

Calgary Coordinated Community Response to Missing Seniors Backgrounder

Rationale

Currently, approximately 110,000 or 10% of Calgarians are over the age of 65 (City of Calgary, 2011), and this number is projected to double in the next 25 years (Government of Canada, 2014). A decline in cognitive functioning is associated with aging, with the risk of dementia doubling every five years after the age of 65. In Calgary, the Alzheimer Society estimates that more than 13,000 individuals are living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, and for every person diagnosed, 10-12 people are directly impacted (family members, friends, caregivers, etc.).

A significant concern associated with cognitive decline and dementia is wandering, which has been cited as the greatest safety risk experienced by older adults with dementia. The Alzheimer Society indicates that 6 out of 10 of people with dementia will wander at some point. When individuals wander away from their homes and get lost or go missing, it can lead to increased risk of injury and death

In the event that a vulnerable senior does go missing, an effective, coordinated responsive measure is needed to support the senior, their caregiver(s) and the community.

Project Background

In 2015, with funding from United Way, Bowmont Seniors Assistance Association (BSAA) completed an environmental scan of missing senior/Silver Alert programs in the United States and in Canada. Upon completion of research, a steering committee was formed, which was comprised of carya, BSAA, Calgary Police Service, Alzheimer Society of Calgary, The City of Calgary and United Way. In November of 2015, the steering committee organized a community conversation in Calgary with key stakeholders to gauge the interest and capacity to develop a "missing senior" response in Calgary. A cross section of stakeholders from all sectors agreed to move forward and an action committee was formed as part of Calgary's Age Friendly Strategy.

Current State

The goals of **Calgary Coordinated Community Response to Missing Seniors** are as follows:

- Strategies are in place that will assist authorities in finding missing older adults
- Ensure that response systems are efficient and coordinated
- Create public awareness about vulnerable older adults and the resources that are in place that will help find them
- Develop a network that can support a community response and monitor issues pertaining to missing vulnerable older adults
- Identify and implement a "silver alert" type system to notify the community when a vulnerable senior is missing
- Support caregivers in the prevention of wandering and increase awareness of resources in the community.

The **Calgary Coordinated Community Response to Missing Seniors** committee is advocating for a dual-pronged approach to keeping seniors safe in our communities through use of preventative and responsive measures to addressing the issue of missing seniors. Preventative measures such as strategic facility design, technological tools and caregiver education about wandering can help to minimize the incidents of seniors going missing.

In addition to the development of a community response to missing seniors, the **Calgary Coordinated Community Response to Missing Seniors** committee was consulted on Bill 210; Missing Persons Amendment Act 2017, which included the Silver Alert response. Bill 210 was passed unanimously in December 2017 in the Alberta Legislature.

The **Calgary Coordinated Community Response to Missing Seniors** is presently working with the University Of Alberta Department Of Occupational Therapy and the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine and AGE-WELL on best ways to address the issue of vulnerable older adults who could potentially go missing. We will continue to work closely with organizations to further this cause.

The **Calgary Coordinated Community Response to Missing Seniors** includes the following member agencies:

- Alberta Health Services
- Alzheimer Society of Calgary
- Alberta Seniors and Housing
- The Alex
- Brenda Strafford Foundation
- Calgary Police Services
- Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens Association
- Calgary Seniors Resource Society
- carya
- City of Calgary Strategic Services
- Distress Centre
- FCSS - Calgary
- Jewish Family Services
- Kerby Centre
- Silvera
- United Way

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