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## SAGE CHAPTER OPERATING MANUAL

Welcome to SAGE! We are so happy to have you as part of our family. By starting a SAGE chapter at your university, you are joining a national network of like-minded peers dedicated to fostering intergenerational friendship and connection.

Starting a chapter can be challenging, especially if you don't have experience creating a student group. That is why we have put together this guide with some helpful advice and tips to get you started.

Should you need any additional help, please do not hesitate to reach out directly to the Executive directors Rowaida Hussein ([rowaida.hussein@sageproject.ca](mailto:rowaida.hussein@sageproject.ca)) and Vanessa Rezai-Stevens ([vanessa.rezai-stevens@sageproject.ca](mailto:vanessa.rezai-stevens@sageproject.ca)).

Best of luck and have a great year!



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### **Our Story**

Our group came together during the COVID-19 pandemic to reach out to the seniors living in our long-term care homes. Realizing the devastating effects of social isolation on older adults, we were spurred to act. In lieu of in-person visits, we facilitated over 300 hours of “Companion Calls” -- virtual, one-one-one visits between seniors and student volunteers across 4 Toronto care homes during the pandemic. We creatively developed other projects—pen pal initiatives, gardening events, jazz concerts—to connect our seniors to their local community. Now, beyond the pandemic, we hope to expand our work and bring SAGE to universities across Canada. Emphasizing that SAGE stands for Student Association for Geriatric Empowerment allows us to highlight our focus on wanting to increase young people’s involvement in a cause that is often overlooked.

People often feel powerless in the face of systemic issues; and while large-scale changes are still needed to make a difference, we should not underestimate the strength of collective action. We believe the sage plant, representing health and wisdom, embodies the ideals of our group. Together, we plant the seeds of intergenerational friendship.

### **Our Mission**

To support seniors in our local communities through intergenerational initiatives.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement**

As an organization, we welcome everyone to participate in our projects. We strive to be inclusive in both our language and our actions. We do not stand for discrimination of any kind based on age, race, gender, ability, or sexuality, and are working to be active in the education and dismantling of systems that enable such disenfranchisement. We aim to be as transparent as we can in our actions and our leadership. If you notice something we do that does not align with our mission, please reach out and let us know your suggestions.



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## How to start a SAGE chapter at your school

### 1. Find students who are motivated and interested in starting a SAGE chapter with you.

Nothing can be done alone! Reach out to friends and peers at your school who are interested in helping you start and run a SAGE chapter.

Some useful avenues to recruit students include:

- University departmental newsletters
- Student Facebook groups
- Campus Clubs Fairs
- Social media posting
- Physical posters near lecture halls and libraries
- Making announcements in lecture halls before/after class (get permission from the lecturer first!)
- Get creative! What events/organizations at your school might be interested in your message? Reach out to them for members.

In your recruitment advertisement, you should include some basic information about SAGE and the roles you are recruiting for, as well as a link to email you for more information or a Google form for the application.

### 2. Apply for official student group recognition from your university.

To become a university chapter of SAGE, your group **must** have official student group recognition from your university. This process is different depending on the institution, so be sure to check your university's website for more details.

Additionally, the President of the university chapter must be a registered member of SAGE. They will be the contact person with the national office and serve on the National Chapter Leads Committee, which meets four times annually (August, November, February, and May).

### 3. Organize your team: Recruit executive & general members.

There are two classes of membership in SAGE university chapters, Executive members and General members. Executive members oversee organizing SAGE events on



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campus while general members regularly attend events, sometimes volunteer with event running, and can participate in weekly Companion Calls with seniors. Typically, a SAGE chapter will include 20+ general members and 7-10 executive members as follows:

Executive Role	# of Students	Description of Responsibilities
(Co)President(s)	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calling for meetings</li> <li>• Organizing other exec members</li> <li>• Communicating with National SAGE office</li> </ul>
Volunteer Coordinator	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit general members for Companion Calls</li> <li>• Organize Companion Callers and conduct follow-up surveys</li> </ul>
Communications Director	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching out to care homes and seniors' organizations</li> <li>• Organizing collaborations with other student groups</li> </ul>
Social Media Director	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise campus events online</li> <li>• Creating graphics for social media and posters</li> <li>• Growing and maintaining your chapter's social media presence</li> </ul>
Events Director(s)	1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan on-campus events.</li> <li>• Organize venue booking, catering, and supplies, etc. for events</li> </ul>
Education & Advocacy Director(s)	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research for news articles, scientific papers,</li> <li>• Writing reports &amp; infographics</li> <li>• Following up with policies in LTC</li> <li>• Contacting MPs</li> </ul>
Treasurer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for fundings and grants</li> <li>• Organize budgets for events with Events Director(s)</li> <li>• Coordinate reimbursements</li> </ul>



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The executive team should collectively establish a regular meeting schedule (e.g. every two weeks) to plan events and organize Companion Calls.

