

InfoGram November 2007

Issue # 19

A bimonthly Electronic Newsletter from the Nutrition and Health Promotion Team of the California Department of Aging (CDA)

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Education Materials:

This section provides resources on education materials your agency can access in order to improve your services.

Openhouse: Senior Community Living with Pride

Openhouse is a community-centered non profit organization dedicated to helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender older adults stay connected to the community.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) seniors have lived most of their lives knowing they could be put in jail or a mental institution just for being gay. They could lose jobs, friends, housing, family, and more if their sexual orientation were revealed. To survive, LGBT seniors have learned to hide.

LGBT seniors are hidden, isolated, and underserved. They do not access the services that are available to all seniors. And when they do, they do not talk about who they are for fear of judgment, rejection, or compromised care. To be "in hiding" puts their physical, emotional, and social well being at risk.

Most social service, health, and housing providers are not aware of the LGBT aging issues, how to reach out to this underserved population, or how to make their services more LGBT accessible.

Openhouse is available to come to your agency to train all staff, including those who provide direct services, administrative services, home care, practical

support, etc. When appropriate, Openhouse can also present to community groups, program participants, housing residents, volunteers, or interns.

The expected outcomes of the two-hour training include:

- Increased understanding of LGBT aging issues and the obstacles to accessing services.
- Greater knowledge of how to make services more accessible for LGBT seniors.
- Greater knowledge of resource information and referral for LGBT senior clients.

Openhouse will continue working with your agency and staff after the training. Ongoing technical assistance and support will be available for your agency's use.

For more information about this organization and how to access their services, programs and/or trainings, visit the website below:

<http://www.openhouse-sf.org>

Fall Prevention Center of Excellence (FPCE)

Visit the FPCE website at www.stopfalls.org for resources on what seniors or others can do to reduce the risk of falls. The website provides updated information on key fall prevention issues from around the world.

In addition, handouts and brochures are available on the website. One of their newest handouts is the *Falls and Vision Loss* handout which can be downloaded in the "Communication Fall Prevention" section of the website. This handout is about how age related vision loss, which is normal due to aging, can increase the risk of falls. In contrast, the handout also points out some age-related vision losses are associated with diseases that are not a normal part of aging, but are more likely to affect older adults. Also, as part of the multi-factorial approach to reducing falls, FPCE will be releasing three new exercise brochures titled *Balance Basics*, *Stretch & Flex*, and *Strong & Stable*. Details on the release of these brochures are pending, but please check the website in the near future for information on how to obtain copies.

Latino Nutrition Coalition

The Latino Nutrition Coalition can help you access materials that can help your agency outreach to the Latin/Spanish community.

The Latino Nutrition Coalition focuses on practical programs that Latinos can relate to, and that will have an impact. Working with business leaders, culinary experts and scientists, they are creating national, regional and local programs. Their first initiative is centered around *Camino Mágico*, their groundbreaking supermarket guide. They are raising awareness of the Camino Mágico through:

- In-store grocery programs
- Health clinic programs
- In-school programs

- Restaurant programs
- Target-city programs in 5-6 cities
- Community fiestas and festivals

For more information about accessing this service and using their materials, visit the Latino Nutrition Coalition website at: <http://www.latinonutrition.org/>

Marketing: MOWAA Studio:

The Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA) is offering a new advertising resource known as the MOWAA Studio. Only MOWAA members will have access to these customized print public service announcements (PSAs) and personalized professional broadcast-ready PSAs on CD. One of these PSAs “Henry Olsen” is available free of charge and others can be purchased at minimal cost.

For MOWAA Studio information, visit the MOWAA website below and click on MOWAA Studio Brochure:

<http://www.mowaa.org/displayContent.asp?MemberNo=5D&CurrentNo=5C5C5E&t?mid=156¤tid=332>

Customer Service:

This section continues a series of articles, tips, resources, and information to assist providers in developing strategies to improve customer service and increase program participation. They are based on business principles that can also be used in the public/non-profit sector.

Your Fast Guide to Dealing with Complaints

Excerpted from the book “Mastering Customer Relations” by Roger Cartwright.

The book is part of the Macmillan Master Series.

Many organizations spend a lot of time and money trying to identify customers who want to buy their products. Here, Roger Cartwright explains that complaining customers are offering themselves up free!

