

# **A Manual for Volunteers**



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**or visit our website  
*Eldernetonline.org***

# Inside the Volunteer Manual

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## Introduction & Welcome to ElderNet

ElderNet's mission is to help older and disabled adults in Lower Merion and Narberth remain living independently and safely in their homes by providing free practical volunteer and social work services. Most volunteer services are targeted toward frail older and younger disabled adults living with low to moderate incomes. ElderNet does not provide services to residents of assisted living communities or nursing homes.

ElderNet seeks to improve the quality of life of our participants. Volunteers provide help with transportation to and from medical/dental appointments, food shopping, odd jobs around the house and managing mail and checkbook/bill paying. Volunteers also help to ease the isolation of homebound participants through daily telephone reassurance calls and friendly visiting in the home.

ElderNet of Lower Merion and Narberth is a private, not-for-profit, 501 (c)(3) organization founded in 1976 by representatives of community, religious and governmental agencies. We are unique to our area. ElderNet receives funds from the Montgomery County Office of Senior Services, Lower Merion Township, and from community residents, foundations, businesses, churches, synagogues and other groups.

ElderNet is staffed by social workers, trained professionals and volunteers. Because of the vulnerable population that we serve, volunteers undergo an interview process. The references they provide are verified and they undergo a criminal background check. Volunteers' driver's license and insurance information are updated annually for all volunteers who drive for ElderNet.

Although there is no fee for services, participants must meet income requirements. They must also demonstrate need and meet residency guidelines as outlined in the ElderNet Participant Manual and policies. To determine income eligibility, ElderNet uses HUD guidelines, which are available from ElderNet. These guidelines are adjusted annually and participants' incomes are reassessed annually as well. Income does not include assets such as the participant's home. In a multi-person household, only incomes of potential participants (**and** their spouses, if applicable) are included in determining household income. In the case of a couple, joint income is counted regardless of whether one or both are applying to ElderNet. Proof of income may be required.

In applying to become an ElderNet participant, all participants agree to comply with policies and procedures as outlined in the Participant Manual and as specified by ElderNet. All participants sign a Waiver of Liability annually (see below). Volunteers are covered by the Pennsylvania Good Samaritan Law as “a volunteer in public service.” A copy of the Pennsylvania Good Samaritan Law is available upon request.

ElderNet may decline to serve someone if, in our judgment, the participant’s health or safety is endangered, if skill or resources are required beyond what a volunteer-based organization can provide, if a volunteer’s or staff member’s health or safety is endangered, or if a participant is unable or unwilling to abide by ElderNet’s general policies for participants.

### **Waiver Signed by ElderNet Participants**

I hereby release, acquit and forever discharge ElderNet of Lower Merion and Narberth, the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth, and any officer, agent, employee, sponsor, organizer and all volunteers assigned by them, from any and all liability claims, demands, actions and causes of action whatsoever, arising out of or related to any loss, damage or injury sustained while receiving services as an ElderNet participant.

## **Volunteers Make ElderNet Work!**

The compassion and dedication of ElderNet's volunteers ensure that our participants have access to vital health care, food and social interaction. Volunteers like you provide crucial services for the most vulnerable residents of our community, and we value and respect your time and privacy. Please let us know at any point if you have any questions or concerns!

The Volunteer Coordinator oversees the volunteer program and manages the interactions between participants and volunteers. Most (but not all) participant requests for volunteer help are entered into an online database program called RideScheduler, and are relayed to volunteers by email twice weekly. Other volunteer assignments are "off-line," based on matches made by the Volunteer Coordinator between a particular participant and volunteer.

Please discuss with the Volunteer Coordinator any physical limitations you, the volunteer, may have so that we may match you with appropriate participants. For example, walkers come in various styles and some may not be easily managed by all volunteers. A volunteer who is using a cane (even temporarily) is not a good match for a participant who needs to take someone's arm when he walks.

