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Welcome

Welcome to the Alberta Health Services team and congratulations on your decision to volunteer. You will have an opportunity to make a big difference in the lives of our patients, families and staff. Volunteers are a vital link in the important work of Alberta Health Services. There are thousands of volunteers and hundreds of community groups who serve in volunteer programs across the province.

The business of AHS is to care for people. All who work for us—employees and volunteers—are helping to achieve our mission.

Connect with us!

Like us on Facebook
The Alberta Health Services Volunteer Resources Facebook page is a great way to learn about the exciting things that are happening around the province and connect with other volunteers around the province. Care Moments, Educational Opportunities, New Volunteer Opportunities, and AHS Provincial Updates are posted daily.

Follow us on Twitter
Learn about volunteer opportunities and get updates on volunteer special events and projects,

Bookmark your volunteer page on Volunteer Impact
This is where you can enter your volunteer hours, find out the latest site information, sign up for volunteer shifts, contact the site, update your contact information, personalize your volunteer page, and generate volunteer verification reports…all at home!
AHS Vision

Our Vision, Mission and Values are core statements describing the overall purpose of our organization, how we operate, and what keeps us moving forward. It clarifies what we do, who we do it for, and why we do it.

Mission Statement

To provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

Our Values

Alberta Health Services’ core values guide our actions and behaviours to achieve excellent patient- and family-centred healthcare for all Albertans.

compassion

We show kindness and empathy for all in our care, and for each other.

accountability

We are honest, principled and transparent.

respect

We treat others with respect and dignity.

excellence

We strive to be our best and give our best.

safety

We place safety and quality improvement at the centre of all our decisions.
Everything AHS employees, physicians, midwives and volunteers do should advance patient- and family-centred care. And we know that excellent patient and family-centred care is attainable when employees, physicians and volunteers feel safe, healthy and valued in the work environment.

Using the AHS Health Plan and Business Plan as our roadmap, AHS has worked with employees, physicians, volunteers and partners to build four foundational strategies. The four strategies guide efforts to sustain safe, high-quality health-care delivery for the benefit of all Albertans. They are built on the base of our Vision, Mission and Values, and provide a solid framework for us to manage the demands within our system and to coordinate efforts across the province.

The Four Foundational Strategies

**Patient First Strategy**

**Main objective:** Strengthen AHS' culture and practices to ensure patients and families are at the centre of all health care activities, decisions and teams.

**How will AHS do it:** Promote respectful patient/provider interactions; improve communication between providers and patients/clients/families; adopt a team-based approach to care; and improve transitions in care.

**Our People Strategy**

**Main objective:** Our People Strategy is about how we support each other. It is about creating a culture in which we all feel safe, healthy, and valued, and can reach our full potential. Our People Strategy addresses a critical success factor for the other three strategies: an engaged workforce connected to our collective efforts to improve Alberta's health care system.

**How will AHS do it:** Create a clear vision for the organization, with a shared purpose and common goals; build a safe, healthy and inclusive place to work; develop excellent leadership that respects, values and supports our workforce; create an engaged workforce by giving people access to the resources and development opportunities they need to do their jobs effectively.

**Strategy for Clinical Health Research, Innovation and Analytics**

**Main objective:** Generate, share and use evidence in care and service delivery to improve patient outcomes and to solve the complex challenges facing the health system.

**How AHS will do it:** Identify gaps where research and innovation will have a significant benefit to patients and the health system; use Strategic Clinical Networks to engage partners in research and innovation; provide timely and secure access to health information; apply and spread knowledge; and innovate to achieve care and service excellence.
Information Management / Information Technology (IM/IT) Strategy

Main objective: To allow health information flow with the patient, so that providers and patients across the province can have access to complete information at the point of care and learn from the data in the future.

How AHS will do it: AHS will use information and technology to transform care in three key ways:

- Enable Albertans to have electronic access to their own health records to empower them to be an integral part of their care team;
- Enable information flow across the continuum, including creating best practice standards to be embedded in the technology at point of care;
- Learn from the care we deliver to continue to improve quality and outcomes through the use of information and analytics.
It Takes Teamwork

By becoming an AHS volunteer you have joined a large team of caring people who are committed to improving the health and well-being of the 3.8 million Albertans they serve. We hope your volunteer experience will be enjoyable and meet your expectations.

Thank you for choosing to be an AHS volunteer!