Many people become defensive when dealing with complaints because this is a person’s natural reaction to someone who is angrily criticizing their organization or department in the case of an internal customer complaint. Organizations seek to instill loyalty into their employees, but complaint situations are times when employees need to be honest and objective. Within the bounds of commercial confidentiality, it is counterproductive to not be honest with the customer. Lying to the customer is nearly always found out and only serves to make recovery time more difficult. Dealing with complaints requires three actions that have traditionally been carried out in the order of:

- INVESTIGATE
- ACTION

- LEARN

Organizations have, traditionally on receiving a complaint, carried out an investigation to see whether the complaint is justified. If the customer has been found to be justified in making a complaint, some form of remedy has been applied as an action, and the organization has, hopefully, learn from what has happened and taken steps to ensure that there is no repetition.

More modern thinking suggests that the order of the above should be changed and put the action in rectifying the customer's complaint first and the investigation second. Organizations have argued in the past that they need to carry out an investigation in order to prevent spurious and even fraudulent claims. Such claims, however, are only a tiny minority when compared to the majority of perfectly justified complaints. If the sums of money involved are large then most customers would consider an investigation reasonable, but when only small sums are in question then immediate action is more likely to recover the situation and retain customer goodwill than a long investigation. The investigation and learning are still important even if there has been only one complaint because whether the complaint was justified or not, the product or service has angered one person, so it could anger someone else. The organization needs to find out what has happened and what lessons can be learnt.

People usually complain and may become difficult for a reason. Whatever the staff of the organizations feels about the complaint, they cannot deny the customer's feelings of anger or disappointment and that is what the organization needs to deal with.

Customers do make mistakes but organizations need to bear in mind that if one customer can make a mistake when using a product or service, then others can too. There may be instructions on the packaging, for example, that the organization needs to change in order to prevent further mistakes. Just as employees do not wish to admit a fault of the organization, customers may be embarrassed by having to admit that they have made a mistake. Embarrassed customers can quickly become ex-customers.

If the organization is in the right, then it is paradoxically at its most vulnerable because that means that the customer is in the wrong and it takes a great deal of tact to tell the customer that they have made a mistake.

Customers who complain should, with the exception of professional complainers, be thanked because they give the organization an opportunity to put what is wrong right, not only for that one customer but also for others who are going to be acquiring the product or service in the future. Complaints can also provide the organization with valuable market research. Many organizations spend huge sums on Market research to find out what people like and dislike. The person who has complained is offering the organization free information. If justification

for the cost of customer recovery is needed, this might well be it. By acting quickly to put things right, the organization may save considerable sums in the future, or be able to design new products and services in a better way as a result of the customer feedback gained through complaints.

Complaining customers usually want to give the organization another chance. As Cartwright & Green (1997)* have pointed out, those who walk away without complaining are really saying 'Goodbye'. They are saying: 'you let me down and you won't get another chance'. Those who complain are saying 'Hello'. They mean: 'You have let me down but I want to give you a chance to make it up to me'.

Most organizations spend a lot of time and money trying to identify customers who want to buy their products. Complaining customers are offering themselves up free!

* Cartwright & Green (1997) In Charge of Customer Satisfaction, Blackwell.

Resources of Interest:

California Volunteer Matching Network

Is your agency looking for volunteers? If so, make sure your volunteer opportunities are listed with the California Volunteer Matching Network (CVMN) at: www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org

The website assists Californians in identifying volunteer opportunities in their local communities that meet their needs and interests.

Participating local volunteer agencies around the state ("Hubs") have been specially selected to assist nonprofits and public agencies post their volunteer opportunities into this new statewide volunteer database.

When you post your volunteer opportunities with your local Hub, they are automatically posted at CaliforniaVolunteers.org. Hub agencies (usually a Volunteer Center, Hands On Network affiliate or other volunteer connector organization) are located throughout the state - find your local Hub at this website: <http://www.californiavolunteers.org/hubs.asp>

Your local Hub can assist your agency in determining your volunteer needs, drafting your volunteer position descriptions, posting your opportunities into the database, and promoting your opportunities to interested local volunteers.

Any questions or can't find a Hub in your area? Contact the CVMN team - cvmn@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov.

This is a great way to increase outreach in recruiting volunteers for your programs and/or services provided by your agency.

The Nutrition and Health Promotion Team Contact Information

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