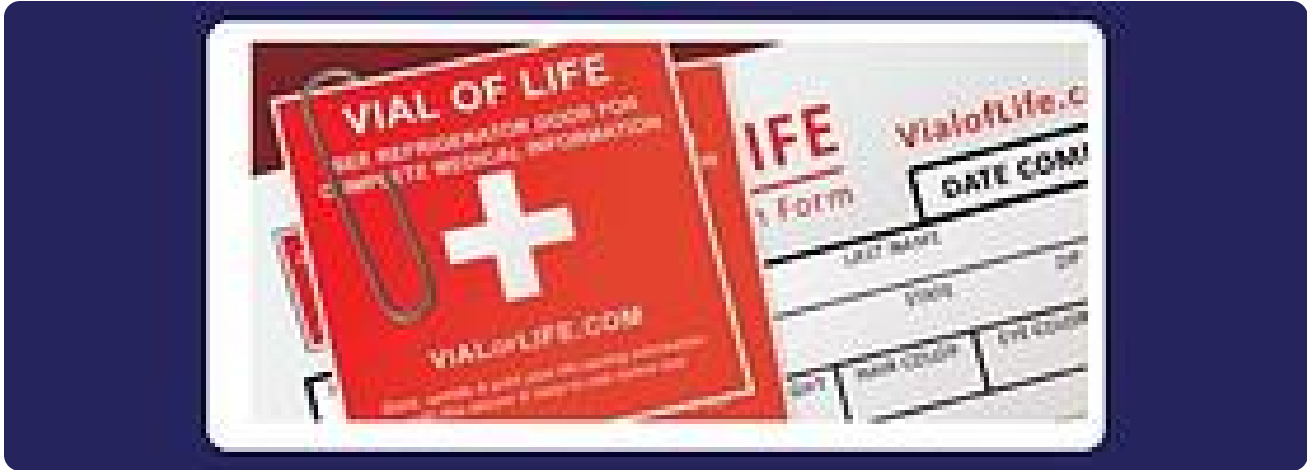




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## Vial of Life - Emergency Response Decals & Forms

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### Category: Medical | Emergency

*Can emergency responders enter your person's home if you call for a welfare check? This story may surprise you - and offer an easy, free solution you never knew you needed!*

By *Carol Hillegas*, ABC Dementia Caregiving Insight Coordinator

My aunt was falling. More and more all the time.

Sometimes she would tell us when it had happened. That was early on in our being concerned about her. As time went on, she would only tell one of us about one or two of

her several recent falls. She would tell each of us about different falls, different days, different bruises and sore spots.

It felt like she herself was concerned about it, and she wanted someone to know she was falling. But it seemed like she didn't want to tell us all about all of the falls.

We guessed she worried that if we knew how often it was happening, we would want to forcibly remove her from her home and stick her in an "old folks home" as she called it.

She always seemed to be able to struggle herself back up on her feet. She fell in the yard and crawled up to the porch so she could use the railing. In her small and crammed-full house, there was always a doorjamb, chair, or table to grab onto.

Amazingly, for a long time the falls didn't cause anything more than bruises and sore muscles. Only one time did she find out later that she had cracked a rib or two. But we knew that it was only a matter of time until she really got hurt.

It was very concerning. She lived alone, and this was developing during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it wasn't like she was having regular visitors to lay eyes on her.

I worried constantly.

For quite a long time, I called her just to check in every single day. I knew I could talk to her in the morning, and she could fall 5 minutes later, 3 hours later, later on in the middle of the night, with no one there to help. But I had to check in and make sure she was okay, that day, at that moment.

I know she would have preferred not to be checked on that often. And it was wearing on me. Conversations with her were not always easy. Or short.

This was long before she agreed to wear a medical alert device. And even before she would agree to use a walker or even a cane around the house. Oh, she had them both.

They had a nice permanent home tucked in a corner of her living room. Or sometimes a bedroom.

When I couldn't get ahold of my aunt by phone one day, and our usual boots-on-the-ground lady was out of town, I called the police in her city for a welfare check.

I was told they would call me back to let me know what they found.

Nothing.

Scared the whole time. Finally, I called them back. I was told no one answered the door and they had no probable cause to force entry.

"But I told you the whole story about her being alone, frail, sick and no way to leave the house!"

Not the way it works. Sorry.

I had mailed my best childhood friend a key months before...just in case. I called her in desperation. She dropped everything, rushed over, and found my aunt lying flat out on the hallway floor. Insisting that she hadn't fallen, was just down there petting her dog.

Her dog wouldn't go anywhere near her, or the puddle of her urine she was lying in.

"Don't you dare tell everyone I couldn't get up!"

"Okay then Barbara, go ahead and get up."

"I can, you know. Don't call an ambulance."

"Sure, just let me see you get up."

You can guess the rest of that story. She went by ambulance to the hospital that day, and a few days later she was released to a skilled nursing facility for rehab for several weeks.

Later, looking back at her security system motion detection record, I saw that she had to have been lying there for 36-40 hours.

That's it. It's not acceptable that when you call for a welfare check for someone of her age and in her condition, no one actually checks her welfare!

When I expressed that to the police dispatcher, I was told police won't go in, but EMS/Fire can. So I talked to the Fire Chief, and he told me about Vial of Life.

The great thing about Vial of Life is that it can be used in conjunction with a medical alert system, or completely without.

As of right now, it's \$5 for a kit that includes a medical information form and 2 vinyl Vial of Life decals for doors or windows to let emergency personnel know there's information inside the house.

Or, if you don't care about the decals, you can just download the form from their website for free. Just complete it with all the individuals' crucial medical information that can help EMS personnel treat them if necessary. They recommend putting the form in a clear zip baggie and placing it on or in the refrigerator door.

I also made a copy to keep in my aunt's purse in case she wasn't home when she needed help.

If they have a medical alert and EMS is called, they will immediately see the decal if placed on the front door or window. They can then access the information when they get into the house.

At the suggestion of the Fire Chief, I also got a secure lockbox (like real estate agents use) with a front door key inside, and had it secured near the front door of my aunt's house. I

then registered the access code to the lockbox with the local Fire Department and Dispatch so that the next time we needed a welfare check, EMS would already know that was in place any time they were sent out.

That would work whether we family members or friends called for help, and also, once she (finally) got her medical alert system, when they dispatched help.

### Learn more about the Vial of Life Kit at their website:

#### Vial of Life

This simple Vial of Life kit has saved hundreds of thousands of lives. More than 2 million kits d...



<https://www.vialoflife.com/>

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By **Carol Hillegas**, ABC Dementia Caregiving Insight Contributor

Like many caregivers, Carol started just helping out a bit. Soon she realized she was spending hours each day fulfilling needs and solving problems. A freelance copywriter by trade, Carol uses the lessons she's learned along the way helping great organizations communicate how their products and services ease the way for seniors and caregivers. Find out more about Carol at [Liberty Copy](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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*The **ABC Dementia Course & Community** was created to support you to support someone with memory loss at home or in a care community.*

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