

# Bridging the Gaps



## Supporting Older Adults Through Healthy Aging and Independent Living

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Community Preceptor: *Sara Popkin, MSW, LSW, UUH Outreach*

### UUH OUTREACH

UUH Outreach provides individualized quality professional care that is responsive to the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of older adults in the Northwest Philadelphia community. UUH Outreach provides a wide range of services such as social work support, health promotion, and access to community funds to help older adults make ends meet. Additionally, the staff nurse assists clients via health consultations to help them better understand their care plans and ensure healthy living. UUH Outreach partners with multiple community agencies to ensure that older adults in Northwest Philadelphia have access to as many resources as possible.

### CONTEXT

The Northwest Philadelphia UUH Outreach clients are primarily people of color, low-income older adults who have been living in the area for decades, if not their whole lives. Many clients qualify for a number of state-assistance programs that can be overwhelming to manage for an individual.

Pictured is Intern Nina picking up produce vouchers on behalf of two clients. These vouchers are available every summer and provide \$50 worth of state-grown produce to low-income PA residents that are 60+ years old.



### TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The primary roles for the 2023 intern were assisting clients with decluttering of their homes, assessing community needs, referring clients to UUH staff who can assist them with their needs, preparing and delivering a presentation for the community on oral health, and increasing food access through the delivery of meals and helping clients sign up for fresh produce vouchers. The intern was involved in at-home client visits, making phone calls to clients, and compiling client resources. Additionally, the intern engaged with and learned about a variety of programs and funds accessible to older adults in Northwest Philly, such as Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's emergency fund, multiple heat-relief programs providing AC units to Philadelphians, Center in the Park and its associated programs, and more.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS/CHALLENGES/JOYS

#### Challenges:

##### Barriers to resources

- Digitizing the bureaucratic process creates obstacles for elders trying to access city or state services who are unfamiliar with computers or smartphones.
- Many elders are bound to their homes due to health issues or no longer being able to drive, increasing the difficulty in accessing not just government services, but also community resources, healthcare, food, and more.

##### Poverty

- Several clients struggled significantly with their financials, which put pressure on their living conditions, physical health, and mental health.

##### Accumulation

- Issues such as recent downsizing, physical disability, and mental health struggles lead to several clients needing assistance in decreasing the amount of clutter in their homes. This is particularly important in a population where fall risk is a major concern.

##### Accomplishments

- Organized and decluttered clients' homes to make the space more usable for them.
- Led oral-health myths vs facts workshop for Maple Village community members.
- Connected elders to fresh produce vouchers and heat relief programs.

##### Joys

- Learning about a multitude of local programs and organizations that work to support the inhabitants of Northwest Philadelphia.
- Getting to know UUH clients and their experiences.

### REFLECTION

UUH Outreach's staff and their commitment to the betterment of their client's lives was inspiring, and I was grateful to be able to assist these wonderful people in helping our elder community members. UUH Outreach gave me a better understanding of the world of social work, especially in-field social work, which I had had little experience with prior to the program. Every day I was blown away at how many people throughout Philadelphia were devoted to improving the lives of others. Each one of the agencies I worked with are now resources I can provide to future clients or patients. Additionally, I further developed my skills in interacting with clients which in turn boosted my confidence. My experience at UUH Outreach has no doubt played a pivotal role in my development as a physician.