

Though National Social Work Month is nearly over, our experienced Social Workers, and Senior Community Services as a whole, never stop looking for ways to **break barriers** on many levels.

**We all age. It's the one experience every one of us has in common.**

Continuing to raise awareness of the barriers described below and working with our advocates, partners, and communities to address them, will serve us all in the future.



### Those we serve

Those helping a loved one with household chores, shopping, and transportation, often don't identify as caregivers because they're not providing personal care. Because of this, they may not be aware of caregiver support services. And for many older adults it can be difficult to admit that they're struggling or to accept help that's offered. To break through these barriers, each person is guided toward identifying unrecognized personal strengths, assessing areas of daily life where support may be helpful, and choosing the combination of resources that meets their unique needs, values, and circumstances.



### Access to resources

The word “community” in our name is a working adjective. Each year, our Social Workers help people connect with more than **270 outside resources**, tapping into formal and informal service networks. With help from a Social Worker, those we serve become empowered to:

- Identify reliable, affordable programs and services
- Better understand systems and application procedures
- Communicate with family members and service providers
- Problem solve
- Plan for the future
- Maintain balance in their lives

Within Senior Community Services, referrals also flow easily between programs. Genevieve cares for her husband who has dementia. She was referred to one of our Caregiver Support Groups by the director of her Senior Center and began attending. In addition to connecting with other caregivers, she learned that our Household & Outdoor Maintenance (HOME) program could offer free technology support to have virtual visits with her doctor, find a volunteer to help with lawn care, and schedule a handyperson for minor home repairs. Taking advantage of HOME services allowed Genevieve more time to care for herself while continuing to care for her husband.

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## Funding

Though funding challenges still exist, SCS is grateful for the strong partnerships we have with all levels of government, and funding provided by them, to support our programs:

- Cities in our service area provide funding and office space for our Social Workers
- Hennepin County makes case management and supportive counseling available to all of its older residents
- The State administers *Live Well at Home* and *Dementia Friendly* grants
- Area Agencies on Aging administer grants using funds available through the *Older Americans Act (Title III)*

### **Adequate funding poses a perennial barrier, often in inverse proportion to the need.**

The dramatic growth of the older adult population is matched by increasing labor shortages and rising costs for in-home help, putting ever more pressure on family, friends, and neighbor caregivers. For elders to remain independent as long as possible, it is critical that community support options (family and paid caregivers, more affordable community-based housing options, non-medical support services) be adequately funded to be sustainable.



## Health care organizations

Long-standing barriers between community-based social services and health care organizations are gradually being addressed. Recently, Minnesota health plans Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, HealthPartners, Medica, and UCare signed contracts with us to provide our award-winning Family Caregiver Coaching and Counseling services to the families of their members eligible for the **Elderly Waiver** program – a first in the State. This is a win-win for both, allowing health plans to focus on their members while we focus on members' families.



## Geographic distance

Our award-winning [CareNextion.org](https://www.carenextion.org) care team tool breaks the barrier of geographic distance. Whether enlisting the help of brother Stan across town or sharing information about Mom with sister Mary in North Dakota, CareNextion provides a single platform to build caring connections, share information, and manage necessary tasks.



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