Volunteer Guidelines

As a volunteer with Vanderbilt University Medical Center our highest priority is to serve our patients and families with the best possible care and service. As a volunteer you are an important part of our team and the following guidelines will direct you as to appropriate interactions with staff and patients. All volunteers are expected to adhere to the following guidelines and policies:

1. Volunteer Role: Volunteers support, enhance and assist in our efforts to "Put Our Patients First" and do not replace paid staff.

2. Patient Referrals: When patients, families or visitors express a need for spiritual support, emotional or financial support please make these desires known to your volunteer supervisor or the patient’s nurse. Volunteers should not engage in activities that might be considered evangelizing or counseling.

3. Patient Services: Volunteers provide patient service, not medical care.
   • If a patient request food or beverages please check with patient’s nurse first.
   • Volunteers must never give medication to a patient.
   • Volunteers should not offer opinions on a patient’s symptoms, diagnosis or treatment.

4. Patient Information: Volunteers will only be given patient information on a “need to know basis”. When given paper documents containing patient information, volunteers should return the paper to the volunteer supervisor at the end of the shift to be shredded. Volunteers should not seek patient information from patient charts and/or computers. Volunteers must not discuss patient information that is confidential (patient name, room number, diagnosis, etc.).

5. Volunteer Service Description: Volunteers are expected to perform their duties as outlined in the service description.

6. Volunteer Assignments: Volunteers are assigned to areas of service only by the Department of Volunteer Services. Any changes in assignment must be made and documented by Volunteer Services in coordination with Medical Center staff.

7. Photo ID: All volunteers must wear a Vanderbilt Photo ID. When a volunteer becomes inactive or goes on Leave of Absence, Photo ID MUST be returned immediately to Volunteer Services.

8. Volunteer Uniform/Dress Code: Volunteers must adhere to the Dress Code Policy (see page 6) and always wear their Photo ID and Volunteer Vest.

9. Signing In: Volunteers must ALWAYS sign-in and sign-out at the approved location when volunteering.
10. **Volunteer Absences**: It is the expectation that each volunteer will notify Volunteer Services (by phone call) with advance notice of an absence. Excessive unscheduled absences will be addressed by Volunteer Supervisors and Volunteer Services staff and could include dismissal. Excessive unscheduled absences are defined as three no call/no show occurrences over a 90 day period.

11. **Escorting and Transporting**: Volunteers may *escort* patients and/or families from one point to another. Volunteers may *assist* staff in transporting patients; however, it is the responsibility of the staff to transport patients and transfer the patient to and from the bed, stretcher or wheelchair. Personal protective equipment must be worn as directed by staff. Volunteers should not move or lift patients or other heavy items.

12. **Isolation**: Volunteers should not enter a patient’s room that has an “Isolation” sign on the door without the approval of the charge nurse or designee. Wearing personal protective equipment is a requirement. If the patient is on “airborne precautions” volunteers should not enter the room.

13. **Cleaning**: Volunteers should never “clean-up” any spills, clean equipment or change bed linen in any area they are assigned. Volunteers are asked to report spills immediately to the supervisor or other relevant staff. Toy cleaning is permitted.

14. **Sharing Personal Information**: Visiting patients in their home, sharing phone/address/e-mail information or using personal vehicles to transport patients is prohibited.

15. **Cell Phone, Texting or Pictures**: In order to provide excellent customer service and full attention to our patients, families and visitors volunteers are asked to not use cell phones, beepers and pagers while volunteering. Volunteers should *never* take photos in the hospital.

16. **Smoking**: Vanderbilt is a smoke free environment. Smoking is prohibited on the Vanderbilt Medical Center Campus.

17. **Exchanging of Gifts**: Volunteers should not accept any payments or gifts for their services from patients or their families. Volunteers also should not bring gifts or exchange phone numbers with patients or visitors. To make donations contact Volunteer Services or area Volunteer Supervisor.

18. **Family and Friends**: Please refer family and friends who have an interest in volunteering to the Volunteer Services Department. Volunteers may not bring children, friends, relatives or other visitors with them while volunteering during their scheduled assignment.

19. **Medical Center Employees**: Volunteers who are Medical Center Employees will be placed in areas other than where they work. Volunteers who become employed by the Medical Center (temporary, term or regular) can remain a volunteer in an area and role that is different from their area of employment. Volunteer Services must be notified immediately if a volunteer is being considered for employment or has been hired.
20. **Letters of Recommendation:** Letters may be provided for volunteers following completion of the initial commitment. If a recommendation letter is needed please provide Volunteer Services at least two week’s notice.

21. **Internships and Shadowing:** Volunteer placements are not an internship or shadowing opportunity. Visit the following web site for more information: [www.mc.vanderbilt.edu](http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu) and type in “Observational Experience”.

