



Volunteer Training: Communicating with Members

June 2026

Communication Preferences

When a person joins Arlington Neighborhood Village (ANV), we collect information directly from the member as part of the application process, including preferred communication methods and any relevant communication needs or accommodations. We require members to have at least one method by which we can reach them.

This information is documented in the member's record and shared with volunteers in the service confirmation email. The member's preferred contact method (home phone, cell phone, and/or email) is listed in the Member Information section of the confirmation email. It's also important to review the 'Special Instructions', where more detailed information may be listed. Examples include:

- "Member screens unknown callers; volunteers should leave a voicemail with callback number if no answer."
- "Member prefers communicating by text when possible"
- "Member prefers contact on home phone first; cell phone is secondary."
- "Please call member after 12pm"

Of course, a member's preferences and means of communication may change over time. Please let the ANV Office know if you learn of an update to a member's contact information or preferences in the course of providing a service.

When a request is assigned, the ANV Office notifies the member and shares the volunteer's name. If requested by the member, the office will give the last four digits of the volunteer's phone number.

Providing a Service

1. Please contact the member within 24 hours of receiving the assignment.
2. Review the Special Instructions provided in the confirmation email and contact member using his/her preferred method.
3. If there is no answer:
 - a. Leave a voicemail whenever possible.
 - b. Clearly state your name and that you are an ANV volunteer, explain the purpose of your call, and share your callback number.
 - c. If voicemail is unavailable, try again later.
4. Try multiple contact attempts over a couple of days when appropriate.
 - a. Consider trying different times of day and, if possible, more than one communication method
 - b. For time-sensitive requests (appointments, rides, etc.), if you can't reach the member, use your judgment and contact the office sooner if needed.

5. Notify the ANV Office if you are unable to reach the member after several attempts over 2 days. If neither you nor the office can make contact, the service will likely be considered canceled.
6. If the service is assigned on short notice, or too close to the scheduled pick-up time to coordinate with the office, (e.g., you are assigned on a Tuesday afternoon for a Wednesday morning pick up), assume the service is still needed even if you have not confirmed with member, and plan to arrive at the member's home at the scheduled time.
7. For day/time flexible requests, please review any preferred days or times listed in the request description and work with the member to arrange a mutually agreeable schedule.
 - a. Note that our current system requires a placeholder date and time when a request is submitted, even for flexible requests. Please refer to the description of the request for details about the member's preferred timeframe.
8. It is very helpful, though not required, that you make a reminder call the day before the scheduled service. Some members will request it, others may not think of it or need it. During the initial confirmation call, you can ask if the member would like for you to call again when you're on your way.

Unique Cases and Alternate Contacts

ANV members are generally expected to communicate directly with the office and volunteers without relying on a third party to arrange their services. However, ANV may approve communication through a family member, caregiver, or other contact in some situations, such as:

- Language barrier
- Loss of phone access
- Hospitalization or other temporary change that affects a member's ability to communicate

In these situations, ANV may arrange an alternate contact person (family member, building concierge, etc) when possible. Any necessary details will be shared by the office and/or included in the Special Instructions in the confirmation email.

Shadow Emails

Some members have a family member, friend, or other support person who helps manage scheduling. These individuals may be listed as a "shadow email" and copied on service confirmation emails. This is meant to keep the member's contact "in the loop" – volunteers do not need to contact shadow email recipients separately unless instructed to do so.

Challenges and Considerations

ANV's membership includes older adults with a variety of preferences, abilities, access to technology, and personal circumstances that affect how and when they communicate.

Some members may:

- screen unfamiliar phone numbers
- check voicemail, text messages, or email infrequently/inconsistently
- miss calls or messages due to limited phone use or device settings
- experience fatigue or limited energy that affects responsiveness
- have hearing loss that affects their ability to have a phone conversation, or hear their phone ring

- have vision impairment that makes it difficult to see a phone notification or return a call/text
- experience memory-related challenges
- need extra time to see, process, or respond to messages

Our members are people, and communication varies from person to person. Most interactions are straightforward, but occasional flexibility is part of the work. Patience and good judgment go a long way!

Communication Tips

- Always leave your name and callback number in voicemails
- Try contacting members at different times of day if needed.
- Technology challenges can be frustrating for some of our members; patience is appreciated!
- If your phone settings automatically block unknown callers, please make sure the member for whom you are providing a service is saved in your contact list so they can reach you.
- We have many volunteers who are available to offer tech support! Feel free to remind members that they can request tech help by contacting the office. If it was challenging for you to reach a member, it is probably hard for others as well. A tech volunteer might make an important difference in that member's ability to engage with medical providers, friends and family.
- Members may appreciate written reminders, repeated information, or extra confirmation.
- If communication difficulties are preventing you from completing a service, contact the ANV Office for assistance.