

## SOCIAL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Keeping people connected, healthy & safe during the COVID-19 crisis

HPSM's mission is to ensure that San Mateo County's vulnerable and underserved residents have access to high-quality care, services, and supports so they can live the healthiest lives possible. The COVID-19 crisis has made that mission more urgent than ever.

We know that social isolation and loneliness have increased with sheltering in place. While the negative impacts of loneliness on mental health are well-known, studies show that **too little social connection can be as physically harmful as smoking**.

The same people most susceptible to life-threatening COVID-19 infections are also at high risk for social isolation. Older adults and people with disabling conditions reported higher rates of loneliness than the general population long before COVID-19.

**HPSM has implemented several new initiatives in response to this crisis of loneliness:**

### SOCIAL OUTREACH



Employees throughout HPSM as well as HPSM partner organizations are calling members to check in and provide social support. One of HPSM's partners also organizes **older adult members to call each other**, so that isolated members receive periodic "buddy calls" from their peers.

HPSM designed and printed a series of postcards with space for handwritten personal notes. With the help of San Mateo County, HPSM recruited volunteers to write brief positive messages to members to help lift their spirits.



## HEALTH ASSESSMENT, SCREENING & EDUCATION

Visits to healthcare providers have plummeted with the COVID crisis. Out of concern that people may fail to receive needed medical care, HPSM staff continually evaluates if high risk members need services, whether it is free prescription delivery or a physician visit via phone or video. The pandemic has led to many non-medical needs as well, so HPSM assesses members' holistic needs, for



example, for meals and grocery delivery. HPSM partners with several organizations to reach out to older members and those with disabling conditions to assess health risks, perform COVID risk screening, provide advice about medications, answer health-related questions, and arrange for home-based care.

HPSM is also contacting other high-risk members to provide education, including those with asthma, pregnant women, and new moms. We hope these personal connections help members feel less alone during this challenging time.

“Maria told me she was out of food and toilet paper and scared to leave her apartment. I asked her neighbor and fellow member Jorge to drop off a care package of food and other basic necessities on her doorstep. Maria called me back crying tears out of gratitude.”

— **Community outreach specialist**

### **COVID-19 has reinforced the critical role of safety net health plans like HPSM.**

Throughout HPSM's 30+ year history, we have addressed our community's health care challenges with innovation and creative collaborations. As a local plan, HPSM is uniquely positioned to foster relationships among community-based organizations, the health care system, and people most in need. We provide what members expect from their health plan: access to doctors, hospitals, and medicines.

Providing access to those services is essential – but it is not enough. Now more than ever, people also need human connection and social support. As the situation changes and more data becomes available, HPSM will adapt these initiatives to optimize their effectiveness – and seek new ways to connect with our members.

**If you have any questions about HPSM's COVID-19 social outreach and member engagement initiatives, please email [info@hpsm.org](mailto:info@hpsm.org).**