moving ahead with those same parties to implement Carrier Alert in Cambridge. This program is currently in operation in other area cities, including both Quincy and Waltham.

A second effort towards developing an assistance network within the Cambridge senior community is through telephone reassurance/outreach. The Friends of the Cambridge Council on Aging, Inc. has been successful in obtaining a small grant award to develop such a Telephone Reassurance network for residents, age 60 and over. We are just beginning the planning phase for that program. The Telephone Reassurance network would be built upon a group of volunteers who make phone calls to seniors on a regular basis to make a personal connection over the phone. The focus will be on seniors who live alone and are more isolated from services, or those people who spend a large amount of their day alone. While the telephone reassurance network will have as its primary goal the personal connection to keep a person involved with some mainstream communications, it will also have a back-up component for the Council on Aging to further investigate if the volunteer caller is not able to reach an individual on the phone.

The plan for telephone reassurance will be developed during the beginning of Fiscal Year 1998. The plan will include the process for recruiting a sufficient number of dependable volunteers to do calling, the protocols for the volunteers to follow and the process for identifying seniors who may wish to be included in the network.



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

May 5, 1997

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 25, regarding a plan for contacting senior citizens and disabled persons to determine if they are in need of assistance, please find attached report from Assistant City Manager for Human Services Jill Herold.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
attachment

Consent Agenda #9

5-261

Relative to Awaiting Report Item
Number Twenty-five, regarding a plan
for contacting senior citizens and
disabled persons to determine if
they are in need of assistance.

In City Council May 5, 1997

PLACED ON FILE