



SENIORS IN SERVICE
OF TAMPA BAY, INC.

Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay, Inc. Senior Companion Program 2009 Impact Report

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Something powerful is happening at Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay Inc. (SIS). During this evaluation period, the Senior Companion Program engaged and mobilized more than 100 enthusiastic, caring senior volunteers who reached out into the community to help frail elderly and disabled adults with physical, mental and emotional limitations achieve and maintain their highest level of independent living. Senior Companions also provided respite and reduced the level of stress for their caregivers. Those served may lack family or community support, be physically disabled, or simply lonely. The common thread is that without help, they can't sufficiently meet their basic needs. Senior Companion volunteers provided these essential services, at no charge to the clients. They are a vital, personal connection to the outside world. A meal delivery program provides a homebound person with a healthy lunch; a Senior Companion ensures the meal is not eaten alone. A doctor prescribes medication; a Senior Companion helps to ensure the client can get it. A homebound elder living alone yearns for human contact; a Senior Companion visit is "just the right medicine". The caring companionship Senior Companions share is just as valuable as the service they provide. Developing lasting friendships is an essential part of the program for both the companions and clients. By offering support and companionship, risk factors are reduced and at-risk elders and disabled adults are less likely to experience costly, premature institutionalization.

The Senior Companion Program has 35 community partners who refer more than 500 people annually. In addition to providing in-home services, volunteers are integrated into group sites such as congregate meal sites, the James Haley Veterans Administration Hospital, and a not for profit Assisted Living Facility serving low-income elders. The volunteers interact with clients, patients and provide regular one-on-one attention.

The volunteers and supervisors at the stations/sites where volunteers serve evaluate the Senior Companion Program annually, and the clients give feedback on an ongoing basis. This year the SIS Board of Directors along with people from the community conducted one-to-one interviews with 100% of the volunteers in attendance at their May in-service meeting. The volunteers answered questions regarding their satisfaction with the program, their relationships with the program staff and what they enjoy and do not enjoy about the program. Station supervisors were mailed a similar survey asking them to evaluate the impact of the Senior Companion Program at their agency. Clients are given an opportunity to evaluate their Senior Companion and the program as a whole at least twice a year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The volunteers that were surveyed, 100% (80 of 80), overwhelmingly revealed that they are happy with their volunteer experience – 100% (80 of 80), indicated that they enjoy what they do and 98.75% (79 of 80) rated their overall volunteer experience as good or excellent. Their comments such as "It gives me my freedom, my expression and it has changed my feelings about others. I used to be depressed but no more.", and "I get up knowing that I have value, something to do, someone to help." demonstrate that being able to help the clients and feeling "useful" is what they enjoy most. What they don't enjoy is the times when clients experience situations they cannot change. "I hate to see my clients sick or lonely, with no family support."

97.66% (586/600) of the clients agree that the Senior Companions have improved their quality of life. The comments received included:

- “She has been such a support to me after the loss of my granddaughter, listening & helping me.”
- “With her company I don't feel alone anymore: and I'm happy.”
- “I love my volunteer! She is so good to me. I adore her. This service is a blessing to me.”
- “You provide a good service and have caring and helpful people working for you. Thank you for my volunteer. Without him I would be lost. He has improved my life in all aspects.”

The volunteer site supervisors also report that the Senior Companions are a tremendous asset, and 100% indicated that they provide seniors with more individualized attention than they would otherwise receive. Their comments speak for themselves, and can be summed up in two quotes:

- “The Senior Companion Program's reputation in the community is excellent. Our agency and clients rely on the senior companions for the valuable services they perform.”
- “I am the property manager for a community of 62 & over/disabled residents. Since they have started receiving Senior Companion services, tenants that would never leave their apartments are now happy, smiling, and visiting, joining others in the lobby. I think the program is great.”

It is clear that the Senior Companion Program is truly making an impact on the lives of seniors in our community.

VOLUNTEER SELF EVALUATION

The SIS Board of Directors and community members, using a standard survey form, gathered opinions from 80 volunteers via one-to-one interviews in May 2009. They were read a series of statements and were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The results are as follows:

- 100% (80 of 80) agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering in the community makes them feel wanted and needed.
- 100% (80 of 80) agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering gives them an increased sense of self-worth and accomplishment
- 100% (79 of 79) agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering is an important part of their life.
- 97.43% (76 of 78) agreed or strongly agreed that they have felt an increased sense of independence since they began volunteering.
- 95% (76 of 80) agreed or strongly agreed that their health has improved because they kept active by volunteering.