### Volunteer Standards & Expectations

Volunteers should not violate department guidelines, Medical Center policies, Local, State or Federal laws. These actions could result in ending of a volunteer opportunity and may include but not limited to:

- Dishonesty
- Theft or destruction of VUMC property
- Threatening or hitting others
- Established pattern of no shows/no calls
- Unprofessional conduct/inappropriate behavior that may or may not result in injury or damage to persons or property
- Unauthorized use of the VUMC phone system
- Disclosure of information that is considered confidential by VUMC regarding patient or patient’s family members (i.e. gossip)
- Violation of Vanderbilt Anti Harassment policy
- Obtaining or divulging information of a confidential nature
- Adversely impacting patient care
- Jeopardizing patient safety
- Possession of weapon or drugs
- Falsifying records

### Volunteer Reporting

1. Volunteers are asked to contact **VOLUNTEER SERVICES at 322-2379 for Children’s Hospital, 936-3078 for Adult Hospital or 936-4800 for OHO** (voice mail is available) to report absences. When possible advance notification is preferred. Volunteer Services will notify the Volunteer Supervisor. After business hours and on weekends, please also call your Volunteer Supervisor. Also call these numbers or email your Coordinator to change volunteer day, assignment or time. (Some placements have different practices ie online re-scheduling. Please check with your Coordinator for confirmation of the reporting of absence practice in your area.)
2. Volunteers with colds, viruses, fevers, draining lesions, poison ivy, open cuts/sores or other infections are asked NOT to volunteer. Call Volunteer Services as quickly as possible to report any absence.

3. Volunteers should report any circumstances out of the ordinary (such as injuries, suspicious persons in area, spills, etc.) to their Volunteer Supervisor and the Volunteer Services Office when appropriate.

4. Volunteers are asked to promptly report any changes in address, phone number, etc. to the Volunteer Services Office. This will insure that our records are up-to-date in the event of an emergency. All volunteer files and information will be kept confidential to the extent possible.

5. Volunteers should refer questions and concerns of patients and visitors to the patients nurse or volunteer supervisor. Attempts to solve or personally resolve the issues are prohibited. (Examples include responding to questions of a legal, ethical or medical nature). This information will be directed to trained personnel for attention.

6. Volunteer comments and suggestions for improving our services and facilities are strongly encouraged. Volunteer Services welcomes feedback and encourages responding to surveys or questionnaires sent out or stopping by the Volunteer Services Office. The information received supports the Volunteer Program’s continuous service improvements.

7. Volunteers should report for volunteer service only during their assigned day and scheduled time, unless previously approved by Volunteer Services. Volunteers must NOT spend the night in the Hospital or extend their time to volunteer. Volunteers are not permitted to volunteer on unauthorized days and times.

8. Volunteers should refrain from bringing excessive amounts of money and other valuables when volunteering. Vanderbilt is not responsible for loss or damage to volunteers’ personal items.

**Volunteer Parking**

Courtesy parking is provided for all hospital volunteers during the time you are volunteering. If you volunteer in Children’s Hospital, Dayani Center or Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital you may park in the South Garage, on the Ground Level, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and half of 4th floors (where it says Patient and Visitors Parking).

If you volunteer in Vanderbilt University Hospital (including Medical Center East) or The Vanderbilt Clinic you can self-park in the Central Garage (preferred) or East Garage (self-parking). We request that volunteers leave the Valet Parking service to patients and families.
Sign-In & Sign-Out Procedure

All volunteers must sign-in and sign-out when volunteering at the Medical Center.

The Volunteer Information Center (VIC) system is used for this purpose. The VIC system will record your volunteer hours and allow you to check your schedule and messages that have been sent by the Volunteer Office.

There are four kiosks located in the following locations: Children’s Hospital (in the Volunteer Lounge), the lobby of the Vanderbilt University Hospital (next to the Information Desk), The Vanderbilt Clinic (1st floor lobby at the Information Desk) and on the 2nd floor of Medical Center East (behind the Information Desk).

Instructions for using the kiosks will be provided at training. You will need your Volunteer ID Number to access the kiosks and this will be given to you when you attend Volunteer Training.

Please note that you must sign-in at the beginning of your shift and sign-out at the end of your shift. If you forget to sign-out the system will not give you full credit for the hours you have volunteered.

If the system is not working, you should use the paper sign-in located in the notebook at the Volunteer Lounge in Children's Hospital or at the Information Desk in Vanderbilt University Hospital, The Vanderbilt Clinic and Medical Center East.

Dress Code Policy

ALL Volunteers are expected to dress in business casual while conducting themselves in a professional manner at all times. NOTE: Special “Dress Codes” may be required of certain assignments. This will be discussed during the interview.

- Volunteer must wear approved volunteer uniform with a Volunteer Photo ID Badge. Photo ID Badge must be worn with photo visible above the waist.
- Skirts and dresses must be knee length or longer.
- For your protection/safety, open-toe shoes and sandals are NOT permitted.
- Shorts are not permitted.
- Attire must be clean, in good repair and free of wrinkles.
- Fingernail length and jewelry worn should not be excessive nor interfere or potentially adversely impact patient care.
- Strapless, bareback, sundresses or halter tops should not be worn. Tops that do not cover the stomach area are not permitted.
- No visible body piercing with the exception of ears.
- Due to patients sensitivity to smells, cologne, and perfume or after shave should not be worn while volunteering.