Here is a quick snapshot of some of our many resources:

- 108,000 skilled health professionals and support staff
- 15,600 volunteers
- 9,300 physicians
- 8,978 acute & sub-acute care beds
- 2,439 addiction & mental health beds
- 23,950 continuing care beds
- 650 facilities province-wide, including hospitals, clinics, continuing care, mental health and community health sites’

Highlights of our annual service volumes include:

- 992,800 Volunteer hours
- 114,900 Home Care clients
- 2,180,581 Emergency Department visits
- 401,279 hospital discharges
- 2,808,343 total hospital days
- 54,203 births
- 7.0 days average length of stay for hospital admission
- 54,203 total hip replacements
- 6,379 total knee replacements
- 36,766 cataract surgeries
- 199,928 MRI exams
- 387,116 CT exams
- 73.8 million laboratory tests
- 578,005 cancer patient visits
- 21,429 mental health hospital discharges

Source: AHS 2014-15 Annual Report
Introduction

This handbook will help you get started volunteering. It can also be a reference tool as you gain more experience and questions arise.

Important Definitions

You may not be familiar with some of the words used in this handbook and within the health-care system. Here are some definitions that will help make things clear.

- **AHS** is used as a shortened version of *Alberta Health Services*.
- **CPRF** is an inclusive term we use to describe the people who receive our health-care services. It is an acronym for Client/Patient/Resident/Family Member. For example, it may describe a *resident* of a long term care facility, a *client* receiving services from homecare, a *patient* in active care or a *member of the public* who attends a clinic.
- **Volunteer Resources Staff** are AHS employees who work in the Volunteer Resources Department. The most common titles you will hear are Coordinator and Program Assistant. Other titles are Administrative Assistant and Zone Manager.
- **Supervisor** is the term that describes your main contact person when you are volunteering. Your supervisor will support you, give direction and answer questions.
- **Placement Department** is the area where you will volunteer.
- **Assignment** is your specific volunteer job. Volunteer Resources staff will help you decide the best assignment to match your skills, interests, and availability.
- **General Online Orientation** is given by Volunteer Resources staff. It covers topics that all volunteers need to know about AHS and the specific location where they will volunteer.
- **Site Orientation** is given by Volunteer Resources staff. The information provided is specific to each site, and usually includes a tour of the facility.
- **Training** is given for each different volunteer assignment. It may be given in a group session or one-to-one. During training detailed information is given that is very specific to your volunteer assignment.
- **Volunteer Impact** is the name of the software database that Volunteer Resources uses in conjunction with volunteers, who have their own accounts. The accounts can be used to record volunteer hours, and coordinate your volunteer shifts, among other useful tools.
Volunteer Resources Department

The Volunteer Resources department is responsible for planning and organizing the volunteer program. Volunteer Resources staff recruit, interview, screen, orientate, evaluate and recognize volunteers. They act as a link between you, your assignment and your supervisor.

Volunteering is about
- sharing your talents and skills
- offering care and compassion to those in need
- improving the quality of life for the citizens in our communities
- feeling empowered, being creative and having opportunities for growth, and
- having fun!

We are here to support your volunteer experience!

The purpose of Volunteer Resources is to provide a framework for volunteer involvement within Alberta Health Services that complements the delivery of patient-focused, quality health care.

We envision every volunteer—supported and engaged.
Your Volunteer Assignment

- Volunteer Resources staff will work with you to match your skills, interests and available time with a rewarding volunteer assignment.
- Make sure you understand what is expected in terms of time commitment.
- Be careful not to over commit.
- If you are unable to attend an agreed-upon shift, please notify your supervisor and/or Volunteer Resources staff. Advance notice may allow time for a replacement to be found.
- If your assignment does not meet your expectations, please call Volunteer Resources staff.
- We are here to help.

Recording Volunteer Hours
You play a significant role in the work and mission of AHS so it is important that we identify and track your volunteer activity.
Tracking your volunteer hours allows us to keep accurate records that support recruitment, training, promotion, recognition, insurance and funding needs. Information about volunteer activity helps Volunteer Resources staff be accountable. It also helps us to understand trends and issues related to volunteer turnover, demographics and program changes over time.
You can benefit from tracking your hours as this information might be needed for a job or education program application, to expand your resume, or simply to know the hours you have worked and the impact of your work with patients.
We appreciate your assistance in recording your volunteer hours for your assignment.
Volunteer Resources staff will tell you the best method available to record your volunteer hours.

Recognition
We are very appreciative of the service provided by volunteers across the province. The quality of life for our patients is greatly enhanced through the efforts of our many volunteers.
Throughout the course of your volunteer career, you will be recognized in a variety of ways. Recognition activities and social events are planned periodically throughout the year. Everyday recognition by your supervisor, staff and patients is encouraged and promoted.