Volunteering with ElderNet is very flexible! How and when you volunteer is up to you – your interests and schedule. Volunteers often take weekly assignments; for others once or twice monthly works best. Please discuss your preferences with the Volunteer Coordinator so that we may find the best way to work together. We understand that your availability might vary throughout the year with life's demands and surprises.

Please let us know if you are taking a break from volunteering or must discontinue. We appreciate your returning our calls or emails, even when the answer to our request is no!

Out of respect for everyone, we ask participants and volunteers to refrain from smoking during any ElderNet outing or visit, and not to wear perfumes or other fragrances. Problems with allergies, in particular pet allergies, should be discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Working with ElderNet Participants

- **Please contact your participant at least 24 hours prior to the assignment** to confirm that you will be driving him or her. Although ElderNet staff contacts participants to confirm that a volunteer has accepted their ride, many of our participants experience some anxiety if they haven't heard from their volunteer driver a day before the appointment.
- **Please be on time** for appointments. Notify ElderNet promptly if you are unable to fulfill a scheduled assignment or unexpectedly delayed.
- If you need to cancel a ride that you claimed, please give us as much notice as possible. Don't worry, we understand that it happens sometimes!
- Volunteers should not accept tips, gifts, or payment for services, although a small thank you is acceptable.
- Seatbelts must be worn by both participants and volunteers when on assignment. Use of alcohol and illegal drugs, as well as abuse of prescription drugs, by anyone on ElderNet outings or visits is prohibited.
- Participants are encouraged to pay parking fees when appropriate; if a volunteer pays for parking, it will be reimbursed by ElderNet.
- Volunteers may choose to be reimbursed for mileage. If requested, ElderNet will reimburse volunteers for mileage at the IRS rate for non-profits, which is \$0.14/mile.
- Be careful about giving out your phone number to participants. ***Participants must call in appointments to ElderNet with at least one week's notice, and are informed that they should not call volunteers directly for rides.*** We do not recommend giving your phone number to participants until and unless you are very comfortable with that participant. While most would

respect your privacy, it is possible that some would take advantage of their ability to contact you directly (and inappropriately). **If you would like to “block” your number when contacting your participant, just dial \*67 and then the number as usual.** If you need a callback from the participant but are hesitant to give them your number, you can ask them to call ElderNet instead, and we will relay the message to you from our office. ElderNet does not share your personal information with our participants.

You, the volunteer, are a liaison between the participant and ElderNet. Please share with us any concerns you have about your participant and any changes you notice so that we may follow up. ***If something unexpected happens at an appointment or if the participant is admitted to the hospital, please let ElderNet know.*** If you encounter any situation that you are not sure of or are uncomfortable with, please call ElderNet while on the assignment if possible. Our staff is here to help solve problems. Participants provide, and give us permission to call, an emergency contact person and/or a physician should we deem it necessary for health and safety reasons.

ElderNet social workers can help sort out problems with government offices, or in choosing prescription drug plans and working through the qualifications of certain benefits for on-line applications. You may recommend a call to ElderNet if a participant seems to need help with a particular problem.

ElderNet strives to supply the volunteer with the information they need to best help their participant while being respectful of our participants' privacy. *Please let us know if the assignment was as you expected it to be and if you felt adequately prepared.*

Participants and volunteers are asked to complete an annual, anonymous survey regarding their experiences with ElderNet. *We appreciate your feedback!*



## Insights . . . and Cautions

Here are some thoughts to consider when you volunteer:

- Present a warm and friendly attitude. Be enthusiastic and interested.
- Be responsible, courteous and respectful. Help with doors, offer help with seatbelts, offer an arm to assist someone in walking. It is helpful to walk a bit behind someone using a walker.
- Be a good listener. Talk about subjects of special interest to your participant: his or her family and friends; past and present interests and hobbies; and noteworthy things going on in the world.
- Be sensitive to complaints and understanding if someone is going through a difficult time or having a bad day. Accept ups and downs in moods and behavior. Health problems may cause changes in moods. Be prepared to listen to health reports but don't let them dominate your conversation.
- Your role is to be helpful and supportive. No one expects you to have answers for another person's problems.
- Spending time with a volunteer is a chance to socialize, an outing, a welcome break in routine. It often represents much more to the participant than the simple task it might be. Participants are appreciative and each expresses his or her appreciation differently (and some, with difficulty).
- Respect confidentiality. Please consider privacy and courtesy. Please do not share any details of the participant's life and current situation with others.

