

Remembering When Program Update – April 2022

ISSUE

The Remembering When Program (the program) has enabled the Saskatoon Fire Department (the SFD) to respond to and address the growing number of requests for a lift assist from people who have fallen and are unable to get up. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Remembering When team (SFD staff and volunteers) pivoted from group presentations and home visits to mailouts and telephone calls to reach people and offer advice on preventing fires and falls.

BACKGROUND

At the November 5, 2019 Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services the Fire Chief provided a report on how the program has enabled the SFD to address the number of lift assists that are responded to each year.

CURRENT STATUS

Efforts to build partnerships and promote the program have been aided throughout the pandemic as most other programs, dealing with fall prevention, were shuttered for the majority of this time.

Key components of the program achieved compliance with pandemic restrictions by focussing on what could be accomplished by telephone or a mailed-out checklist that was worked through, by telephone, approximately a week later. Three-month follow-up calls indicated that people found the interventions worthwhile and were able to implement 67% of the suggestions made.

An Advisory Committee was created, and the team implemented their recommendations:

- To provide education to staff at Personal Care Homes (PCH) in an online format to address the number of requests for a lift assist coming from the PCH. In March 2021, a \$25,000 grant from the New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) was received to produce modules (completed), and
- To provide education in an online format to family caregivers. In March 2022, an additional NHSP grant for \$25,000 was received to produce similar modules for a target audience of family caregivers (ongoing).

The program has worked with the University of Saskatchewan (USask) on two quality improvement research studies to examine the effectiveness of the program and recommend quality improvements to examine the substantial increase in the number of people lifted more than five times in 2021.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The program has completed the following outreaches to the community:

2019:

- 412 referrals to Client Patient Access Service (CPAS),
- 419 follow-up phone calls,
- 48 group presentations, and
- 122 home visits.

2020:

- 357 referrals to CPAS,
- 571 follow-up phone calls,
- 9 group presentations,
- 37 home visits,
- 65 home visits over the phone, and
- 2 virtual presentations at national and international conferences.

2021:

- 472 referrals to CPAS,
- 515 follow-up phone calls,
- 6 group presentations,
- 25 home visits, and
- 53 home visits over the phone.

The requests for lift assists have continued to rise (Appendix 1). Based on the Neighbourhood Profiles, the population of Saskatoon has also continued to increase as has the percentage of people who are over 65 years old. Between 2017 and 2020, approximately 2% of the population were lifted, 65 years old or older, each year (Appendix 2).

From June 2020 to March 2021, a research study with USask was completed to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and provide quality improvement suggestions. The research found that the program:

- Was a reciprocal learning experience between the volunteers and participants,
- Was more than a safety program as it offered opportunities for connection that combated social isolation,
- Improved individuals' safety at home,
- Increased individuals' knowledge of how to manage a fall on their own, and
- Was a 'gateway' program that connected individuals to other community resources.

The research project looked at qualitative and quantitative data from 2018 and 2019 and clearly demonstrated that the program is effective. One surprising finding was the

program's affect on social isolation. COVID-19 increased social isolation throughout the community and programs such as the Telephone Buddy Program were designed to combat it. With the established track record, the program was and is uniquely positioned to prevent fires and falls and combat social isolation. When the team phoned an individual, they intentionally asked how COVID-19 had affected them. Volunteers sometimes spent an hour on the phone with the resident. The program is a way to reach some of the vulnerable population in the community and address the social isolation that this group felt during the pandemic.

In January 2022, a research study began with USask to determine why there was a substantial increase in the number of people that were lifted five or more times in 2021 (46) as compared to 2020 (28). Preliminary results are pointing to the need to look at the bigger picture including the impact of the pandemic, the physical, mental, and social factors that contribute to falls, and the need for fall prevention education. Once again, the need for more education for family caregivers and the effects of social isolation were highlighted.

IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial, privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

- To continue meetings with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health and the Saskatchewan Health Authority to gain their support for the program in the future,
- To bring the in-person proactive group presentations and home visits back up to 2019 levels,
- Expand the reach of the program through the online training modules for staff at PCHs, and
- Expand the reach of the program by producing online training modules for family caregivers and reach those who cannot attend or are not inclined to attend a group presentation.

APPENDICES

1. Lift Assists (yearly) 2008-2021
2. Population Data Compared to Lift Assists 2017-2020
3. Lift Assist Heat Map 2019-2021
4. Age of People SFD Lifted in 2020-2021

Report Approval

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