Additional Education & Training
You are encouraged, whenever possible, to attend education/training sessions, meetings and recognition events. These are good opportunities to meet others and exchange ideas. The topics covered will most often be applicable to your volunteer work. From a health-care point of view, the more knowledge and confidence volunteers have, the better care our patients will receive. Sometimes a fee is charged for education and training events. In these cases, volunteers will be required to pay the same registration fee as staff.
Your Volunteer Assignment

**Supervision**
One or more staff members in your placement department are considered your day-to-day supervisors. Ask your supervisor if you have questions about your assignment duties or the patients you serve. Questions about your schedule or transfers to a new assignment can be discussed with Volunteer Resources staff.

**Workers’ Compensation Claims**
Active volunteers may be covered by Workers Compensation for illness or injuries sustained while volunteering with AHS. Please see the information below about how to report.

**Reporting Illness or Injury**
If you become ill or injured while volunteering, please tell your supervisor immediately. If necessary, you will be asked to visit your family doctor or the Emergency Department, where you will be treated as an outpatient. Volunteer Resources or the supervisor in your placement area should also be notified as soon as possible to assess if an Incident Report needs to be filed. For all injuries, exposures and urgent safety issues:
1. Take action: First Aid / emergency response
2. report to VR staff or your supervisor: IMMEDIATELY
3. Report before you leave

**Insurance Coverage**
All active volunteers are covered by AHS liability insurance, with the exception if the volunteer’s actions are willfully negligent or criminal in nature. Volunteers must act within the scope of their assignment.

**Assignment Descriptions**
Written assignment descriptions are available for all volunteer assignments. You are responsible to make sure you are performing only the duties described in your assignment description. AHS cannot be held responsible if something goes wrong should you perform duties not included in your assignment description. Any changes to your assignment must first be approved by Volunteer Resources staff in consultation with your supervisor. You must not use your assignment to promote personal/religious beliefs or business interests.
Your Volunteer Assignment

Patient Safety & Security

AHS health-care facilities are equipped with communication systems and emergency call systems appropriate for the type of facility (e.g. long term care, acute care, etc.) and the needs of the patients. These systems may be call bells in patient rooms, a security system, card access or other communication or emergency call system. Systems are well maintained, inspected and tested according to the standards set by the manufacturer. During the orientation process Volunteer Resources staff will inform you of the systems available in the facility where you will volunteer, how they function and when they should be used. For example, if you are with a patient in his/her room and there is an emergency situation, you should use the patient call bell to alert the staff. If you are provided with an access code to enter a secure unit, do not share the code with unauthorized people.

Confidentiality & Information Privacy

Information about AHS patients, families, volunteers and employees as well as AHS business information must be safeguarded. We need to make sure that only people who really need confidential information get to see it.

Photo Identification

You will be issued an AHS photo identification name tag that should be worn at all times when you are volunteering. This helps to make a safe, secure environment for patients, staff and volunteers. When you wear your photo identification make sure it is visible and easy to see. If you lose your photo identification or it is stolen, please report this to Volunteer Resources staff immediately so they can assist you in obtaining a replacement name tag. A replacement fee may be charged for lost or stolen cards.

Appearance

When you volunteer, you become part of the professional health-care team. Good hygiene and appropriate clothing are basic to a successful volunteer experience. Volunteer Resources staff or your supervisor will tell you if there are specific dress code guidelines for your assignment.

Uniforms

Some volunteer assignments require a volunteer uniform (e.g. jacket, smock, apron). The uniform identifies you as a volunteer. The uniform should be laundered after each shift. Volunteer Resources staff will tell you about any other specific guidelines for uniforms.

Fragrances & Jewellery

Many people are allergic or sensitive to perfumes or other scented products. Please do not wear these products when you are volunteering. Jewellery can cause a safety and infection control hazard. Volunteer Resources staff will give you more information if it applies to your assignment.
Your Volunteer Assignment

References
If you plan to use your volunteer experience as a reference for future employment or education, please inform Volunteer Resources staff. We can provide you with a confirmation letter detailing your assignment areas, volunteer hours and service dates.

Parking
Free parking is available when volunteering at most locations. Volunteer Resources staff will give you information about parking at the site where you are volunteering and arrange for a parking pass, if required.

Meals & Breaks
You may be entitled to a voucher to help cover the cost of a beverage, snack or meal during your assignment. Volunteer Resources staff will give you more information specific to your assignment.