These positions are fixed for a single academic year. Your team can decide internally how roles change over the years. For example, a good idea might be to host a general election that includes General and Executive members at the end of the academic year to decide executive members for the next year.

**4. Have your first official executive meeting before mid-October to create a roadmap of your goals and events for the academic year.**

This meeting is crucial to prepare for the November SAGE National Chapter Lead Committee meeting where the President of your chapter will share the team's general plan for the year and network with other chapter Presidents.

**5. Recruit General Members as Companion Callers.**

- a. Companion Callers will form intergenerational connections with seniors by meeting with them virtually weekly. University student volunteers can be recruited through social media (post in volunteer FB groups, SAGE social media post), university newsletters, lecture announcements, etc. Be sure to highlight in recruiting materials that students who volunteer will be eligible for CCR credit with the university.
- b. Volunteer coordinator to meet with CompanionLink secretary Emily to get volunteers set up for calls. Volunteers will be required to complete CompanionLink's training for companion calls and submit documentation (Police checks, volunteer intake forms, etc.). In some cases, volunteers may be required to complete orientation and/or additional intake with senior care homes.
- c. The target # of companion callers may depend on the availability of volunteer positions set out by CompanionLink. SAGE chapters are encouraged to reach out to senior care homes in their community to promote the program. See page 9 for an email template when reaching out to potential sites for companion call.

**6. Begin planning and running projects:**

Here are some examples of projects that your SAGE chapter can run!

**Community Care**

- Community care is an initiative aimed at supporting both seniors and those caring for seniors in our communities. Your chapter can partner with local businesses to



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donate items to care staff, including baked goods, coffee, self-care products, and more. Donations intended for seniors can include care packages with art supplies, books & other items that promote hobbies that enhance health, wellness and social engagement.

- Here are some examples of deliveries SAGE has facilitated in the past to senior care homes and seniors:



*COPS Donuts delivery to Maynard Nursing Home in Toronto, ON*



*CLIFF Bar donation to staff at the Rejai Centre in Toronto, ON*



*Care Package for seniors – Delivery to St George Care Community*

## **Bloom Together**

Bloom Together was a summer project aimed at providing gardening supplies to seniors living in care to promote outdoor activity and social engagement. With the help of a \$1500 grant from Rising Youth, SAGE was able to donate a number of gardening supplies to Markhaven Home for Seniors and The O'Neill Centre.



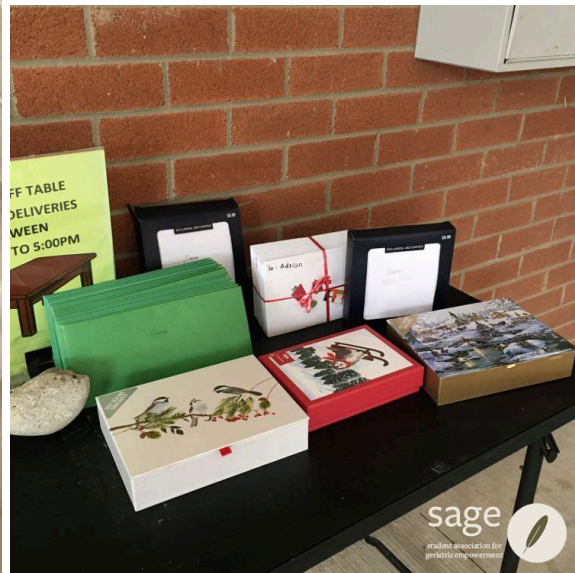
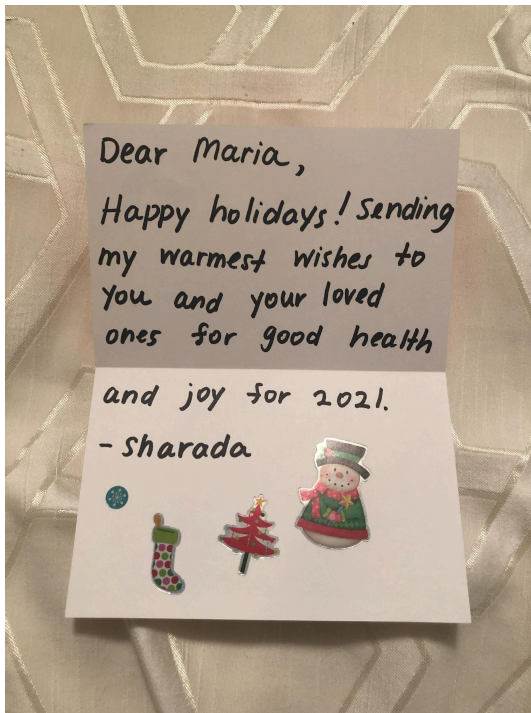


