



## *Northeast Senior Assistance (NESAs)*

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The Northeast Senior Assistance (NESAs) utilizes volunteers in a variety of ways. Principal among these are Office Receptionist, Medical Appointment Driver, Grocery Shopper, and Handy Helper. In addition, NESAs utilizes volunteers to organize and develop special projects such as fundraisers, client special activities, delivery of special client services, etc.

### **1. How does one become a NESAs volunteer?**

Potential volunteers contact the NESAs office at 967-6372 and are provided with an information packet containing some basic information about NESAs and a volunteer application. The potential volunteer completes the application and returns it to the NESAs office. Upon receipt of the application, the potential volunteer will be contacted for an interview. During the interview, potential volunteers will be asked about their interests in senior programs and the kind of activities in which they wish to participate. They will also be asked to sign forms allowing a background check to be conducted, and if they wish to be drivers, permission to check their driving records. Following the interview, the background checks(s) will be completed and one or more references contacted. When the application process is complete, the volunteer will be notified and may begin immediately.

### **2. Why are references and background checks needed?**

NESAs serves a very vulnerable population and our clients give us free access to their homes. We must provide every possible safeguard to assure their safety and well-being. Any information collected is treated in a confidential manner, and is used only within our office.

### **3. What exactly do volunteers do?**

NESAs is an ecumenical organization, which relies almost exclusively on volunteers for service provision. Volunteers are categorized into one or more of the following five groups:

**TRANSPORTATION VOLUNTEERS:** These volunteers pick up clients at their homes, drive them to medical appointments and take them home again. They may assist the client from their home to the volunteer's car and into the medical facility. They wait while clients are being seen, and return them to their homes, taking care to assure that the client is safely inside his/her home before departing. Normally, transportation volunteers provide this service once per week and may specify days and times when they are available to drive. They will not be called for more than one trip per week unless they have indicated a willingness to drive more than once. Some of our clients use wheelchairs because they are unable to walk more than a few steps. A driver may be asked to use the client's chair to transport him/her from the door to the car and a facility's chair to assist the client into the building, but a volunteer will not be asked to place the chair in their vehicle or to transport a wheelchair. Clients are advised that they must be able to move from chair to car and use a wheelchair other than their own before they are accepted as clients. Driving assignments normally take about 2-4 hours portal to portal from the driver's home.

**GROCERY SHOPPING:** Shopper volunteers are assigned to a particular client. The volunteers are given a client whom they contact and arrange to meet. They work out individual arrangements with their clients about how often shopping will be accomplished (normally about every 7-14 days), whether the client has a "standing list" i.e. always needs

milk, bread, orange juice, to which they simply add additional items, or whether their list will differ each time. They also work out whether the client can provide the list on the telephone each time, or if the shopper will need to stop by the client's home en route to the store to help the client prepare the list. The shopper then goes to the grocery store, purchases the items, and takes them to the client. When the shopper takes the groceries to the client's home, the sales slip from the grocery store is given to the client, and the client will give the shopper a check for the amount of the groceries. Shoppers are strongly encouraged to allow some extra time when the groceries are delivered to visit with the client although both NESAs and our clients understand that it may not be possible to do so every time.

**OFFICE VOLUNTEERS:** Normally work one three-hour shift per week. Shifts are 9AM-12PM or 12PM-3PM. Back-up volunteers are also needed to work when a regularly scheduled volunteer has another commitment. Office volunteers answer the telephone and greet any guests who visit the office in person. They receive client requests for service, provide any necessary explanation and record these requests on the appropriate forms. Office volunteers also match client requests to driver availability and schedule drivers for clients. If the volunteer has typing and/or computer skills, they may be asked to assist with routine office tasks. However, these skills are not required for office volunteers.

**HANDY HELPERS:** Perform routine household maintenance tasks for elderly clients. These are normally very simple tasks which can be easily accomplished by an able bodied person. Some of these tasks are replacing high light bulbs, replacing oven lights, repairing leaky faucets, repairing loose curtain rods, etc. The tasks may not require the use of power tools, although simple power tools such as power drills or electric screwdrivers may be used at the volunteer's option. The tasks MAY NOT require the use of a power saw. Handy Helpers may also provide routine outside maintenance such as raking leaves, trimming bushes or planting flowers. Handy Helpers are not asked to perform a repetitive task such as lawn mowing, although lawns may be mowed as part of a one-time yard clean-up. Clients must provide all necessary supplies, and may also provide tools and equipment. However, Handy Helpers may find it more convenient to use their own tools.

**SPECIAL SERVICE VOLUNTEERS:** Special Service Volunteers include volunteers who serve NESAs in capacities other than those listed above. They include Board Members who represent their supporting agencies on the NESAs Board as well as those who assist with a special program, function or fundraiser. These volunteers may provide some service each month, or they may provide intensive service for a short time, then not be called upon for several months. Some examples of these types of volunteers include newsletter helpers, and Fall Fest assistants.

#### **4. How are volunteers trained?**

Most volunteers are trained by working with NESAs staff and/or an experienced volunteer. Special training opportunities such as computer training and defensive driving are provided intermittently.

#### **5. How are volunteers recognized?**

A volunteer-of-the-month is selected for each month. This honor is bestowed on volunteers whose service is exemplary in some way. All volunteers are recognized and honored at Fall Fest (a late fall gathering of clients and volunteers) and volunteers also receive recognition during National Volunteer Recognition Week. The biggest reward, however, is the knowledge that their service has made a real difference in our clients' lives.