



# New Volunteer Orientation



Ralph H. Johnson  
VA Medical Center

“The Price of Freedom is Seen Here”





Thank you for considering serving those who served. Our namesake, Ralph H. Johnson, bravely gave his life for our country and we consider it a privilege to serve the brave men and women like him who served our country.

While our primary function is to deliver the best care anywhere, our customers are our America's Heroes, which makes volunteering here a little different from most hospitals. If you enjoy working in a health care environment and showing appreciation for those who bought your freedom through sacrifice, we know you will enjoy serving where the price of freedom is visible every day.



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# Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center Voluntary Service

- **Dwight Kress** – Program Manager, Voluntary Service
  - **Candy Anderson** – Voluntary Service Specialist  
Myrtle Beach, Savannah, Hinesville CBOCs & Vet Centers; 843-848-0161
  - **Samuel “Matt” Matthews** – Voluntary Service Specialist  
North Charleston Clinic, Beaufort, and Driver Volunteer On-boarding; 843-818-5100 x 404426
  - **Amanda Mercer** – Voluntary Service Specialist  
Downtown Main Campus Volunteer On-boarding; 843-789-6059
  - **Amanda Bassett** – Program Support Clerk Information and Welcome Desk
- 
- Office Phone: (843) 789-7230
  - Staff Email: [VHAChaVAVS@va.gov](mailto:VHAChaVAVS@va.gov)
  - Website: <http://www.charleston.va.gov/giving/>

# Expectations

## TIME COMMITMENT

- Our program requires a minimum commitment of **SIX MONTHS, 4 HOURS PER WEEK**. If you cannot make this commitment, please **STOP** now and call or email us to talk about short-term needs.

## APPOINTMENT & ASSIGNMENT

- A VA Volunteer is a federally appointed position.
- If our personal/work schedule changes and you need to change your assignment schedule, let us know.
- If you aren't enjoying your assignment let us know. We are happy to try to find something different (about 1 in 7 volunteers change assignments, so you won't be alone). **ALL ASSIGNMENT CHANGES MUST GO THROUGH VOLUNTARY SERVICE!**

## RULES

- Follow the rules! Note that most of what you'll find here are health care rules, not government rules, and are designed for patient safety.

# Expectations cont...

- **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- When assisting Veteran patients, communication is key
- Always ask the Veteran if they need or want assistance before lending assistance
- Do not attempt to assist the Veteran once they have indicated they do not want or need assistance

- **DRESS CODE**

- Volunteers will wear vest, polo or other provided items to differentiate themselves
- Clothing with offensive messages are not permitted
- Open-toed shoes are not appropriate in patient care areas or where risk of injury to exposed feet is possible
- Lack of coverage that may present a health hazard or hair that cannot be adequately covered is not permitted

# Expectations cont...

- **POLITICS**
  - Because VA facilities are voter registration stations, no material (including clothing) can be brought into the facility by VA staff (including volunteers) promoting a party or candidate
- **RELIGION**
  - Only VA Chaplains can provide spiritual guidance. Volunteers can assist Chaplain Service under supervision
- **MONEY**
  - Only VA Voluntary Service can accept donations
  - Volunteers cannot engage in ANY financial transaction with a Veteran patient – sales, loans, gifts, check cashing are prohibited
  - If you see a compliance issue, inform Voluntary Service or our Compliance Officer
- **PROFESSIONALISM**
  - Professional boundaries must be maintained between staff (including volunteers) and patients

# VA Voluntary Service (VAVS)

- Founded 1946 to provide for nation's Veterans while they are cared for by VA health care facilities
- One of the largest centralized Volunteer programs in the Federal Government
- Over 350 organizations support VAVS
- Volunteers have provided over 700 million hours of service since 1946



Sabrina Clark—  
Director, Voluntary  
Service Office

# VA Voluntary Service cont...

- Voluntary Service is responsible for recruiting, orienting and placing volunteers within VA. Think of us as human resources for volunteers.
- We make sure volunteer hours are logged into our timekeeping system and that Veterans needs are being met through the help of our volunteers.
- Group visits to inpatients are coordinated by Voluntary Service.
- Voluntary Service is responsible for accepting and recording donations.
- Voluntary Service is the only service that can accept donations for the VA!