Lockers
In some areas, lockers are available to store your personal belongings while you are volunteering. Where lockers are not available ask staff to assist you in finding a secure place to leave personal items. AHS is not responsible for lost or stolen personal articles. Do not leave your purse or other valuables unsecured.

Smoking
Smoking is prohibited in all AHS owned, managed or leased property, vehicles, grounds and buildings. Smoking is also prohibited in patients’ homes.

Use of Drugs & Alcohol
You may not volunteer for AHS while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Non-compliance is grounds for dismissal.

Telephones & Electronic Devices
Electronic devices must not be used within one metre (three feet) of medical equipment as transmission may cause interference. Also, electronic devices can be a distraction so we ask that you do not use a cell phone, text messaging equipment, music player or other electronic devices while you are volunteering. Urgent, incoming phone calls can usually be received through the Volunteer Resources department or the facility’s main information desk. Please note that phones on nursing units are for business use only.

Media Relations
From time to time Volunteer Resources staff may ask a volunteer to participate in a radio or television interview. This type of media activity helps promote the volunteer program and encourage others to participate. It also lets the community know about the wonderful contribution that volunteers make to the health system. In all cases, media interviews or discussions must be authorized by Volunteer Resources staff in tandem with AHS Communications. Participation by volunteers in media activities is voluntary.
Your Volunteer Assignment

Communication & Concerns Resolution
Your opinions and concerns are valuable in helping us to provide quality health care. Please contact your supervisor or Volunteer Resources staff to discuss any concerns or suggestions for improvement. A meeting can be arranged with the Volunteer Resources Zone Manager, or Zone Designate, if a situation has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

Evaluations
Volunteer programs are evaluated regularly. We will seek your input to help keep your volunteer assignment meaningful, both to you and our patients. Individual evaluations are also completed on a flexible schedule. This helps to assess your performance and maintain a record should you require a future reference.
AHS values your contribution and wants you to benefit from your experience as a volunteer. Feel free to discuss any problems you may have with your supervisor, staff in your placement department and/or Volunteer Resources staff.

Absence or Leave of Absence
Patients and staff depend on you coming for your scheduled shift so your commitment is important. Occasionally you may be unable to volunteer when scheduled due to illness, vacation or another important reason. If you cannot volunteer please notify your placement department and/or Volunteer Resources staff as soon as possible. With adequate time another volunteer may be scheduled.

If you need to be away for an extended time please give as much notice as possible and indicate your expected return date. You may be able to arrange a leave of absence.

Your assignment is not guaranteed after a leave of absence, but every effort will be made to arrange a suitable alternative assignment. If you do not return or provide further notification after twelve months, your status will be moved to inactive.

Termination of Volunteer Services
If you wish to end your volunteer assignment, please notify Volunteer Resources staff as far in advance as possible. You will be expected to return your photo identification and any other items related to your assignment. You will also be asked to complete an exit interview survey. Sometimes things don’t work out well for volunteers in their assignment. You may be asked to terminate your volunteer assignment for any of the following reasons:
- breach of confidentiality
- extended absence with no explanation
- volunteering while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- failure to follow AHS policies and procedures resulting in a threat to the safety and security of patients, staff, visitors, or other volunteers, or
- if it is in the best interest of the volunteer or placement department
Respectful Workplaces

A respectful workplace is one where each person feels they belong and has something important to offer. Many things go into making the workplace a respectful one. You might even think of respect as being the local language of AHS. Much of what we do really depends on being able to communicate respect and see that respect is being given to everyone—patients, families and coworkers. We expect volunteers and staff to show respect to everyone in the workplace. AHS is committed to providing respectful, secure and supportive work environments to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals. AHS does not tolerate nor condone any violent actions or behaviours directed toward any AHS staff member, volunteer, or representative. AHS will take action in an objective manner to address reports of workplace violence, without retribution to those who report incidents in good faith.

Read more about the Workplace Violence: Prevention and Response Policy

Safe Disclosure Policy

The Safe Disclosure Policy provides a confidential way to report improper activity occurring within AHS. Also known as the ‘Whistleblower Policy’, it allows AHS personnel, the public and volunteers to report anything they consider to be improper activity, without fear of retribution or retaliation as set out in the policy. Improper activity means any alleged unethical, illegal and other improper activity, including but not limited to, fraud, violations of laws, and violations of the AHS Code of Conduct, principles, policies or bylaws, and negligence of duty.

Read more about the Safe Disclosure Policy

The Code of Conduct

Just as a person’s reputation is based on how they behave, organizations like AHS have a reputation too. This reputation is built upon the actions of the people who work and volunteer in the organization. The AHS Code of Conduct defines how you can contribute to our positive reputation, through your own actions. The Code of Conduct gives five general points that guide our behavior as volunteers and staff.

