

Project Reassurance

The Columbus Police and Fire Departments recognize the need for daily telephone calls to isolated and vulnerable residents in our community including seniors and those with disabilities. Many seniors as well as those with disabilities may have health problems that cause them to become homebound. A major loss of support occurs when families move to other areas of the country or are just not able to be involved adequately. Many seniors have outlived family and friends. Many residents that live alone face the danger that a fall, stroke or sudden illness could incapacitate them to the point that they may not be able to seek immediate help. One of the most effective means of reducing isolation, victimization, and health concerns is daily contact through a telephone reassurance call. This telephone call each day could mean the difference between comfort and suffering or in some cases between life and death. This has been a successful program in many cities, saving countless lives, and is now offered to residents who live within the city limits of Columbus as a free community service.

The Columbus Police Department and Fire Department are proud to announce Project Reassurance. Project Reassurance is a program designed for seniors living alone and disabled participants, or anyone else who may require special assistance or care. This program offers the families of senior citizens the reassurance that their loved ones are being checked on daily. The participants that will be involved in the program can feel confident in knowing that the Columbus Police Department will monitor their well-being everyday. Project Reassurance means different things to each participant. For some participants, the program is a chance to talk with someone daily. For others, the program is reassurance in knowing that help is available in the event that the participant does not answer their phone.

Project Reassurance requires the participants to contact the Project Reassurance phone line once everyday between the hours of 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. or 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. 365 days per year. The participant will provide the Police Department with the two hour contact window in which they will be calling in. When the participant calls in, the Dispatcher will verify their well-being and may even share crime prevention tips, weather alerts, and other useful information. The Dispatcher has a list of all of the participants in the program. As each participant calls in, the Dispatcher notes which participants have called on a log sheet. If the participant does not call in within the predetermined time frame, the dispatcher will attempt to call them. If there is a busy signal, the dispatcher will try again. If there is no answer, then the dispatcher will send a police officer or firefighter to the house to check on the participant. The police officer or firefighter will respond non-emergency, meaning they will not have any emergency lights or sirens on.

Upon arrival at the residence, the police officer or firefighter checks the house by looking through the windows, looking for a vehicle (if the participant has one), and speaking with the neighbors to see if they have seen the participant that day. If the police officer or firefighter feels that something may be wrong, a call is placed to a contact party on the individual's contact list. The contact party is asked to come to the house with a key so access can be gained and a further check performed.

In some instances, participants have hide away locations for their keys. This information is logged at the Police Department. Additionally, in some cases, if they live in a multi-family building, there may be a key box available for the official to access their building's keys. Participants may also wish to provide a neighbor with a spare key that can be used to access their residence in the event the police officer or firefighter feels that something may be wrong. Having keys readily available will eliminate the need to use force to gain entry. Property damage would then be kept to a minimum.

The Columbus Police and Fire Departments hope that you will sign up for this program. Project Reassurance will provide you with the sense of security and well-being that you deserve as well as a friendly voice to speak with each day.

To obtain a program enrollment form, please contact the Columbus Police Department at 623-5919 or the Columbus Fire Department at 623-5914. Enrollment forms can also be picked up in person at these departments and at the Columbus Senior Center. We look forward to serving you!