

Definition

An unbefriended elder, also called an adult orphan, is an older adult with no identified family or friends to assist in medical decision-making.

Philosophy

Volunteers of America–Minnesota Protective Services balances respect for self-determination with concerns for safety, and honors an older person’s rights, values and lifestyle.

Fees

This project is supported, in part, by a Community Service/Community Services Development grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and a grant from the Stevens Square Foundation. There are no fees for participating in this project. Donations are welcome.

Contact Information

Senior Services

2021 East Hennepin Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55413
612-331-4063

Referral Contact

Mary Bornong, LISW
mbornong@voamn.org
612-617-7815

www.voamn.org

The mission of Volunteers of America –Minnesota is to provide opportunities which will make a significant, lasting impact in the lives of our program participants, and to elicit community support for our program participants.

Unbefriended Elders:

Matching Values with Decisions



Supporting the Rights and Choices of Unbefriended Older Adults at Risk of Incapacity

A Protective Services Program for proactive involvement with older adults prior to incapacity or medical crisis

About this project

Volunteers of America–Minnesota has embarked on a new project to support the rights and choices of unbefriended elders/adult orphans at risk of incapacity. The project, Unbefriended Elders: Matching Values with Decisions, is aimed at proactive involvement with these seniors prior to incapacitation or a medical crisis.

Due to lack of a family member or friend to serve as a surrogate decision-maker, when unbefriended elders/adult orphans experience a medical crisis or develop cognitive impairment and are unable to state their wishes regarding care, they are at risk of:

- Medical treatment that is not consistent with their values and preferences;
- Over or under treatment when admitted to medical or care settings;
- Unnecessary guardianship.

Through this project, Volunteers of America–Minnesota will support adult orphans through intensive work with participants.

Project activities include:

- Locating family members who have lost touch and seek reconnection;
- Facilitating communication between participants and their primary care; physicians/practitioners to ensure medical wishes are known, discussed and documented;
- Working with the participant to identify a surrogate decision-maker when possible;
- Facilitating and distributing completed Health Care Directives to health care and other professionals.

Referral Criteria

- 1) **Lives in Anoka, Hennepin, Ramsey or Washington Counties**
- 2) **Age 65+**
- 3) **No emergency contact/responsible party known**

And

- 4) **One or more of these criteria:**
 - No written Health Care Directive
 - No verbal health care instructions
 - At risk of guardianship



Referral Process

Contact Mary Bornong, LISW with questions or to refer a client: 612-617-7815 or mbornong@voamn.org