Participants come to ElderNet in different ways and under various circumstances. They may learn of us from their children, another participant or through our publicity efforts. Other participants are referred to us by social workers, often from area hospitals, the County's Office of Senior Services, and medical or other professionals. ElderNet's volunteers are very important to the continued well-being and independence of the participants we help.

Please be aware of a few concerns:

- Report immediately (call in) to ElderNet any injuries and/or unusual incidences that may occur, in the presence of the participant when appropriate.
- Do not offer medical advice. Do not prescribe or give medicine of any kind, even an aspirin.
- Do not, under any circumstances, try to lift the person you are helping. Offering an arm or minor assistance transferring in and out of the car or chair is appropriate. **Do not delay calling 911 for help in case of emergency.**
- Volunteers may make bank deposits but we encourage participants to do direct deposit or deposits by mail when possible.
- Never sign your participant's name to any document.
- Do not give advice on business or legal matters or help your participant get a lawyer without first discussing this with ElderNet. The ElderNet social worker can help a participant with information and assistance for many government benefits and community resources.

There are many ways to volunteer and to help make a difference for a frail elderly or disabled person in our community. We look for reliability, patience, honesty, good judgment, a helping attitude and a friendly smile in all of our volunteers. These qualities are recognized and appreciated by participants, their families, and their care providers.

## *Volunteer Opportunities*

### **Driving to Medical Appointments**

Helping people access medical care is a major emphasis for ElderNet.

This volunteer opportunity involves driving and escorting participants to medical appointments and essential errands such as to the bank or pharmacy. You need to have a safe driving record and skills, knowledge of the area, a valid driver's license and insurance, and a car. The approximate time commitment is 2 hours per assignment but it varies depending on the doctor's schedule and the nature of the appointment.

Appointments are in our immediate area (Lower Merion and Narberth), nearby in Delaware County, and sometimes to government offices in Norristown. Where you drive is up to you.

Participants must call their appointments in to ElderNet staff at least a week ahead of time. They are entered into an online scheduling system called RideScheduler. Volunteers have access to RideScheduler at any time from their own computer, and can sign up for or cancel their assignments at any time.

The information in RideScheduler includes:

- Date, time, and expected length of appointment, as well as an appropriate time for pickup from the participant's home
- Participant's address and phone number, and any special information regarding pickup location
- Doctor's name, address, suite and telephone number
- Relevant information about the participant's condition regarding, for instance, the use of a walker or the need for a transport chair at an office, etc.

Please call ElderNet to let us know if anything was not as you expected. **Always notify ElderNet promptly if you must cancel your assignment so that we can find someone to fill in.**

We try to set up assignments the week before and always let the participant know who will be taking her/him. We request that the volunteer call the participant a day or two beforehand to confirm the arrangements, and where you will meet. Please tell the participant what type and color of car you will be driving and how she/he will recognize you. Please be on time.

Participants **must** wear a seat belt in order to be driven by ElderNet. Please make sure that it is fastened. Volunteers also need to wear their seatbelts when driving for ElderNet. Please drive safely. If a participant is distracting or highly directive, politely let him or her know what your needs are in order to take her to the destination safely and efficiently. It is acceptable not to converse in difficult driving situations. A non-driver may not be sensitive to the demands on you.

Participants are instructed to not add any stops (except pharmacy if time allows), or to make last-minute changes. Special participant requests must be cleared through the ElderNet office. You may ask the participant if he or she needs to stop somewhere (post office, pharmacy, bank) at your discretion. Please help participants remember to take all of their belongings with them when leaving your car.

