

A Day with the Golden Gate Center Team



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At 350 Golden Gate Avenue in the heart of the Tenderloin neighborhood, the team arrives at 8:30 every morning to provide care and support for dozens of frail elders and adults with disabilities. The people they serve all have serious health conditions that threaten their ability to live independently. The clients are at great risk from the corona virus and have been sheltering in place for over six months. They had all attended the Golden Gate Center to receive adult day health care and socialize until in-Center services were suspended in March. Most had attended for many months or years. Now, with their care centers closed and isolated in their homes, they are at serious risk for illness. The team of clinicians that cared for them at the Center knows this and is striving to provide care during the pandemic in every way possible. This is how they did so on a typical day in October.

George Wu, the team's registered nurse usually arrives early. George has worked at Golden Gate for years and knows the health conditions of participants well. Most

days begin following up on urgent or worrisome health issues from the previous day, calling clients, their caregivers and other health providers. As the day proceeds, George speaks with many clients, providing health care checks and helping them address ongoing issues.

"I know which clients need close monitoring for issues like blood pressure, glucose levels, medication management, etc. Every week some will have urgent concerns that I need to follow-up with their caregiver or primary physician. About half of our clients have cognitive issues, so often I am coordinating with their health care team, not just with the participant."



By 8:30, the entire team is at the Center, each organizing services for participants based on their own expertise but coordinating closely with each other and working as a team. Sara Choi, the team's social worker, has calls with client or caregivers scheduled throughout the day. *"I often am working with a client's caregiver to address issues and they have specific times when they are available to talk. For example, in-home care workers will only be there at specific times or family members may need to speak outside their work hours. I need to schedule times that work best for them."*

Sara's work as the Social Worker is to help clients address issues that can range from helping them with mail they do not understand to needing a place to live. Often clients mail Sara letters that they cannot read or do not understand so she can translate and explain them. On a regular basis, extremely urgent needs require her help, such as a client losing their temporary housing and on the brink of being forced into a group shelter. Every day she provides information to participants and advocates for them to get their needs met.

Roy Yang is the team's Activity Coordinator who, when the Centers were open, organized group activities in the day room. Now he is confronted with these same participants confined in their homes for months, suffering from loneliness and boredom. *"Clients are very lonely and need something challenging in their daily lives. I create games every day, usually picture or word searches, in Chinese, based on Chinese cultural themes, and mail them to clients. It gives them something new to do every day and reminds them of activities we did together at the Center."*

Roy mails activity packets to every client every day, all of them adjusted for each participant's capacity and primary language. (Most Center staff speak languages besides English including Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Tagalog.)

Roy has begun organizing small group phone calls using Skype, so participants can connect again with their old friends from the Center. He hopes to do the same using ZOOM in the near future. *"Our clients are very lonely and want to talk. We are doing whatever we can to make their lives more fulfilling."*

Using ZOOM for physical and



occupational therapy is already underway at the Center. Physical Therapist, Elaine Dong, and Occupational Therapist, Linda Hennessey, work alternate days and both are just beginning to use ZOOM for therapy classes. *"Most of the time I interact with clients or their caregivers by phone to do wellness checks and*

evaluations. But ZOOM allows me not only to see them, but to show them how to do specific exercises" says PT Elaine Dong.

OT Linda Hennessey adds, *"Working from the notes of the entire team and then exploring with the participants why a new health issue has occurred helps to determine how it might be addressed. For example, a participant's increase in falling might be the result of change in vision rather than physical weakness. Difficulty eating might relate to tremors and needing appropriate feeding utensils. These are problems I can help address through training or by providing new equipment or other aids for activities of daily living."*

At 2:30 every day, the entire team gathers for a group huddle to discuss both specific clients and general issues. This allows each clinician to bring to the group's attention concerns around a specific client and get counsel and support. *"None of us are functioning alone. It's a team effort every day to meet the needs of participants, whatever they may be,"* says Nurse George Wu.

Throughout most days participants come to the Center to pick up bags of food, masks and other supplies. Food is purchased from the SF Food Bank on Tuesday and clients that prefer to pick it up are called. Individual bags are assembled by Program Aides Feng Chan Jian and Mei Hua Xie under the instruction of nurse Wu, making sure the items are appropriate for each client. For clients that need supplies but do not want to come to the Center, staff will deliver it to them. *"I always send two staff to make a home delivery and usually I am one of them,"* say Program Director Martina Leader. Deliveries are sometimes combined with "doorstep visits" that allow clinicians to visually evaluate a participant and occasionally provide instruction for home therapies.



By 4:30 all the calls are made, mailings done, Zoom classes over and deliveries complete. All the client records have been updated for the entire team to review in the morning, when they arrive concerned about Mrs. W. or Mr. C. Whatever can be done, using old tools or developing entirely new ones, will be done to meet their

needs and help them maintain their health.



"Our participants are scared. I am scared too; it is a terrible pandemic. However, I am fortunate to be part of great team here at the Center. I recall the old expression, 'If you want to go fast go alone; if you want to go far, go as a group'. This team is doing everything we can to get our participants through this pandemic." Sara Choi, Social Worker at Golden Gate Center.

Golden Gate Center staff: Martina Leader-Program Director, Sara Choi-Social Worker, Rui Yang-Assistant Social Worker, George Wu-Registered Nurse, Emma Vonrydingsvard-Licensed Vocational Nurse, Roy Yang-Activities Coordinator, Maryann Lesigues-Billing Specialist, Linda Hennessey-Occupational Therapist, Elaine Dong-Physical Therapist, Feng Chan Jian and Mei Hua Xie-Program Aides

Photos: (Masthead) Roy Yang, Activities Coordinator, and Feng Chan Jian, Program Aide, delivering preparedness bags and supplies to clients.

(Top) Registered Nurse George Wu making calls to clients.

(Middle 1) Sara Choi, Social Worker, reviewing clients' letters and art work.

(Middle 2) Elaine Dong, Physical Therapist, evaluating a client in his home for a new cane.

(Bottom) Linda Hennessey, Occupational Therapist, leading ZOOM class.

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