1. Treat people with respect, compassion, dignity and fairness.
2. Be open, honest and loyal.
3. Act ethically and professionally.
4. Take responsibility for your own actions and expect others to do the same.
5. Respect confidentiality and privacy.

Read more about the Code of Conduct Policy
Alberta Legislation

Information regarding patients, staff, students, volunteers, physicians, family members and AHS operations is to be respected and handled confidentially. There are four pieces of Alberta Legislation that are important to us:

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) of Alberta**
The FOIPP Act is a law that protects an individual’s privacy with rules for collection and use or disclosure of personal information by public bodies. It also provides a method of requesting access to information that is not available by other means.

**The Health Information Act (HIA) of Alberta**
The HIA protects the privacy of individuals specifically related to their health information and protects the confidentiality of that information. It also outlines the rules for anyone sharing and accessing this information.

**Protection for Persons in Care Act (PPCA) (Patients 18 years of age or older)**
The Protection for Persons in Care Act (PPCA) promotes the prevention and reporting of abuse of patients receiving health-care services. Volunteers and other service providers are responsible for taking reasonable steps to protect a patient from abuse, maintaining a reasonable level of safety for the patient and reporting abuse in order to provide for the immediate safety, security and well-being of all patients. Any abuse involving a patient must be reported as soon as possible, and failure to report abuse is an offense. You can also report abuse by calling the Protection for Persons in Care reporting line at 1-888-357-9339 or calling the police if the person’s life or wellbeing is in immediate danger or if the abuse is criminal in nature.

**Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (Patients under 18 years of age)**
The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act is the legal authority for providing child intervention services in Alberta. The principles of the Enhancement Act guide caseworkers in their work with families, stresses the importance of family, provides for support services to families to ensure that a child will only be removed from home if other, less intrusive measures are not sufficient to protect the child, specifies the circumstances under which a child may be in need of intervention through Alberta Children’s Services, reflects an appreciation of the strong contributions foster parents make to children in care and established the role of the Child and Youth Advocate.

### Important Reminders from these Pieces of Legislation include:

| 1. | All volunteers and staff of AHS are expected to keep information about others confidential. This includes health information about patients and staff. |
| 2. | Volunteers should never discuss a patient’s health information with another patient, family member, friends (yours or theirs), or other volunteers. |
| 3. | Volunteers do not have the authority to release any information or ask for information they do not need to know to complete their assigned tasks. If asked for information by someone else, volunteers should refer those individuals to a staff member. |
| 4. | Breaching confidentiality is grounds for dismissal. |
Encouraging Feedback

**Patient Concerns and Feedback**
Alberta Health Services values the input of others. Feedback will help to further improve the quality of Alberta’s health care system.

The experience of care holds important information that helps us to continuously improve. AHS wants to hear what others have to better understand what we're doing right and what we can do better. If people want to share feedback regarding healthcare services or other support services a family member has received, there are three options to do so:

1. **Talk to a local health care provider directly.** Whenever possible we first encourage people to speak with their care team. Because the care team knows the person best, discussing your questions or complaints with them may resolve any issues right away. This is often the best way to proceed.
2. **Contact the Patient Relations Department** by phone, fax or mail.
3. **You can complete an online patient feedback form.**

**Patient Feedback Form** (print version)

**Patient and Family Centred Care**
Patient- and Family- Centred care sees patients and families as integral members of the healthcare team, and encourages their active participation in all aspects of care, including as partners in planning, implementation and evaluation of existing and future care and services.

Patient and Family Centred Care (PFCC) has these characteristics:
- People are treated with dignity and respect.
- Health care providers communicate and share complete and unbiased information with patients and families in ways that are affirming and useful.
- Collaboration among patients, family members, and providers occurs in policy and program development and professional education as well as in the delivery of care.

Here are some ways volunteers can support Patient and Family Centred Care:
- Knock before entering someone’s space
- Smile at patients, families & visitors
- Make people feel at ease by being warm & friendly
- Address people in their preferred manner
- See patients as people first, patients second
- Honour the personal and cultural beliefs and values of everyone – including patients/ families & colleagues
- Show compassion for not just patients and families but to your colleagues too?
- Refer to patient’s families and colleagues in the same respectful way, whether they are present or not.
- Practice active listening. This is when a listener intentionally uses body language, tone of voice and word choices to help the speaker feel heard and understood. Three essentials of active listening are: empathy, respect, and presence.
- Additional training in Patient and Family Centred Care is available, if requested.
Volunteering with Patients

Patient Rights
Volunteers can play an important role in improving the quality of life for our patients. You can brighten the day for a lonely patient in a nursing home, help a surgical patient find their way in a large hospital or share a cup of tea with an isolated mental health client in their home. In this section of the handbook we will be discussing some of the topics that will help you in your relationship with patients.