If an appointment runs very long and your window of availability is closing, call ElderNet. We will make sure your participant gets safely home if you are unable to wait beyond the time that was allotted.

If a participant must travel with an additional escort, he or she must first have it approved by ElderNet. Escorts are required to sign a liability waiver.

If it is necessary for you, the volunteer, to travel with pets or children, please discuss this with the Volunteer Coordinator to make sure that the participant match is suitable.

## *Volunteer Opportunities*

### **Grocery Shopping**

This volunteer opportunity involves helping participants grocery shop, or shopping for them if they are homebound. You need to have a safe driving record and skills, knowledge of the area and patience in the supermarket! You also need a valid driver's license, insurance and a car. Shopping assignments should not exceed two hours.

Shopping is done weekdays, evenings or on the weekends, based on volunteer availability and participant preference. Help is provided to each shopping participant once every two weeks. The participant is responsible for the cost of the groceries.

The office will match a volunteer with a participant and ask the volunteer to call the participant directly to finalize the arrangements. You will be given information on the participant's abilities and any special needs.

The participant will tell the volunteer where he or she shops. Shopping will be done only at **one** of the local supermarkets, without additional stops, unless the volunteer specifically agrees to go to another store. If banking services or other stops are needed, participants are asked to discuss it first with ElderNet. Participants are asked not to request that items be returned.

It is against ElderNet policy for volunteers to take a participant to shop for alcoholic beverages or to purchase them for the participant.

If you are shopping **with** the participant:

- For many participants, grocery shopping is an outing, a chance to keep in touch with what's new, a social experience. It is a very difficult thing to give up doing for oneself, and many who go do require help.
- Please offer to help read labels, locate items on the shelves, find the best values and manage the grocery bags.
- Participants are asked to prepare a list and to be considerate of the volunteer's time in making selections as efficiently as possible.

- Please help the participant put away the groceries if needed.

If you are shopping **for** the participant:

- It is important to bring back what he or she asked for. Allow time to meet with the participant to find out about preferences, food allergies and other dietary restrictions or concerns.
- The participant will prepare a detailed list, grouping items by category and indicating coupons. Review the list with your participant. Discuss items—quantity, size, brand, flavors, acceptable substitutions, the budget and what to omit if the cost runs over. The more detailed the list, the easier it is in the store.
- The participant will give you their grocery store member card and form(s) of payment: cash, check, debit card, Access card (food stamps), and any required PIN numbers, as well as any coupons or gift cards. The participant or ElderNet can explain how to use an Access card. Be sure that the participant's name, address and phone number are on any checks, and that the check is made out to the store and signed by the participant. You will just fill in the total from the register receipt. Never sign your participant's name to any document.
- If needed, the participant will call ahead to the store to alert the manager that he or she has a volunteer shopper coming to the store.
- You will use your own judgment to make decisions and if necessary call the participant from the store to ask questions. Always take the phone number with you. We ask the participant to keep the phone line clear in case you call.
- Review the store receipt with the participant as well as the amount of change due if payment is by cash.
- Please help the participant put away the groceries if needed.

Let us know how it is going! Some volunteers prefer to be matched regularly with one participant, others work with a variety of people.

## ***Volunteer Opportunities***

### **Friendly Visiting**

This volunteer opportunity involves visiting in the participant's home to share a companionship activity. You might visit, play a game, do a small project, read aloud or go for a walk or outing. You need to have an ability to listen and an interest in another's life experiences. Some Friendly Visitors help manage paperwork, mail, bills and checkbooks. If you are going to help with paperwork, you must have good organizational skills. *Participants requesting this service are often visually impaired.* The time commitment is usually one to two hours per visit.

After discussions with the participant and volunteer regarding the participant's request, the Volunteer Coordinator introduces the volunteer to the participant. Both are asked privately if the match is acceptable. If either is dissatisfied, options or new matches will be discussed.

