



ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH ELDERS

It is important to respect elders' rights to health and dignity, and recognise their physical and psychological needs, and their family and community responsibilities.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Always be friendly, willing to listen and respectful. Treat elders with dignity
2. Seek informed consent before consultations or information gathering
3. Include both older women and men when planning activities
4. Although elders are mature and can make their own decisions, be aware that they may also need some guidance and assistance, especially when they have an illness or disability
5. Recognise that elders' time is valuable. Ensure appropriate appreciation (a payment or gift) for elders' time when they contribute to the program
6. Try to reach those who may not be able to travel to meetings because of poor mobility
7. Get permission before filming or taking photographs of elders to use online, in teaching materials or reports

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Choose a venue that is accessible for elders with a disability, such as poor vision or arthritis
2. Ensure that elders are physically comfortable. Provide chairs or clean mats, cushions and blankets
3. Avoid making elders sit for a long time. Schedule regular breaks so that elders can move around or visit the toilet if needed
4. Ensure that there are sufficient and accessible toilets. Inform elders where toilets are located
5. Provide healthy refreshments or meals during meetings. Avoid foods that are high in salt or fats
6. Invite young people to assist those with limited mobility or low vision
7. Arrange childcare so that elders can still participate if they need to bring their grandchildren
8. Remind elders to bring necessary medicines. If possible, arrange to bring a doctor to assist in case of sickness
9. Warn elders of any hazards such as rough seas, busy roads, slippery paths or steep stairs
10. Communicate with the family members of elders to inform them about program activities and the aims of the program



These Guidelines were written by Ms Jennifer Joseph (previously of PALM Foundation) and Ms Chandima Abeywickrema (PALM Foundation), and edited by Kelly Durrant (Burnet Institute) and Rachel Coghlan (The Fred Hollows Foundation).

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