

# Guidelines – Community Care

## Introduction

The concept of a Community Care Committee emerged during CHF BC discussions on aging-in-place (AiP). The idea aligns with the seventh international co-operative principle, "Concern for Community."

While much of the conversation around aging-in-place tends to focus on mobility and accessibility, CHF BC recognizes the importance of extending these areas of focus to care and consideration of all co-op members, regardless of their age. If members require assistance, it is crucial to ensure a non-discriminatory approach to providing the necessary accommodations. However, the responsibility to nurture the well-being of the community within a co-op extends beyond the scope of unit adaptation.

While most co-ops already have a **social committee** dedicated to organizing community gatherings, the idea of a **community care committee** could either function as a sub-committee under it or operate as a separate committee, with the approval of the board. Within these guidelines, we aim to highlight a list of considerations for your co-op to explore.

## Community Care Committee – Options

The Co-op has explored ways to support members and will establish a Community Care Committee. Its scope of work may include the following, which may be included in a formal terms of reference document outlining duties and responsibilities for the Committee:


- Establishing a **volunteer network or registry** to foster a spirit of community support. Whether a member is celebrating the arrival of a new baby, undergoing surgery and in need of recovery assistance, or facing the loss of a family member, having a dedicated committee to connect with those in need and have volunteers ready to offer support is an effective way to cultivate a strong and supportive community. The action items may include organizing meal trains, assisting with household chores such as garbage disposal, dog walking, grocery shopping, or even simple tasks like replacing lightbulbs.
- Researching the possibility of an **accessibility assessment**, which involves evaluating the ease with which individuals can navigate and use various spaces in their units and around the co-ops' amenities. The goal is to identify potential risks and barriers and explore solutions to make recommendations to enhance accessibility: these could relate to vision, movement, sound or cognitive differences. This process can be key to ensuring that environments are inclusive and accommodating for residents with disabilities and for vulnerable residents more generally.

- Being a **resource centre** for trusted information from government, health and medical experts or other reliable sources and for referrals to non-profit organizations, and funding sources for adaptations or community projects.
- Maintaining **up-to-date emergency contact** information for every member. This is a simple task but important. This measure ensures that the co-op can respond swiftly and effectively in emergencies, saving time when it matters most.
- Assisting in planning **activities aimed at particular cohorts** outside of co-op wide events, such as bingo and trivia nights tailored for adults, PG-movie nights, or gaming nights designed to engage teenagers.
- Collaborating [with the membership committee] to establish a **buddy system**, pairing new members with experienced ones during their first year to ensure they feel welcomed by offering general information and introducing them to other co-op members. This system also supports the new member's active participation in co-op events, such as meetings, BBQs, or cleanup days.
- Implementing a **staying-in-touch program** involving regular (e.g., weekly) check-ins, particularly focusing on vulnerable members and those who live alone, to foster connection and support within the community.
- Planning for **emergencies and developing a contingency plan**. This can help ensure that all members can get out safely in case of an emergency when evacuation is needed, defining a muster point, and connecting ahead of time with local community centres and other nearby facilities that can be used to rehouse members.

## Community Care – Options for Individual Member Action

The following list aims to keep members informed about their options. The co-op is not obligated to ensure the implementation of these options, nor does it possess the authority to mandate them for its members. Ultimately, the decision to adopt these practices rests with each individual member.

- **Having a will.** The importance of having a will cannot be overstated, regardless of one's residence or financial position. Without a will, the government determines the distribution of assets in the event of a person's death, potentially deviating from the individual's intended wishes. To maintain control and ensure the desired allocation of assets, it is important for members to establish and periodically review their will, ideally every five years.
- Having a **living will**, a document articulating the member's preferences for medical treatment in situations where they are unable to communicate their wishes. This document is as important as a will.
- Planning ahead by arranging a **power of attorney**. Early action is important, as it may not be feasible once an individual is deemed lacking the "sufficient mental capacity" required for decision-making.

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- For co-op members with **pets**, careful consideration and planning are essential because the co-op bears no legal responsibility for the care of members' pets. Members need to proactively establish a plan for the well-being of their pets in case they won't be able to take care of them anymore.