#### **Friendly Visiting Policies**

- The Friendly Visitor and participant will meet on a regular basis, preferably weekly or every other week.
- Visits will last an hour or more at a prearranged time convenient to both.
- The volunteer should call to confirm the time before arriving. If a participant will not be available at the scheduled time, he or she is asked to inform ElderNet so that we may notify the volunteer.
- The primary purpose of a visit is companionship. Please be receptive to your participant's abilities and tolerance levels. Take an interest in your participant's well being but try not to let health issues dominate your visit.
- A Friendly Visitor may run an errand but the Volunteer Coordinator must be informed if you plan to drive the participant anywhere. Friendly Visitors do not clean, cook or do laundry.
- Do not accept a house key from your participant without first discussing this with ElderNet. Enter the house in the participant's absence only with an ElderNet staff person.

Friendly Visitors are a liaison between the participant and ElderNet. Please report any problems to us.

## **Managing Paperwork, Mail, Bills and Checkbook**

Friendly Visitors who help with bills, mail and managing a checkbook have considerations in addition to those listed above.

- Please respect the participant's privacy. Confidentiality is important.
- Accept that there may be an adjustment period as trust builds. Progress at the participant's rate. You are going into very personal information and it may be difficult for the participant to feel comfortable with help.
- Work involving checkbooks, bills, mail and filling out forms should always be done in the participant's presence. Do not remove materials from the participant's home. If an exception must be made for photocopying, please return the originals and copies immediately. *If the participant does not have a shredder, ElderNet can make arrangements for shredding of documents.*
- When helping to sort out problems, make calls in the participant's presence. You can put the participant on the phone to verify identity.
- Volunteers may make bank deposits but we encourage participants to do direct deposit or deposits by mail.
- Never sign your participant's name to any document.
- Do not give advice on business or legal matters.
- The participant is responsible for the cost of stamps and supplies.
- Keep a log at the participant's home (a spiral notebook works well) noting each date you were there and list what you did and which bills were paid, as a reminder to you both.

The participant should set aside important mail for the volunteer's visit or keep everything for the volunteer to sort through. Your participant may have difficulty parting with mail and papers. You can offer to help the participant decide which things to keep, recycle or shred.

## ***Volunteer Opportunities***

### **Odd Jobs**

This volunteer opportunity involves helping a participant with a small project or task that he or she can no longer take care of without assistance. Some typical odd jobs might include leaf-raking, garden cleanup, hanging pictures, cleaning out/organizing a closet or cupboard, and doing small carpentry work. A volunteer could connect small electronics such as a DVD player. Packing for a move can be done on a limited basis.

The time for these jobs varies with the project, but should not exceed two or three hours. You need the skill to perform the task at hand. *Volunteers are not to do plumbing or electrical work.*

- When a request is called in to the ElderNet office, the Volunteer Coordinator may post it in the RideScheduler system, or may call a volunteer who has expressed interest in performing that kind of task.
- Appropriate parameters for the job will be set. The cost of any materials is the responsibility of the participant. However, if a project is of a vital nature and the participant does not have the funds, please tell the Volunteer Coordinator. We might be able to direct the participant to other resources.
- If additional or follow-up work is necessary, please let ElderNet know. Also let ElderNet know if you are able to continue working on the job.

## ***Volunteer Opportunities***

### **Friendly Phone Calls**

This volunteer opportunity involves a daily phone call to check on the well-being of a frail, elderly, or disabled person who lives alone, and to report in to ElderNet in case of concerns. Our goal is to ease isolation and to provide assistance as needed. You need to have a willingness to make a daily commitment and a desire to help give someone a supportive start to his or her day. The time commitment is just a few minutes, or more as you like, daily. We will find someone to fill in when you are unavailable.