# Benefits of VA Volunteering

- Meal provided when volunteering four or more hours a day
- Tax free shopping at Canteen Service
- Personal satisfaction from serving those who served
- Free on-site training opportunities
- Improved health
- Free flu shots, screenings, and other benefits as announced
- Recognition and award opportunities
- Free use of the medical library

# Without Compensation (WOC) Appointee

- Volunteers accepted in the VAVS Program are considered WOC appointees.
- WOC precludes monetary payment, or any form of compensation by VA not authorized by policy



# Volunteer Assignments

- We classify our assignments into five broad categories:
  - Drivers
  - Clerical
  - Customer service/Wheelchair escort
  - Supplemental clinical
  - Interactive/recreation
- Factors like *ability to adequately perform duties* associated with an assignment, *background check* results, and *driving record* may be disqualifiers for some VA volunteer placement.
- We work hard to find assignments that fit your interests and our needs – happy volunteers keep volunteering!

# Youth Volunteers

- Parental/guardian consent required under age 18
- Youth volunteers are generally between 13 and 18
- All youth volunteers will be assigned and placed with a level of supervision based on their demonstrated maturity
- For safety reasons, youth volunteers should not be in a position where safety could be comprised such as
  - In a patient's room with the door closed
  - In secluded areas
  - In a closed office with fewer than 2 VA staff present
  - Any situation where you could not summon help immediately
  - Volunteers under age 18 cannot be fingerprinted (will be Occasional Volunteers)
- **Youth volunteers cannot work in same area as parent or guardian**

# List of Excluded Individuals or Entities (LEIE)

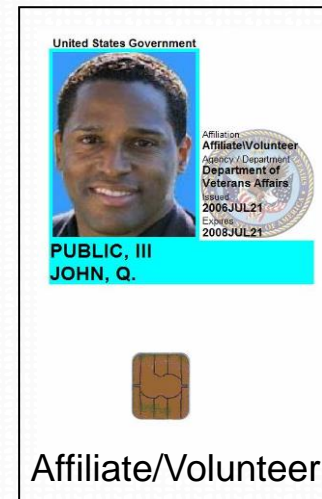
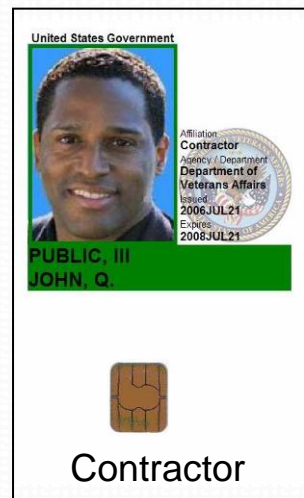
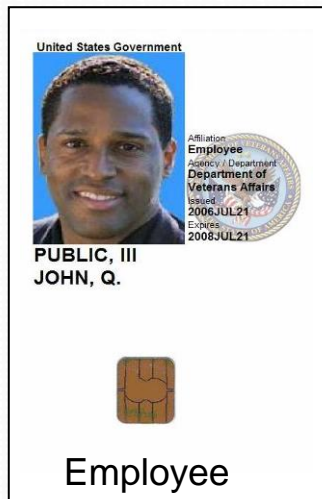
- List of Excluded Individuals and Entities cannot do business, even volunteer work, for the US government
- Reasons for placement on this list include:
  - Convictions for program-related fraud (i.e. Medicare, Medicaid)
  - Patient abuse
  - Licensing board actions
  - Default on Health Education Assistance Loans
- All volunteers must be cleared through the LEIE system
- Placement on the LEIE list makes an individual **ineligible** to volunteer unless a waiver can be obtained
- A waiver cannot be obtained

# Categories of Background Investigations

- SAC – Special Agreement Check reviews all national, state, and local police and court records
  - Conducted on ALL volunteers
  - Results are reviewed case by case
  - In most cases, minor offenses will not be considered
  - More serious offenses may limit volunteer activity
  - Identity theft and recent violent offenses may result in non-appointment
  - Volunteers who turn 18 while volunteering will be required to complete a SAC
- NACI – National Agency Check and Inquiries investigation includes SAC, and investigators also interview acquaintances, coworkers, and other individuals
  - Required on volunteers who require computer access, as well as other training
- HIPDB – Healthcare Practitioners Information Database reviews national and state clinical licensure issues (for practitioner volunteers only)