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*Bloom Together delivery at Markhaven Home for Seniors and the O'Neill Centre*

### Pen Pals & Holiday Cheer

- SAGE can partner with senior care homes to recruit seniors who are interested in becoming a Pen Pal. Virtual or in-person letter writing events can be held to bring SAGE volunteers and general members together in a space where they can create their letter to their new friend. Letter content can include new hobbies, recipes, music, pictures of pets, and other positive topics that someone would like to share. These pen pal friendships can continue to thrive through letter writing or transition to in-person connections or Companion Calls!
- Holiday Cheer is an initiative that aims to provide heartfelt handwritten holiday and New Year messages to seniors living in care. Receiving a warm message during the holiday season can make all the difference in someone's day!



Holiday card delivery to Allendale Long-Term Care facility in Milton, ON

### Messages of Gratitude

- 88 handwritten messages of gratitude thanking nursing staff at the O'Neill Centre for the incredible work that they do caring for seniors. For this initiative, SAGE



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collaborated with an established UofT student group to have their members write these cards!

- Messages of gratitude can also be delivered using a large banner that can be displayed in a care home! SAGE hosted an event where students on campus could add their message of gratitude to a large banner around the holiday season. Hot cocoa and candy canes were provided at this event at Sidney Smith Hall on UofT St. George Campus!



## Wellness events

SAGE chapters are not restricted to the projects listed above. Facilitating programs is an opportunity to get creative and foster unique experiences for seniors. SAGE chapters can host wellness events from arts & crafts, high tea sessions in care homes, concerts, and plenty more!

## Community of Practice

Community of Practice is an event where Companion Callers, SAGE executives, seniors & others interested can share their experiences on forming intergenerational connections and participating in Companion Calls. This event can be held virtually or in-person. In the past, Companion Callers shared positive memories of their chats and their thoughts on the program. Expert speakers can be invited to present at these events to raise awareness on best practices for befriending older adults.

7. **Once projects are planned, you can now start reaching out to local senior care homes for projects**



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- a. First, contact the senior care home that you're interested in partnering with by phone and introduce yourself as a university student part of SAGE. The first point of contact is most often the home's receptionist. Kindly ask them for the best method to contact the home's Program or Recreation Manager (either by email or phone). The receptionist may transfer you to the Program Manager, where you can ask if they're available for a quick chat over the phone or if they preferred to be emailed.
- b. Email template for contacting a senior care home (feel free to create your own template and make changes unique to your SAGE chapter).**

Dear (name of Program Manager),

My name is (first name) and I am the Communications Director for the Student Association for Geriatric Empowerment (SAGE) at the (name of your university/college). SAGE was established in June 2020 in response to the pandemic as we saw alarming rates of caregiver burnout and social isolation among seniors. Members of SAGE were eager to improve the social and mental wellbeing of healthcare workers and seniors living in assisted care homes. Fast forward to today, SAGE is now a non-profit organization with the mission to foster intergenerational relationships and prevent social isolation among seniors through various programs. Our SAGE university chapter works under the national SAGE project, which is affiliated with CompanionLink.

We have student volunteers who are eager to connect with and support the seniors at your home. It would be great to chat further about potential programs that we can bring to your care home. Please let me know your availability in the next few weeks and we can arrange a zoom meeting to further discuss this opportunity.

You can learn more about SAGE at our website [www.sageproject.ca](http://www.sageproject.ca) and on our social media pages below:

Instagram:

Facebook:

Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting you!

Kind regards,

(Add your email signature here)



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## 8. Obtain funding for your events.

The national SAGE team will assist your group in funding your events. As a first step, however, investigate and identify funding resources available at your specific school. Many schools have community service grants available for student groups. For example, grants like the [Hart House Good Ideas Fund](#) at U of T can be used to fund guest speakers, catering, and other event expenses. Should you be unable to identify funding independently, reach out to the SAGE Executive Directors Rowaida and Vanessa and we will discuss options.



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## **Expectations for Chapter Presidents**

The National SAGE Chapter Lead Committee will meet four times annually. This committee is chaired by Rowaida Hussein and Vanessa Rezai-Stevens.