#### **Friendly Phone Call Procedures**

- Establish with the participant what time the calls will be made, and whether they will occur on weekends and holidays as well (most participants request these calls in the morning). The participant is instructed to let you or ElderNet know in advance if he or she has an appointment or will be away from home during your normal calling time.
- If the participant does not answer, please call again 30 minutes later and let the phone ring 15 times or until an answering machine picks up.
- If the participant still doesn't answer, please report this to ElderNet, so that we may take over trying to locate the participant. ElderNet staff will try again, call local hospitals, or try any of the emergency contacts the participant has given us.
- If we fail to reach the participant or an emergency contact in a timely manner, ElderNet staff may decide to call the police. This means that an officer will go out to the participant's home. If the officer believes someone may be inside and injured, he or she will gain access to the house in the manner deemed most appropriate.

We suggest that participants sign up for the "Lock for Life" lock box program with the Lower Merion Police Department. The police and emergency responders have access to a house key via a secure lock box kept near the door. This is a *free* program – please call ElderNet for more information.

A Friendly Phone Call participant should also have the “File of Life” in his or her home. The “File of Life” is a medical history with contact information that is kept on the refrigerator where emergency personnel are trained to look.

Participants in this program are often vulnerable and isolated. We make an effort to match participants and volunteers carefully. At times, matches may be reviewed for a number of reasons, to make sure the program works smoothly. This is a volunteer opportunity that can be enjoyed by people of all interests and abilities.

Friendly Phone Call partners may decide how much or how little they want to talk or share with one another. The volunteer should always ask, in some way, how the participant is feeling that day, and should report any significant concerns to ElderNet staff. We ask participants not to keep secrets about illness or problems. The ElderNet social worker is available to help resolve any urgent concerns.



## Communicating with Older Persons

Speak slowly and distinctly.

- Tests have proven that speaking slowly and distinctly enables older persons to hear what you are saying more easily.

Don't shout.

- Shouting usually raises the pitch of your voice. Older persons often lose the ability to hear higher pitches. Try lowering the pitch of your voice in order to be better understood.

Face the older person.

- This enables the person to read your lips and perhaps understand you better, and to see your facial and body expressions.

Address your remarks to the 'good' ear, if hearing is a problem.

- Often, an older person has a greater hearing loss in one ear.

Take an older person with a hearing loss to a quiet corner of a room.

- In a separate smaller room or away from ambient noises, an older person with hearing loss may be able to hear a private discussion more easily. It may be difficult to hear well in a group.

### **Hints for Non-Verbal Communications with Older Persons**

Watch the participant's body language carefully.

- What he or she is saying with posture and facial expressions is often a clue to feelings.

Make sure written information is clear and readable.

- Even with glasses, older persons often need to have the written word in larger and bolder print.

Provide better light for older persons to read by.

- Because the pupils of older persons' eyes become smaller with age, less light enters. Therefore, they need higher wattage bulbs for reading. The use of a magnifier helps older persons read more easily. Intense or high-glare light may cause discomfort.

## Helpful Communication Skills in One-to-One Encounters

- Concentrate on what the other person is saying.  
We often are thinking of either what we're going to say in reply or of something else that is on our mind. As a result, we may not hear what the person is saying.
- Allow the person to finish the sentence that completes the thought.  
It is tempting to interrupt before the person is finished. We can often jump to conclusions (the wrong ones) by so doing.
- Clarify what you heard the person say before responding.  
“What I'm hearing you say is...” “Did you mean that you want to...?”
- Make non-critical responses. Do not take things personally.  
“You have the right to your opinion...” “And others may see that differently....”
- Make sure that all has been said.  
“Is there anything else you need to say?”
- Don't dismiss her/his feelings.  
Something that appears to be a small matter to you might be important to the participant. Memories, even of things that happened long ago, can evoke strong emotions. Be accepting and encouraging. If it becomes overly negative or upsetting to you or to the participant, reframe the discussion or change the subject.
- Avoid being overly familiar.  
Elderly persons were raised in a less casual time. Address someone as Mr. or Mrs., until invited to call them by their first name, or ask permission to do so. Avoid using endearments.
- Respect the speaker's 'space.'  
Each of us has a 'safe' distance that we maintain when talking to other people. Don't crowd the other person's 'safe' space. Some people don't like to be touched physically. Ask permission to take his/her arm or help with a seatbelt, for example.

