



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**SAN FRANCISCO LAUNCHES CITYWIDE VOLUNTEER
MATCH PROGRAM TO SUPPORT SENIORS AND PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES**

Expanded City services and volunteer programs will support vulnerable populations, including seniors and adults with disabilities, during COVID-19 pandemic

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed today announced the creation of a citywide volunteer network to support seniors and people with disabilities during the coronavirus pandemic and throughout the duration of the recently updated Stay Home Public Health Order. The volunteer network includes a new program to match volunteers with seniors and others who need assistance getting groceries, medications, and other essential goods. Additionally, the City's Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) has expanded its telephone helpline, which is now available seven days a week to connect seniors and adults with disabilities with City services, including food assistance and home care needs.

To safely shelter in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, many older people and adults with disabilities need support with tasks they used to be able to do on their own, like grocery shopping. Not all seniors have friends or family members available to assist with essential tasks, and those who do may need additional assistance if their support network becomes unavailable due to illness or needs to self-isolate. Additionally, older adults and people with disabilities are at greater risk of social isolation during the Stay Home Order, and would benefit from social interactions with other neighbors and family by phone or video call.

“It’s important that everyone follow the Public Health Order and stay home, especially people who are older or who are otherwise more vulnerable to coronavirus, but we know that staying home presents its own challenges for many people in our city,” said Mayor Breed. “Many of our seniors live by themselves and may not have friends or family in the area who are available to check in on them and make sure they have what they need. I know that many people are looking for ways that can contribute to our community, and volunteering is a great way for us to come together as a city and support our most vulnerable residents.”

The City has created a centralized volunteer page for people who are interested in helping seniors and adults with disabilities. The City partnered with Shanti Project to develop the [COVID-19 Emergency Response Volunteer \(CERV\)](#) program, which leverages their existing infrastructure for recruiting and vetting volunteers and matching to community members in need of help.



Today, Mayor Breed announced the creation of a new volunteer match opportunity with [Mon Ami](#). Mon Ami typically coordinates in-person visits to isolated seniors using its app. With in-person visits on hold, the app has been repurposed to enable volunteers to call isolated seniors for friendly check-ins and to coordinate errand runs for groceries, prescriptions, and other essentials. In partnership with the City, Mon Ami will provide free access to its smartphone app for the month of April to all impacted community members and volunteers.

The Mon Ami volunteer match program is currently being piloted with OpenHouse, a San Francisco-based LGBTQ organization that provides housing and support services to seniors and adults with disabilities. The Office of Transgender Initiatives is assisting with the pilot program.

The Department of Disability and Aging Services has been working to enhance their Benefits and Resource Hub's helpline that connects seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers to supportive resources. The DAS helpline at (415) 355-6700 now operates 7 days per week from 8:00am to 5:00pm. DAS helpline operators are available to connect people to the City's existing service providers and expanded services as they become available.

Seniors and people with disabilities who need assistance with home care, delivery or other essential tasks, or who want to be matched with a volunteer for friendly check-ins are able to sign up through the helpline. The City's nonprofit service providers are also able to sign their clients up for the volunteer services. DAS has also instructed their nonprofit partners to prepare to train and hire up to 200 new home care providers to help older adults and people with disabilities live safely and independently in their communities during the Stay Home Public Health Order.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, please go to sf.gov/covid19volunteer.

For information about expanded DAS services and home care employment opportunities, please go to sfhsa.org/COVID-DAS.

“One in five San Franciscans is over the age of 65 or an adult with disabilities. To safely shelter in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, they will need assistance with many of the daily tasks that they used to be able to do on their own,” said Shireen McSpadden, Executive Director of the Department of Disability and Aging Services. “The City is here to partner with older adults, caregivers, and families to get people the support they need. Our helpline is now open seven days a week to make connections to services and volunteer networks. We continue to expand access to home care, food assistance and other essential needs for those at heightened risks. Together, we can empower people to stay at home and take social distancing recommendations seriously.”

“I am so inspired by community coming together at this extremely challenging time to care for one another and assure that our most vulnerable community members get the food, support, and essentials they need,” said Clair Farley, Director of the Office of Transgender Initiatives and Senior Advisor to Mayor London Breed.



“The formation of this program is a testament to the caring and compassionate community that is San Francisco,” said Kaushik Roy, Executive Director, Shanti Project. “DAS received an outpouring of support from residents who wanted to support their most vulnerable neighbors during this pandemic, and Shanti has the expertise to coordinate volunteers at this scale. We are grateful to be able to contribute in this way.”

“Now is the time for us all to come together and play our part,” said Madeline Dangerfield-Cha, Mon Ami co-founder. “Even before COVID-19, seniors were at great mental and physical health risk due to social isolation; we can use our technology to show these individuals how much they matter and that we are here for them, no matter what.”

“OpenHouse is working hard to support our seniors and those most impacted during this crisis. Our communities have always been resilient and have come together to respond to a crisis from the AIDS epidemic to this incredible challenge we face today,” said Karyn Skultety, Executive Director of OpenHouse. “Thank you to Mon Ami, Mayor Breed, Supervisor Mandelman, and the Department of Disability and Aging Services for their partnership.”

The Health Officer of the City and County of San Francisco has issued a [Public Health Order](#) requiring that residents stay in their homes, with few exceptions, through May 3, 2020. This order is designed to protect community health by slowing the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. These are systemic as well as individual changes that will make a difference in people’s lives.

Even people engaged in the essential activities described in the order must practice the following to avoid getting sick and to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people when on essential outings such as grocery shopping, riding public transit to an essential job, or walking your dog;
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough or sneeze;
- Avoid touching your face;
- Do not shake hands;
- Keep common spaces clean to help maintain a healthy environment for you and others. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly with disinfecting sprays, wipes or common household cleaning products.

Find the answers to frequently asked questions about the order at [SF.gov/coronavirus](#).

Other Public Health Orders and recommendations from DPH can be found at [sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp](#). Mayoral declarations regarding COVID-19 can be found at [sfmayor.org/mayoral-declarations-regarding-covid-19](#).

For more information, you can also call 311. For official updates, sign up for the City’s alert service: text COVID19SF to 888-777.

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