# Volunteer ID Cards

- Approved volunteers have ID cards issued by the PIV office
- Badges are issued after background check clearance
- You may have to return to the Medical Center to get your badge
- Volunteer IDs must be worn at all times while volunteering at any VA facility
- ID badges are the property of the United States.
- **You MUST turn in your ID if you are no longer volunteering, upon request or upon termination**



# Tracking Hours

- Volunteers must sign in to Voluntary Service computer workstations to report their volunteer hours
  - Charleston – 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Voluntary Service Office
  - Savannah Clinic
  - Myrtle Beach Clinic
  - Hinesville Clinic
- Locations without sign-in computers use sign in sheets
- If you cannot find any other way to sign in, please leave a message on our voicemail or email us
- Volunteer hours will only be awarded for projects / time completed under VA supervision, within the scope of the Volunteer assignment



# Timekeeping Reminders

- There is only a sign-in, not a sign out
- Estimate your service, rounding up your hours to the next whole hour
- If your estimate differs from actual, please do your best to make it up next time
- ALWAYS sign in/call in for liability and emergency locator purposes!
- If the computer is down, or you can't make it to one, use a sign-in sheet
- If recording your time on a sign in sheet, **please ensure your name and time is LEGIBLE** or we won't be able to record it

# Meals

- There is a 60-day/40-hour minimum service to be eligible for meals. After you reach this milestone, ask us to turn on your meal ticket options\*\*
- Meals are available in:
  - Charleston – Canteen on first floor
  - Clinics – Meal vouchers for local restaurants (Savannah, Myrtle Beach and Hinesville)
- *You must present meal ticket to receive meal, which is good for up to \$6.00 at the Canteen or local restaurant*
  - *No change will be given*
  - *Must pay any overage*
  - *Only valid on the day you volunteer*

**\*\*Drivers are excepted from this provision**

# Parking

- At Ralph H Johnson VAMC there are 18 Volunteer parking spots
  - Permits are issued in the Voluntary Service Office
  - Permit required only if using Volunteer Parking
  - Requires license, registration, insurance card
- Clinics have general parking – no permit needed

# Patient Abuse

- Patient abuse or neglect is any action or failure to act which causes unreasonable suffering or harm to the patient
- It is the policy of the VA that no patient is to be mistreated or abused in any way: physically, psychologically, sexually or verbally by any employee, volunteer, student or visitor
- Volunteers who witness any kind of abuse toward a patient must promptly report it to their immediate supervisor or the VAVS staff and be prepared to write a statement

# What is Sexual Harassment?

- Sexually-oriented verbal kidding, teasing, or jokes
- Repeated sexual flirtations, advances or propositions
- Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- Graphic or degrading comments about an individual or the individual's appearance
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures
- Subtle pressure for sexual activity
- Physical contact such as patting, hugging, pinching, or brushing against another's body