Other responses include the following:

- 100% (79 of 79) feel comfortable talking to the staff about volunteer problems.
- 98.75% (79 of 80) believe that the staff always gives clear instructions and answers their questions.
- 97.46% (77 of 79) are satisfied with the amount of recognition events and appreciation gifts that they receive.
- 97.5% (78 of 80) enjoy attending the in-service training meetings.
- 96.25% (77 of 80) indicated that the stipend has provided them with increased economic opportunity.

The following is a sample of responses to the question “What have you enjoyed the most?”

- “Being needed and valued. Giving back to the community.”

- “Helping my clients and making sure they get the help they need. I'm treated like a hero.”
- “Getting out of my home: it takes me mentally to other places.”
- “I enjoy what I learn at in-service. It helps me to be more helpful to my clients.”

The following is a sample of responses to the question “What do you not enjoy?”

- “When clients pass away that you have been attached to.”
- “Riding the bus makes it difficult to reach out.”
- “The price of gas.”

The following is a sample of responses to the question regarding any additional comments:

- “If I didn't have the Senior Companion Program, I think my own dementia would be increased. I would be in a nursing home.”
- “I am happy to be a volunteer with the Senior Companion Program. It's a great program: let's keep it growing!”
- “I feel that my clients give me as much as I give to them.”

STATION/SITE EVALUATIONS

18 station supervisors completed the station evaluation survey form. They were given a series of statements and were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The results below are the percentages of supervisors who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements:

Senior Companion volunteers:

- Provide seniors with more individualized attention than they would otherwise receive 100% (18 of 18)
- Allow the agency to function more efficiently 100% (18 of 18)
- Allow us to expand our services 100% (16 of 16)
- Contribute to our purpose or mission 100% (18 of 18)
- Help reduce the cost of services to seniors 93.75% (15 of 16)

The stations also responded to the following:

- I am pleased with the services provided by Senior Companions 100% (18 of 18)
- I am satisfied with our relationship with the Seniors in Service staff 100% (18 of 18)
- I have more time to do my job as a result of utilizing SCP volunteers 94.11% (16 of 17)

The following is a sample of responses to the question regarding “Have you experienced a situation where the presence of a Senior Companion had a specific, direct impact on an individual, a group or your agency?”

- “Yes, we have an 89 year old female resident that suffers with depression/anxiety. Ever since she has had a Senior Companion visit her regularly she has not been calling the front office or 911 when she has anxiety attacks.”

- “Yes, a new resident who is confused and has dementia needed a Senior Companion to help her adjust to our facility. The volunteer helped her to know her way around and also helped her to feel comfortable enough to participate in our activities. She makes the residents happy.”

The following is a sample of responses to the question regarding “How do our Senior Companions assist with your purpose or mission?”

- “The presence of the volunteer dramatically increases the rate/ratio of service delivery. We are delighted with our Senior Companion Manny!”
- “Senior Companions assist our residents by providing in home assistance that increases their independence.” They enable elders to continue living independently.”

CLIENT EVALUATIONS

Opinions regarding the impact and quality of the Senior Companion services they receive were gathered from clients throughout the evaluation period. They were surveyed both in-person and by telephone using standardized quality assurance and reassessment tools. Clients were asked, at on at least one occasion during the evaluation period, to rate each by choosing from possible responses that include excellent, good, fair and poor and/or yes/no. Overall, 555 of 570 or 97.36% of respondents rated the overall service quality as excellent or good.

Evaluation of Senior Companion Service Impact

The results reported indicate the number of responders answering, “yes” to the following questions.

- Is the service helpful? (389 of 399) 97.49%
- Would you be able to find this help anywhere else without paying for it? No: (212 of 216) 98.15%
- Would you say that the Senior Companion has improved your quality of life? (586 of 600) 97.66%
- Are you less lonely after a companion visit? (195 of 210) 92.85%

Evaluation of Volunteer Performance

The results reported indicate the number of responders answering, “excellent or good” to the following questions.

- Does the volunteer treat you with respect and dignity? (196 of 198) 98.9%
- Does the volunteer arrive as scheduled? (605 of 613) 98.69%
- Is the volunteer courteous? (394 of 400) 98.5. %
- Are you notified of changes in scheduling? (393 of 399) 98.49%
- Does the volunteer stay the agreed upon amount of time? (390 of 398) 97.98%
- Does the volunteer willingly assist you with allowable tasks? (384 of 396) 96.96%

Some of the comments made by clients are as follows:

- “She is very helpful. If it wasn't for her, I couldn't function.”
- “She is so very helpful. I couldn't live by myself without her help.”

Compiled 7/09