

Upper Valley Needs Assessment for Operation Red File Project

Operation Red File is a folder that can be placed on the refrigerator that holds pertinent medical information and medications list. It will primarily be used by older adults and paramedics that visit their homes in emergency situations.

Through the month of September 2017, more than 50 seniors were interviewed in the senior centers of Ashton, Rexburg and St. Anthony, Idaho. Those surveyed represent the target population for Operation Red File project.

While interviewing a group of five senior women in Ashton, all five of them stated that they live alone. One woman stated that paramedics have come to her home multiple times. The Red File could save time and prevent stress in case of an emergency. Since the Red File contains information that family members may not know, it could be a helpful tool in time of panic when it is easy to forget important details. Having access to the Red File can improve quality of care given by a paramedic. An up-to-date medications or allergies list can prevent harmful drug reactions. The medical information page of the Red File provides a place for allergies and any other special health considerations. Most seniors interviewed did not have a current medications list, and the few seniors who expressed they have a list do not keep it in an accessible or commonly known location. One woman interviewed said, "I do not currently take any medications. For me, I would want a place to list any medication allergies."

When a group of seniors was asked what key categories would be important in a medical emergency file, the most common responses were: emergency contacts or next of kin, a place for a living will, power of attorney, pharmacy, and religious preference. Of those five categories, four of them are already included in the file. One senior said that when she lived in California they had a program similar to Operation Red File and had much success with it. In her experience, the folder was frequently lost in transition after a visit or extended stay at the hospital. She suggested training medical admitting staff on the use and purpose of the file as well as paramedics.

The concept of preparing pertinent medical information in case of medical emergency in the home isn't unique, but Operation Red File is still beneficial as an effective tool for the senior community, offering a way for senior and others to be prepared. The Eastern Idaho Area Agency on Aging is proud to implement this type of project to the community. The Red File was first introduced to Bonneville county in May of 2017, and has been well received. The first wave of 5,000 files went quicker than expected, and a second installment is being prepared. Just 30 minutes north in the Upper Valley area, seniors unanimously agreed that a file, such as this, would be something they would want to have as a helpful resource in time of need.