**Food Consumption Policy**

In order to maintain a professional environment, food consumption is prohibited in areas visible to the public. Food should not be consumed in corridors, visitor lounges, patient rooms or at patient’s bedside.

**Smoking and Drug Free Environment**

Vanderbilt University Medical Center is a smoke free environment. Smoking is prohibited on the Medical Center Campus. In addition, it is a violation of the Medical Center policy for you to use, possess, sell, trade, offer for sale, and offer to buy illegal drugs, or otherwise engage in the illegal use of drugs or alcohol. It is also a violation of policy for you to volunteer while under the influence of or impaired by illegal drugs or alcohol.

**Volunteer Injury Incident Policy**

If a Vanderbilt Volunteer who has been duly processed and registered with the Department of Volunteer Services is injured while performing his/her scheduled volunteer assignment, the following procedure must be followed:

1. Volunteer, along with supervisor, must immediately go for evaluation and treatment. Report to the VUH Emergency Department. No appointment is required.
2. Notify Volunteer Services and the appropriate Volunteer Supervisor.
3. The Volunteer Supervisor must complete an occurrence report according hospital policy.

**Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest refers to a situation in which an individual’s financial, professional or other personal considerations may directly or indirectly affect, or have the appearance of affecting, a volunteer’s judgment in exercising any volunteer duty or responsibility at the Medical Center.
Photographs/Videotaping Policy

The taking of photographs or videotaping within the Medical Center is strictly prohibited.

Speaking on Behalf of the Organization

All media requests for access to or information about VUMC including patient, staff and facility must be referred to the office of News and Public Affairs which will assess the request and advise regarding further contact with the media. Volunteers must not speak with the media on behalf of the Medical Center unless requested by Volunteer Services.

Anti-Harassment Policy

Harassment of any individual based on sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or sexual orientation is unacceptable and grounds for disciplinary action, and also constitutes a violation of federal law.

Confidentiality Policy & HIPAA

All of our patients have a right to privacy. **All information regarding patients and family members is strictly confidential and is legally protected from disclosure.** It must never be discussed with any unauthorized person. Volunteers should not read a patient’s chart or discuss a patient or family member with anyone. Obtaining or divulging such confidential information will result in dismissal. All volunteers will be required to sign a confidentiality form and complete a HIPAA quiz.

Access of Patient Information & Computers

Protected health information (PHI) about patients is confidential and volunteers will not have access to patient medical records. Volunteer supervisors and other staff will provide information on a “need to know basis” for volunteers. Volunteers will not be issued computer passwords and should not access PPI electronically.

Leave of Absence

After you have fulfilled your initial commitment you may take a leave of absence up to three months. All leaves of absences must be approved by Volunteer Services.
Volunteer Resignation

It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide advance notice of their departure and a reason for their decision. All volunteers must return their Photo ID Badge and vest on their last day of volunteering.

Disciplinary Actions

Volunteers who do not adhere to the guidelines and procedures are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff. Prior to dismissal of a volunteer, staff will consult with the Volunteer Services Department.

Problem Resolution Procedure

A procedure exists so that volunteers have a way to deal with problems that may arise during the day-to-day operations of the organization. Every effort should be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally before presenting them in writing. If a situation is not resolved informally, the following steps should be followed:

Step 1:
When a volunteer has a problem, the first step should be to discuss the issue directly with the volunteer’s immediate Supervisor.

Step 2:
If a volunteer’s problem cannot be resolved with the immediate Supervisor, then the volunteer should contact the Volunteer Services Department in writing. The written statement should include a description of the situation and the desired outcome. The Volunteer Services Department will respond in writing within five business days of receipt of the written complaint. In addition, a meeting will be scheduled with the Volunteer, the Volunteer Supervisor and staff from Volunteer Services.

Continuing Education

The Medical Center is ever changing and growing so to keep volunteers up to date and well informed the Volunteer Services Department will offer regularly scheduled learning opportunities (such as “Lunch & Learn” sessions). Staff throughout the medical center will take part in these sessions to update you on various programs and services. You will be notified of these opportunities by way of special flyers, e-mail messages or through messages sent to you by way of the Volunteer Information Center (VIC) sign-in kiosk.
The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits nearly 15,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation’s predominant standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. To earn and maintain The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval™, an organization must undergo an on-site survey by a Joint Commission survey team at least every three years.

When Joint Commission is on site at Vanderbilt it will be an “unannounced survey” and the Volunteer Services Department will notify volunteers by way of the Volunteer Information Center (VIC) sign-in kiosk. As a volunteer, it is your responsibility to know the guidelines and policies provided in this handbook. If approached by a survey team please answer questions as you know the information. A copy of the volunteer handbook will be on hand in the volunteer lounge for your quick reference.

State inspections are similar to Joint Commission visits as they are unannounced and volunteers will be notified by way of the VIC sign-in kiosk. Volunteers may be responsible for answering questions from surveyors. Questions typically asked of volunteers are in regards to Fire Safety, your volunteer role and your specific training that has been provided, and knowledge of general hospital policies as outlined in this handbook.