

5 Ways to Detect a Need and to Connect an Older Resident or a Person with Disabilities to Appropriate Resources

When interacting with older adults, people with disabilities, and their families or caregivers in your offices, you have an important opportunity to connect them to the resources that might improve their lives, and contribute to their health, well-being, safety, and self-sufficiency. Be proactive in your customer service and in how you treat seniors by learning these communication techniques. We share 5 observable behaviors or points of information that allow you to respond in the moment with information on appropriate support services. **Have the resources printed out and at hand to share. Just mention to the resident that we are in a community resource awareness-building campaign.**

5 behaviors and points of information that indicate a possible need for resources

- 1. Mobility or balance issues or challenges standing:** We can't always determine whether someone is at risk of falling, but many people can benefit from assistance devices like canes and walkers with seats and may not have them. We have home accessibility improvement programs too.
- 2. Transportation:** Sometimes you may learn about transit challenges a resident had getting to your office. Marin Transit and our community partners offer special services for those needing assistance.
- 3. Caregiving:** With nearly 42% of our 60+ year population living alone, many individuals need some assistance with their daily activities to stay healthy and safe. Many have no family or friends nearby to help. We need to connect them to caregiving and support services whenever possible.
- 4. Economic Strain-**You may learn about economic hardship in the conversation, or you may notice self-neglect or lost awareness of hygiene. Proper and regular nutrition is a challenge for many older residents with or without resources. Our resource information includes food resources, rental assistance, and benefits information.
- 5. Loneliness and lack of social connections-** Loneliness can be a major health issue. If the resident wants to talk for a long time and share their story or seeks to keep you engaged in conversation beyond the reason for the visit, share the Connection Resources List with them saying it is part of an awareness-building campaign. This information can benefit everyone.

Communication techniques to remember when helping an older adult or person with disabilities:

- Be patient and be sure they understand. Whether someone has hearing loss or doesn't want to let you know that they didn't understand, verify whether they have absorbed your information
- Be mindful of memory challenges. You might need to keep things simple and use active listening skills like clarifying, summarizing and even writing down steps.
- Smile. They may not have had a smile given to them in days. They may not have laughed for a while.
- Be Alert. If they appear weak, allow them to take a seat and get at their level.

Resources to share: Community Resource Brochure & Social Connections Resource List