Patient rights are an important consideration and should be respected in every patient interaction.

Patients have a right
✔ To preserve their own value system
   Be cautious about discussing religion or other controversial subjects with a patient. Listen compassionately if the patient speaks about his/her faith, but don’t introduce, teach, or recommend another religion to the patient.

✔ To determine the extent to which anyone is involved in their health care
   The patient has a right to terminate or limit any relationship. Listen carefully for cues that the patient does not want to visit with you.

✔ To be accepted unconditionally
   Treat the patient with dignity, disregarding his/her nationality, race, religion, sex, age or class. Be cautious of your reaction to patient behaviour.

✔ To privacy
   Please honour the right of the patient to be alone if desired. Pick up on non-verbal cues that tell you it is time to leave.

✔ To have their financial and non-financial information protected
   Avoid reading any personal documents that may be at the patient’s bedside or in their home. Remember to respect the confidentiality of your conversations.
   You are not permitted to be involved in financial or non-financial patient affairs including but not limited to
   • powers of attorney, wills and estate planning
   • matters related to personal directives, decision making and guardianship

It may be appropriate for you to be involved with a specific patient if you are a volunteer and a family member. Ask Volunteer Resources staff for more information about this type of situation.

Giving Medical Advice
You should not give medical advice to patients or families. Suggest that they talk to their doctor or nurse. You may also suggest that they contact HEALTHLink Alberta. AHS offers this 24 hour-a-day, seven day-a-week telephone health advice and health information service that anyone can access. Highly trained registered nurses throughout Alberta provide advice and information about health symptoms and concerns.
Volunteering with Patients

Patients on Additional Precautions *(Isolation)*
Additional Precautions, or isolation, are put into place to prevent the spread of certain diseases, conditions and germs. ‘Additional Precautions’ include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) which changes depending on how the germ is spread.

Volunteers play an important role with patients on Additional Precautions, as these patients may feel lonely and segregated. You face little or no risk when caring for a patient on Additional Precautions when proper procedures are followed. Look for signs posted on the door that show the type of precautions and PPE needed when entering the room. Signs may be different at different facilities.

For instructions on how to properly put on (don) and take off (doff) PPE, please watch the *Donning and Doffing of PPE* video on the AHS IPC Personal Protective Equipment webpage.

Volunteer Resources staff will provide information specific to the facility where you will volunteer. If you wish to enter an Additional Precautions room, ask the nursing staff for directions about the precautions to take. You do not have to enter an Additional Precautions room if you do not feel comfortable doing so.

Exposure to Blood & Body Fluids
On rare occasions a volunteer may be in a situation where he/she comes into contact with blood or potentially infectious body fluids. If this occurs you should wash the affected area with soap and running water, apply an antiseptic if available and remove any contaminated clothing. If your eyes, nose or mouth are involved flush with large amounts of water for 10 minutes. Immediately report the situation to your supervisor or the patient care staff in the area. Volunteer Resources staff should also be notified as soon as possible. Be aware of your surroundings and whenever possible, remove yourself from situations that may result in your exposure to blood and other body fluids.

Acceptance of Gifts & Tips
It is important that a patient understands your interest in them is not dependent on receiving gifts. However, you may occasionally accept small non-monetary gifts (e.g. food, beverages, flowers, thank-you cards, chocolates) as a token of appreciation. If a patient wishes to give a larger gift, it would be best to encourage him/her to make a donation to an AHS Health Foundation, Auxiliary, or Association. Volunteer Resources staff can assist you in responding appropriately when a gift is offered.
Volunteer Health & Safety

AHS achieves a safe and healthy work environment through the commitment and dedication of staff and volunteers. AHS has designated specific responsibilities through the development of health and safety policies and procedures. As a volunteer, you share the responsibility of ensuring a safe, healthy and productive workplace. The topics included in this handbook will help you to understand the role you play as a volunteer.

Workplace Hazards
A workplace health and safety hazard is any condition or circumstance that has the potential to cause injury, illness or disease. You share in the responsibility to recognize when something is out of place, not in good working order or work performance that could result in injury. Please report any hazards to your supervisor or Volunteer Resources staff. Volunteers will be informed of possible hazards related to their assignment.