### **Goals of the National SAGE Chapter Lead Committee:**

- Check in with student chapters and provide them with guidance and resources.
- Ensures that student chapters have representation on the national board.
- Allows student leaders to network and collaborate with peers across the country.

### **Meetings Schedule and Agendas:**

1. Summer (end of August): New/returning Chapter Heads orientation.
2. Fall (early November): Share your chapter's plans for the academic year and address any questions/concerns.
3. Winter (mid-February): Checking in/progress update; reflect on first semester & outline goals for second semester.
4. Spring (early May): Reflect on the year's progress and transition of power for the next academic year.



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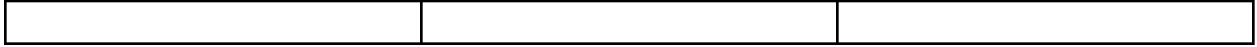
### **Social Media & SAGE National Website & Branding**

Each SAGE Chapter can have an Instagram page to promote their club and showcase their events and projects. Please use the following naming convention for all social media accounts: @sage\_universityname (e.g. sage\_uottawa, sage\_utsg).

Visit @sage.project to view examples of posts (i.e. volunteer spotlights, executive team bios, events, education/advocacy pieces, etc.).

Additionally, please utilize the style guide for colour and font consistency when using SAGE logos.

Pictures policy: do NOT take pictures of senior participants in events. Obtain consent from students/staff participants prior to posting. Without express consent, please blur the face/identifying features of an individual.



## CompanionLink

CompanionLink is a Canadian charity that promotes the social and emotional wellness of seniors by offering virtual one-on-one friendships, direct-impact programming, and mentorship opportunities with compassionate, well-trained volunteers. Like SAGE, they aim to alleviate isolation and loneliness, foster intergenerational learning, and celebrate the value seniors bring to our world. CompanionLink and SAGE work together through Companion Calls. All of SAGE's Companion Callers across the country become CompanionLink volunteers.

CompanionLink Website: <https://www.companionlink.org>



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## Conduct Expectations and Policies

### Privacy & Confidentiality

SAGE is committed to protecting the privacy of all its members and safeguarding the confidential information of all individuals. Students in SAGE chapters may have access to confidential/personal information during events with elderly individuals. This includes but is not limited to information like full legal name, date of birth, contact information, health information, family members' names and contact information, financial information, government identification, etc. Students are expected to always maintain proper confidentiality and refrain from sharing or recording personal confidential information.

### Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying and Abuse

The Ontario Human Rights Code defines discrimination as “a type of behaviour that excludes individuals or is the unjust treatment of individuals because they are a member of a certain enumerated group”.

Harassment is a form of discrimination that includes vexatious conduct and/or unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates an individual. Some examples include:

- Threats, intimidation, mental or verbal abuse
- Unwanted remarks, jokes, slurs
- Mocking someone's physical appearance or their clothing
- Making rude or offensive comments
- Any type of comment or behaviour that may ridicule, humiliate, or offend a person

Bullying is defined as any behaviour including personal attacks, verbal aggression, unwanted criticism, intimidation, negative body language, and social isolation that is targeted and typically ongoing against an individual.

SAGE has a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, or bullying of any kind, for example, based on race, ancestry, place of origin, religion, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, family status or disability.

In any situation where you suspect that harassment, discrimination, or bullying is happening, report to the supervisor immediately.



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### **Abuse Policy and Procedure**

SAGE has a zero-tolerance policy for abuse and neglect of its members/clients. Members who abuse or neglect an individual they are conversing with will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination of membership.

### **Fraud and Theft**

Fraud is the act or intent of manipulating, cheating, stealing, deceiving, or lying for personal benefit. Theft is taking another person's property/belongings without that person's permission or consent. SAGE has a zero-tolerance policy for both fraud or theft.

How to avoid fraud or theft situations:

1. Never accept a gift (money or items) from an elderly individual at SAGE events.
2. Never discuss or record personal finances with elderly individuals at SAGE events.

### **Consent**

The consent of an individual to participate in all SAGE programs and events is required. Individual must be capable of giving consent; if individual is not capable of giving consent, identify their "**substitute decision maker**". Additionally, at any point, the individual has the right to withdraw their consent.

An individual must be aware of the program's scope to make informed consent. For example: is research being conducted? Is their private information being shared or collected? Etc.

### **What to report to your supervisor**

- Allegations of abuse and/or neglect
- Signs of abuse or neglect
- Health concerns brought up by the individual
- Any incidents of harassment, abuse, discrimination etc.
- If the individual or resident was emotionally unwell (upset, frustrated, anxious etc.)
- If you were harmed (emotionally, verbally etc.) during the event