



Canadian Red Cross Friendly Calls Program

The Canadian Red Cross **Friendly Calls** program aims to help address heightened feelings of loneliness and isolation that so many are experiencing, before and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program has existed in some provinces including Saskatchewan for years. Elsewhere, in Canada, it was launched as a result of the pandemic, in recognition of the challenges faced by our aging population, and the positive impact the existing Friendly Calls program has on both volunteers and clients.

The Friendly Calls program pairs a trained Red Cross volunteer with an older adult, aged 55 years and older, who is feeling isolated or lonely, who may have limited social and family connections, or feels they could benefit from more social interaction. Having a regular, scheduled time to connect over the phone not only helps address feelings of loneliness and isolation, it also allows the Red Cross volunteer to check in on the well-being of the person with whom they are paired, and connect them with local and available community resources, if needed. People can participate in this free program by signing up themselves; be referred by family members or care providers; or be referred by health care providers or community partners such as social services, religious leaders, or a seniors' club/group. Pre-scheduled phone calls are tailored to meet the needs of the client. It could be a quick two-minute check-in or a longer more social, friendly chat.

Friendly Calls is much more than just a phone call. It is an important connection with a client that builds relationships with them and a Red Cross staff or volunteer. This relationship creates a supportive connection to understand what matters to a person and how their situation may be impacting their health and well-being. This connection can also note how their situation can change over time, thus allowing the opportunity to provide community-based resources needed for seniors to remain independent and resilient.

Should you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Friendly Calls program, visit us at <https://www.redcross.ca/skfriendlycalls> or, call 306-721-1635; email Friendly.VisitingSaskatchewan@redcross.ca.

It's not just about making a phone call. It's about forming connections.