*Adapted from: The Ohio Department on Aging (Permission granted)*

## Working with Challenging Participants

Our volunteers are usually able to get anxious people to relax or to draw out quiet participants with humor or by taking an interest in what they do. However, some of our participants are in pain, have emotional problems, or are just by nature not socially skillful. Some participants just cannot stop talking about their medical problems. Pain and emotional discomfort have a way of narrowing one's focus.

Sometimes you will meet a participant that you just can't please. She or he may chafe at some of the boundaries and policies that are important for safety and for a satisfactory trip. For example, a participant may resist using the seat belt. In a firm but polite voice, please state that it is policy of ElderNet that participants – and drivers – must wear seatbelts. Set a good example yourself and buckle up, but before or after ask the participant if he or she needs help to get the seat belt around the body. Each car is different, and each participant has a different level of discomfort. It might take some gentle prompting, and asking, "May I do this for you, to make sure the seat belt gets on?" There are no exceptions to the seatbelt rule.

Some participants may only be in a bad mood. Use all of your person -skills to draw the participant away from negativity – you might even just want to discuss the weather. Sometimes asking a difficult participant if he or she is in pain may be enough to show that you understand. At other times you may get a curt answer no matter how hard you try.

*The important thing is that a ride is a shared contract between the volunteer and the participant. You will be pleasant and non-provoking, and, within limits of pain and emotional ability, the participant should be, too.* If the participant is discourteous, try to keep in mind his or her physical and mental status.

Don't let any problems with the participant distract you from driving. If that occurs, try to pull over to the side of the road and explain, again in a clear, calm voice, *that you should both make the best of your time together.* Try to engage the participant in conversation, but if that does not work, silence – pleasant or otherwise, does not hurt.

Rarely, a participant may tell you that he or she must be driven in a particular way (i.e. extra car lengths behind other vehicles, or in a particular lane), or that he or she cannot wear a seatbelt. Anything unusual that a participant tells you to do that was not communicated to you by the Volunteer Coordinator should not be allowed, no matter how much the participant protests that “we always do it this way.”

Remaining calm, firm, and pleasant is the best way to handle a problem with a participant. At the end of the trip, report any problems to the Volunteer Coordinator who will try to resolve any problems or may want to talk to the participant. Do not think that you are being difficult yourself by talking things over with the Volunteer Coordinator. *We want these rides to be a positive experience for you and the participant. Telling ElderNet sooner rather than later can help small problems stay in proportion.*

What if you have a participant who insists on telling you the gory parts of his or her medical treatment? You may pleasantly let the participant know that, although you care about his or her welfare, you need to change the subject. Do not hesitate to tell the participant in a nice way that you have heard enough, and want to redirect the conversation to more general topics. “That must be difficult for you; I’m so glad that you are going to the doctor to have that looked at (taken care of).”

Again, please talk it over with the Volunteer Coordinator. Try not to lose your cool while you are with the participant, but do set limits, politely and firmly. ElderNet’s programs will benefit if you phone the Volunteer Coordinator immediately after an unpleasant experience to talk it over.

## **Problem Solving and Grievance Procedure**

ElderNet takes pride in serving participants promptly and satisfactorily, and in building good relationships with our volunteers.

- If you have questions or concerns about your participant experience or about any aspects of ElderNet, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (610) 525-0706.
- If you are not satisfied with the attempt at resolution, please contact the ElderNet Executive Director at (610) 525-0706.
- If you still are not satisfied with the result or decision you receive from the Executive Director, you may appeal to the sitting ElderNet Board President by letter sent c/o ElderNet, 9 S. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-3406.
- Further appeal may be made to the Administrator of Montgomery County Office of Senior Services at (610) 278-3601 or in writing to MCOSS, P.O. Box 311, Norristown, PA 19404-0311.

ElderNet does not discriminate on the basis of age, race/ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. However, ElderNet reserves the right to evaluate each participant's physical/emotional condition and income level in order to determine eligibility for service.