# What To Do If You Experience Sexual Harassment

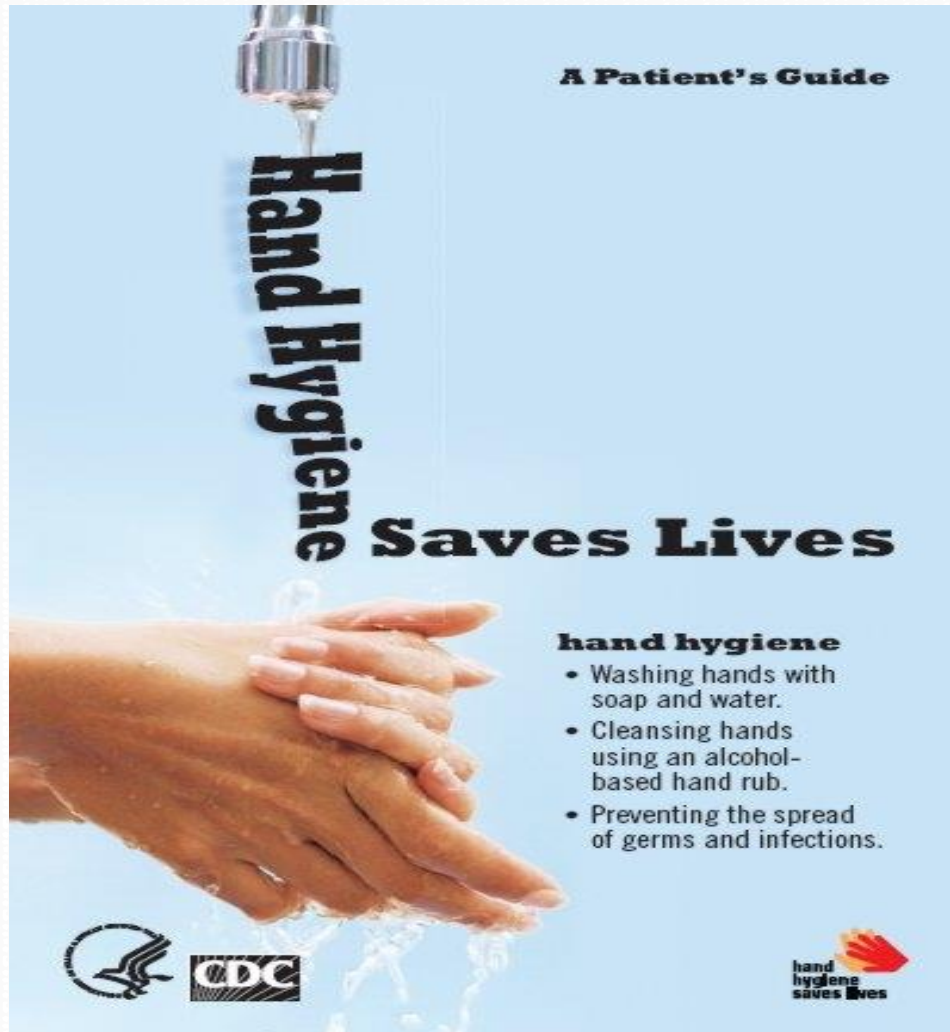
- Tell the person the behavior is unwanted, unwelcomed, or unsolicited, and to stop
- Keep a record
- Ask co-workers if they observed the behavior
- Contact supervisor or Voluntary Service staff immediately



# Hand Hygiene

- You must wash your hands:
  - Before and after work shifts
  - Before and after each contact with a patient or objects used by the patient (i.e. pushing wheelchairs or stretchers)
  - Before eating, drinking, or handling food
  - After restroom use, smoking, eating, grooming, touching face, hair, money, etc.
  - Anytime your hands are dirty or may be contaminated

# Hand Hygiene



**Hand Washing Technique – Takes 20 seconds and includes the following steps:**

1. Wet hands
2. Apply soap
3. Work up lather for 15 seconds
4. Rinse hands
5. Dry hands with paper towel
6. Turn off water faucet with paper towel
7. Open restroom with paper towel when exiting



# Infection Control

- Infection control practices include:
  - Sneezing or coughing into a tissue or upper sleeve, rather than into your hands
  - Discarding tissue into wastebasket
  - Cleaning your hands
  - Avoiding patient contact when you have a respiratory infection or cold
  - Staying home when you have symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, fever, skin rash, or the flu
  - Keeping appropriate vaccinations current (influenza, tetanus, etc.)

# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE includes:
  - Disposable Gowns
  - Caps
  - Masks
  - Gloves
  - Face shields/eye shields
  - Shoe covers
- Volunteers should only wear PPE as directed by supervisor and medical staff
- **Do not** walk through the facility wearing PPE. Dispose of used equipment before leaving patient room



# Isolation Precaution

- Isolation precaution prevents the spread of infection among patients, hospital personnel, volunteers, and visitors
- If a patient's room is marked with a STOP SIGN, comply with instructions for required personal protective equipment before entering
- Ask ward nursing staff for assistance if you have any questions



# Facility Safety

- Weapons of any kind are prohibited on VA property
- Wear appropriate clothing; including Volunteer Vest or Driver Shirt and shoes for your assignment
- If machinery is used during an assignment, follow safety rules
- This is a non-smoking facility - smoking is restricted to outdoors in designated areas
- For safety reasons, food prepared in a private home may not be given to patients
- Only foods prepared by a commercial licensed/inspected food establishment may be received and served to groups
- Be cautious about giving personal information to patients
- Report all injuries to your supervisor, no matter how small

