

CONTACT
Jennie Smith-Peers
Jsmith-peers@iona.org
(202) 895-9418



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IONA SENIOR SERVICES LAUNCHES SOCIAL SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM FOR OLDER ADULTS

Washington, DC—In an effort to enhance the quality of life for isolated older DC residents and provide employment opportunities for older adults, Iona Senior Services is launching the In-Home Peer Support Program in collaboration with the DC Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL). A citywide pilot begins August 5.

This unique initiative employs part-time Peer Support Workers aged 50 and older to provide in-home conversation and social interaction to older adults aged 60 and above who are isolated and lack social support. Peer Support Workers can also help with small tasks such as going grocery shopping and offering technology assistance.

“The In-Home Peer Support Program provides dual benefits to older adults in DC by offering much-needed socialization opportunities as well as part-time employment to older neighbors with a passion for civic engagement and community service,” says Joon Bang, Iona CEO. “This pilot program will allow us to reach many older adults across the District who may have disabilities, mobility challenges, or who simply lack a strong support network. With more older adults in need of supplemental income due to the rise in cost of living, we see this as an important opportunity to meet the needs of DC’s aging community.”

Older adults who request this free program are matched with Peer Support Workers based on their interests, needs, and desired visitation schedule. Peer Support Workers receive training and weekly supervision from the program’s manager and social worker and can engage in additional professional development opportunities such as taking classes and exploring workforce development goals.

"Social isolation has always posed a significant risk to the mental and physical health of older adults, and the ongoing pandemic has only exacerbated this problem," says Gabrielle Boccher, Iona Coordinator for the In-Home Peer Support Program. "We are thrilled to partner with DACL to provide an innovative solution that not only supports isolated older adults but also furnishes ongoing learning and employment opportunities for DC seniors who want to help their older neighbors in need."

For more information about the In-Home Peer Support Program, to learn how to request program services, or to apply to become a Peer Support Worker, please contact Gabrielle Boccher at gboccher@iona.org or (202) 240-8631.

ABOUT IONA

Iona Senior Services is a nonprofit in the District of Columbia that helps more than 4,500 older adults and caregivers each year as they experience the challenges and opportunities of aging. Iona educates, advocates, and provides community-based services to help people age well and live well. For more information, visit www.iona.org.

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