



Establishing the qualities of a meaningful volunteer experience:

Providing virtual social support to elders during the COVID-19 pandemic

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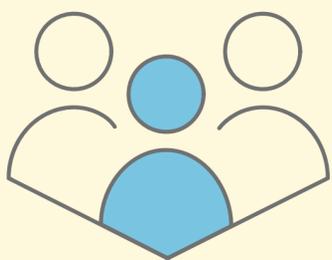
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What is The NEST Collaborative?



The NEST Collaborative was originally launched as the Social Support Action Team under the broader Nevada COVID-19 Aging Network (Nevada CAN) initiative led by the Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division.

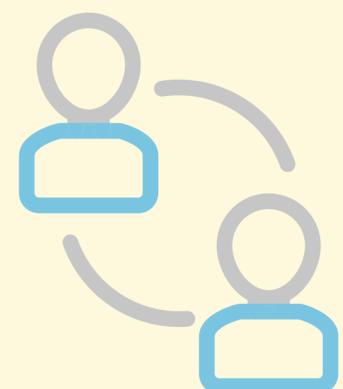
Social isolation has been shown to be associated with a variety of negative health outcomes. COVID-19 expanded the need for social supports among a wider population of elders, since all older adults are now considered vulnerable, homebound, and at-risk of the three plagues of aging: loneliness, helplessness, and boredom (Thomas, 1996).



Over 30 aging services organizations came together, dedicated to the goal of providing free, volunteer-hosted virtual social support to homebound elders.

Two programs were launched:

- One-to-One Calls: A Volunteer calls their assigned list of Participants twice per week to have friendly conversations and refer any expressed needs.
- Peer Social Groups: A group of five Participants meet once weekly via either video- or tele-conference, facilitated by a Volunteer, toward to goal of building a mutual system of support.



The key word...

Volunteer-Hosted!



The NEST Collaborative firmly believes that Volunteers receive as much benefit as the Program Participants they serve. In fact, we rely on it! Volunteers who feel positively about their experience will provide better service.

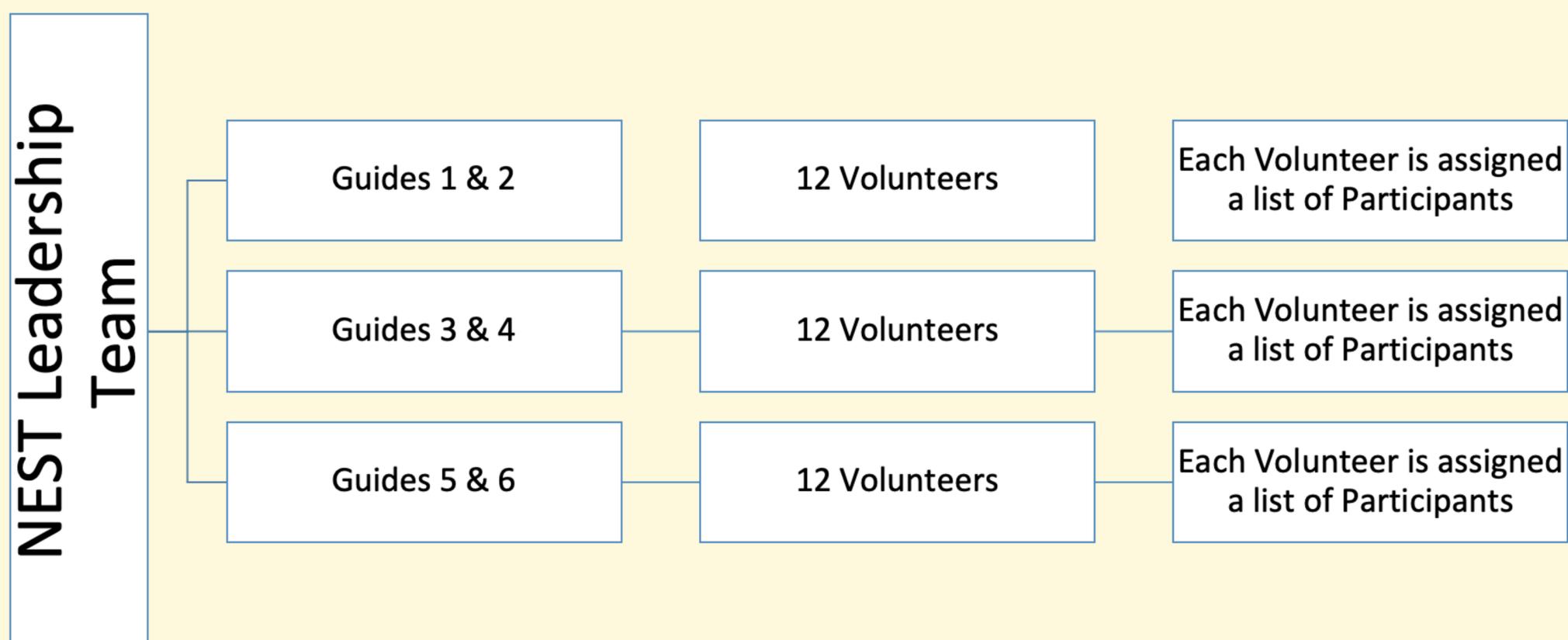
The first step to a good Volunteer experience is good training.