Imminent Danger
You have the right to refuse work that may endanger you or others. This is outlined by provincial legislation. If you are uncomfortable with any task you have been assigned, notify your supervisor or Volunteer Resources staff.

Reporting Incidents
All health and safety incidents must be reported to your supervisor and Volunteer Resources staff during the same shift. It is important that volunteers receive the appropriate medical treatment for their injuries and that steps are taken to prevent further illness or injury. If you witness inappropriate activity or behaviour, you are obligated to report it.

Safety Compliance & Enforcement
You must comply with all AHS health and safety guidelines. During specific training for your assignment you will be told about any health and safety policies that affect your assignment. Inspections are conducted at AHS workplaces on a regular basis. This makes a safe work environment. Please speak with your supervisor or Volunteer Resources staff if you have any questions regarding health and safety.

Safe Lifting
Avoid lifting awkward or heavy loads. These safe lifting guidelines will help you if you are involved in light lifting:

- Keep the load close to your body.
- Once you lift the load, change direction by moving your feet —don’t twist your body. Store heavier loads on waist-high shelves.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.

Volunteers are not permitted to lift or transfer patients.
Volunteer Health & Safety

Cart Safety
Carts are used extensively in a health-care setting. They can be a very useful tool; however, some caution is recommended for safe handling. You should be familiar with cart safety guidelines:

- Push rather than pull the cart, whenever possible.
- Be in control of the cart (speed, manoeuvrability, etc.) at all times.
- Keep the cart near the sides of the hallway to provide clear passage to others. Do not block the corridor.
- Swing wide on corners for visibility.
- Report any problems with the cart to your supervisor or Volunteer Resources staff as soon as possible so any necessary repairs can be carried out.
- Wear closed-toe and -heel shoes to protect your feet.

Slips & Falls
You should be aware of safety guidelines to avoid slips and falls:

- Walk, don’t run.
- Ensure footwear has an adequate tread.
- Notify staff if you notice liquid or material spills.
- Use caution when walking outdoors as well as indoors.

Volunteer Health Screening
Volunteers are asked to complete Health Screening for two reasons: to protect you during your volunteer placement, and in turn, to protect the patients we serve. Not all volunteers require health screening – it’s largely based on assignment, along with some other variables. All volunteers are required to complete a Communicable Disease Assessment Form, prior to starting a volunteer placement.

Immunization
Immunization not only safeguards the health of volunteers but also helps protect our patients from becoming ill. Communicable diseases are a common risk in a health-care setting and in many instances can be reduced or eliminated through proper immunization. AHS strongly encourages annual influenza vaccinations for all volunteers and staff.

Stay Healthy Tips
Hand Hygiene F.A.Q.
Volunteer Health & Safety

Hand Hygiene
The best way to prevent spreading germs and infections is to clean your hands, which is called hand hygiene. Hand hygiene removes germs from your hands or kills germs so you don't spread the germs to yourself or other people.

There are two ways to clean your hands: use an alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) or soap and water. You should use ABHR most often to clean your hands because it contains skin softeners (emollients) and is gentler on hands than soap and water. Use only hand hygiene products approved for use at the facility where you are volunteering. When washing with soap and water, use plain soap and water to wash. Do not use anti-microbial soap.

Hand hygiene should be done:
- before and after a volunteer shift
- before and after contact with patients
- after contact with equipment or surfaces in patient rooms
- after using disposable tissues or a handkerchief
- when hands are obviously soiled
- after handling dirty items
- after using the bathroom
- before and after eating or drinking

For more information, please read the AHS Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedure. This policy and procedure applies to volunteers as well as AHS employees.

Jewellery, nail enhancements and long nails collect and protect germs, making it hard to clean your hands. Volunteers who touch patients or their environment while helping with their care, or prepare or deliver food or drinks to patients, should follow these rules:

1. Artificial (fake) nails, nail enhancements, including gel and acrylic nails, or chipped nail polish are not encouraged.
2. Keep your natural nails clean and healthy with short nail tips (less than 6mm or ¼ inch).
3. If you wear rings, wear only plain bands.
4. Do not help with patient care if you are wearing casts, bandages or splints that interfere with proper hand hygiene. Ask about different tasks you can do instead.

Read more about Hand Hygiene
Volunteer Health & Safety

When to Clean Your Hands: The Four Moments of Hand Hygiene
Clean your hands according to the four moments in the picture below. Volunteer Resources examples are given for each moment.

