

DC Grandparents for Mental Health

**It takes a village.
We are the village.**

How does Friendship Bench DC work?

Led by DC Grandparents for Mental Health—a group of older, primarily Black volunteers who originally came together during COVID-19—Friendship Bench DC is supported by HelpAge USA, a nonprofit which promotes older people's well-being and self-advocacy, in partnership with the Black Coalition for Health and The Rodham Institute.

Friendship Bench DC volunteers will participate in training by mental health professionals to learn how to listen, express empathy, and refer people to higher levels of care if needed. Building on the success of the Friendship Bench in Zimbabwe and other programs that train non-mental health professionals, Friendship Benches are placed in safe community spaces and staffed by older volunteers trained to offer emotional support or simply a listening ear.

People of all ages, from younger to older, will be able to turn to the Friendship Bench to tell their story. Through Friendship Bench DC, older people can give others a sense of connection while personally finding purpose and fulfillment.



DC Grandparents for Mental Health is a movement by adults 60+ years of age in Washington, DC, united in promoting mental health through peer-to-peer and intergenerational conversations and interventions. Learn more about DC Grandparents for Mental Health, a program of HelpAge USA, and how you can be part of the solution.

There is a mental health crisis in our communities. Determined to stop the secrecy and stigma around mental health and help others feel less alone, DC Grandparents for Mental Health is about making sure that people of all ages can get the support they need.

Recognizing the lack of resources and other barriers to mental health care, the older people behind DC Grandparents for Mental Health are working to fill some of these gaps with intergenerational activities and a new pilot initiative called Friendship Bench DC, which provides a way for people of all ages to confidentially share their story with an older person and know they will receive empathy, understanding, and respect.



GRANDPARENTS for Mental Health

Looking to get involved?

Volunteer for Friendship Bench DC and help be part of the solution. If you are 60 years of age or older and living in the DMV (DC, Maryland, and Virginia) area, please join us! Here's how it works:



1. Sign up to be a Friendship Bench DC volunteer.

Sign up by providing your contact information at helpageusa.org/dc-grandparents-mental-health or filling out the form below with a DC Grandparents for Mental Health member.



2. Participate in free training.

Participate in free training (in-person and online) to learn how to effectively listen and empathize with people who are struggling.



3. Use your skills.

Be willing to use those skills to support people who are referred to Friendship Bench DC.



4. Be the movement.

Be part of a grassroots movement of older people who want to help support others.

Yes! I'm interested in finding out more about becoming a Friendship Bench DC volunteer.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Ward: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____