NEST Collaborative Volunteers go through a two-part training on:

- Overview of The NEST Collaborative
- Abuse and neglect prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Cultural competency
- Effective communication
- Group facilitation
- Referring Participant needs

The training is divided into two parts. Part 1 is a series of self-directed webinars, whereas Part 2 is a live Zoom meeting facilitated by a NEST Collaborative trainer.

Then, to make sure each and every Volunteer feels supported, Volunteers are grouped into cohorts of 12 to build community. Each cohort is supported by two dedicated Volunteer Guides who serve as the primary resource for Volunteers.



The Survey

During the summer of 2020, we asked all active NEST Collaborative One-to-One Calls Volunteers a few questions about their experience. 18 responded. We asked about:

- Volunteer training, to understand the Volunteers' perception of their preparation for making social support calls
- Referrals for other support services, to understand the Volunteers' perception of their ability to help elders in domains of their life beyond social support phone calls
- Volunteer support, to understand the Volunteer's perception of support infrastructure available

Volunteers were also asked about any personal benefit that they may derive from their volunteer work and about their future plans for continued participation in the program.

All answers were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (extremely unsatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied) with 3 labeled as neutral.

We also learned a few things about the demographics of our Volunteers.

Of all NEST Collaborative Volunteers at the time of the survey:

- 83% were female
- 44% were 18-44 years old, 29% were 65 years old or older
- 91% were from urban areas
- 15% spoke English and at least one other language

The Results

Satisfaction dimension	Number
Satisfaction with the preparation you received in the training sessions (Parts 1 and 2) to commence the volunteer role	
Satisfied	17 (94%)
Neutral	1 (6%)
Unsatisfied	0 (0%)
Satisfaction with the resources provided in the training sessions (Parts 1 and 2) to help elders with specific needs identified during	
Satisfied	16 (89%)
Neutral	2 (11%)
Unsatisfied	0 (0%)
Satisfaction with the referral process used to link elders with additional services as needed	
Satisfied	6 (33%)
Neutral	9 (50%)
Unsatisfied	3 (17%)
Satisfaction with the guidance and support received from the guides in the volunteer cohort	
Satisfied	16 (89%)
Neutral	1 (6%)
Unsatisfied	1 (6%)
Overall satisfaction with NEST Collaborative	
Satisfied	15 (83%)
Neutral	2 (11%)
Unsatisfied	1 (6%)
Frequency with which volunteers look forward to your interactions with the elders that you call?	
Always or most of the time	14 (78%)
Neutral [†]	2 (11%)
Sometimes	1 (6%)
Never	1 (6%)
Volunteers likelihood of continuing to volunteer with the NEST collaborative moving forward?	
Likely [‡]	12 (67%)
Neutral [‡]	4 (22%)
Unlikely ^{‡2}	2 (11%)

[†]Original response option was “about half the time”

[‡]Responses for “extremely likely” and “likely” combined; original response “neither likely nor unlikely” changed to “neutral”; responses “extremely unlikely” and “unlikely” combined

What does it all mean?

- Volunteers are primarily young adults and elders themselves, opening opportunities both for intergenerational connections and for peer support.
- Volunteers were extremely satisfied with their training and with the system of support that was available (i.e. their Volunteer Guides). We will continue working with this structure to provide "smallness" within the "largeness" of The NEST Collaborative.
- The system for referring needs was only deemed satisfactory by one third of Volunteers. So, we changed the system! The old way involved deciding between numerous potential online forms to submit. The new system is simple and straightforward: an email to the NEST Collaborative Support Team!

The NEST Collaborative continues to improve and continues to grow! Since the time this survey was conducted, we have expanded to serve adults living with disabilities and veterans in addition to elders. We also launched an entirely new program called Tech Assistance in which Volunteers provide one-to-one coaching to Participants looking to learn how to use technology. Lastly, we eagerly await the results of a survey aimed at assessing the impact of The NEST Collaborative from the perspective of Program Participants!