Always clean your hands at the beginning and at the end of your shift.
### Volunteer Health & Safety

#### How to Clean Your Hands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR)</th>
<th>Using Plain Soap and Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make sure your hands are dry and do not look or feel dirty.</td>
<td>1. Wet your hands with warm, running water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Apply enough product to the palm of one hand to cover all hand surfaces (usually 2-3 pumps).</td>
<td>2. Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- All surfaces of your hands must be wet for at least 15 seconds for the ABHR to work properly</td>
<td>3. Vigorously rub soap over all surfaces of your hands and wrists, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A larger amount will be required if you have large hands</td>
<td>- palms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rub the product well over all surfaces of your hands and wrists, including:</td>
<td>- spaces between your fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- palms</td>
<td>- backs of your hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- spaces between your fingers</td>
<td>- wrists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- backs of your hands</td>
<td>- fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Continue rubbing the product over all surfaces of your hands until they are completely dry.</td>
<td>- fingertips, including fingernails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do not rinse or wash your hands or use a towel.</td>
<td>- thumbs, including base of thumbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use hand lotion provided by AHS to help keep your skin healthy.
Volunteer Health & Safety

Fire Safety Regulations

A Code Red indicates that a fire or smoke has been seen in the building. Code Red is the announcement made in AHS facilities when there is a fire or fire drill. When a Code Red is called, you should report to your supervisor or the person in charge. Ask for instructions on how you should respond.

Anyone can activate a Code Red. If you see, smell or suspect fire/smoke, it is important that the Fire Department be notified. The REACT procedure should be followed.

You should be familiar with the location of fire extinguishers and fire alarm stations in your assignment area. Fire safety information will be provided during your specific training for your assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
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<th>v</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>those in immediate danger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>n</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>all doors are closed</td>
</tr>
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<td>c</td>
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<td>v</td>
<td>a</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>your designated fire emergency number to report the location of the fire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>r</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</table>

You should fight the fire only if:

- Everyone is out or leaving
- You have been trained
- The fire is small and confined
- The fire is not growing
- The fire has not and is not developing a lot of smoke

Remember: do not use an elevator during Code Red
Volunteer Health & Safety

WHMIS—Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System

The objective of WHMIS is to provide you with information about hazardous materials in the workplace. The WHMIS symbols, labels and material safety data sheets are part of a program to keep us safe. They communicate information people need to know about hazardous materials in the workplace.

WHMIS Symbols

While it is unlikely that you will come into contact with such hazards, we would like you to be aware of the WHMIS symbols and their meaning. If you have any questions about any substance you encounter while volunteering, please contact your supervisor or Volunteer Resources staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Class D1</th>
<th>Class D2</th>
<th>Class D3</th>
<th>Class E</th>
<th>Class F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Volunteer Health & Safety

Emergency Alert Colour Code System
AHS uses a standardized emergency colour code system in all its facilities. Each emergency colour code represents a designated threat and a response plan. The standardized system allows for communication with staff and volunteers without unnecessarily alerting or alarming patients and visitors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Cardiac Arrest/Medical Emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Violence/Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Hostage Incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Missing Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Bomb Threat/Suspicious Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>Shelter in Place/Air Exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Evacuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>Chemical Spills/Hazardous Spills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Mass Casualty Incidents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you witness or recognize an emergency situation requiring immediate action, notify your supervisor, the person responsible for the affected area or Volunteer Resources staff depending on the urgency and nature of the situation.

While you should be aware when an emergency situation occurs, your direct, hands-on participation is usually not required.

Continuation of Necessary Services
AHS health-care facilities have contingency plans to provide for the continuation of necessary services in the event of failure of electrical power or other utilities, breakdown of essential equipment, extreme weather conditions, employment disputes and other disruptions. Volunteer Resources or other staff will ensure that volunteers are provided with any information and direction, as needed, when services are compromised or disrupted. You may be asked to modify your duties or your volunteer shift, depending on the situation. Volunteer Resources staff will inform you of the communication methods (e.g. bulletin board, computer messaging) used at your volunteer site so you can be alert and aware.
In Conclusion

We hope that you find this information helpful as you begin volunteering with AHS. We also hope that you are now aware of the resources available to you in your day-to-day volunteer role. As a volunteer you have the potential to make an important difference in the lives of our patients. Volunteers are a significant resource within our health system. Your time, passion, and commitment help us deliver quality care.

It is our hope that volunteering will give you a sense of fulfillment and that your experience will be enjoyable and rewarding.

Volunteer Resources staff is eager and willing to listen to your ideas, questions or concerns. Once again, we welcome you to the AHS volunteer team!

Acknowledgments

We appreciate the AHS staff and volunteers who contributed their expertise and creativity to the development of this handbook.