# Confidentiality & Privacy

- What is Patient Confidentiality?
  - The obligation of others to keep an individual's personal information secret, disclosing it only within the bounds of professional and legal standards
- What is Patient Privacy?
  - Freedom from unjustified intrusion into one's personal life

## What's the Difference?

- Looking into records without a “need to know” is a privacy violation
- Sharing protected information, whether or not you have a need to know it, is a confidentiality violation

*VA takes patient privacy and confidentiality seriously!*

# What Are Your Responsibilities?

- Volunteers, as WOC employees, are subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act and all VA regulations implementing that statute
- Volunteers must assist with safeguarding the privacy of patient information accessed during the course of their duties at the VA facility
- You are required to protect information from release and to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and security of health information
- If you see a security breach (unauthorized use, suspect fraud, or see/find PHI) report it immediately
- If you have a volunteer **assignment requiring computer access**, you are agreeing and accepting the responsibility of protecting VA information when you sign the Rules of Behavior. Take this seriously!
- **Volunteers are not exempt from prosecution or fine in case of an unlawful release of patient information** – VHA Handbook Section 7a
- Unauthorized request for, or release of confidential patient information is considered a misdemeanor, and subject to up to **\$5,000** fine

# Cameras, Video Equipment, etc.

- Please respect our Veteran's privacy by refraining from taking pictures of them
- Patient privacy includes the right to not be photographed without consent
- Voluntary Service and Public Relations have forms to be filled out by a Veteran giving their permission to be photographed
  - These forms include information on who is taking the picture and where it will be used
  - Photographs containing Veterans are not to be taken unless these forms are signed

# Threats

- Potential signs of threats
  - No ID badge
  - Visible signs of nervousness (like excessive sweating)
  - Inappropriate clothing that is excessively baggy or too heavy in warm weather
  - Contact VAPD at x7251 to report
- If you feel threatened
  - Avoid confrontation
  - Walk away
  - Report immediately to VAPD (x7251)
  - If you can't get away from the aggressor, scream for help



# Suspicious Bags or Boxes

- Ask yourself:
  - Is the bag or box unattended?
  - Do you see an unknown substance?
  - Do you smell a strange odor?
- If you answered “yes” to any of the above, then:
  - Do not touch the bag
  - Call VAPD (x7251 NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER)
  - Keep your eyes on the bag until the Police arrive to ensure no one takes it by mistake

# Hazardous Material



- As a volunteer, you won't be required to handle any hazardous materials
- If an instance occurs where you feel you must, ask your supervisor for instructions
- **Do not** handle needles, syringes, or other sharps
  - Request Nursing, Medical, or other technical personnel to dispose of such equipment
- **Do not** attempt to clean up any spills, vomitus, or expectoration
  - Contact Environmental Management Service to decontaminate the area

# Fire Equipment

- Fire alarm systems in hallways
- Sprinkler systems in all buildings
- Fire extinguishers throughout facility



- Caution – When an announcement is made that the fire alarm is being tested, wall fire alarms (pull stations) and strobes won't work. Call x7911!

# Responding to a Fire

## RACE

- **R**escue
  - Get patients and those unable to escape fire clear of danger
- **A**larm
  - Pull fire alarm or call **x7911(EMERGENCY NUMBER)**
- **C**onfine
  - Close doors to inhibit spread of fire
- **E**xtinguish or **E**vacuate
  - In the case of small, isolated fires, extinguish IF you are able. In case of large fires, evacuate yourself and those unable to evacuate themselves

# Fire Extinguishers

- Do not attempt to put out a fire unless you have been trained on how to use a fire extinguisher
- When using a fire extinguishers:

## PASS

- **P**ull the pin
- **A**im nozzle at the base of the flames
- **S**queeze the handle
- **S**weep the extinguisher back and forth across the fire until the fire is extinguished

# Next Steps

- Print the New Volunteer Completion Certificate and Assessment
  - Click [HERE](#) to access or
  - Copy and paste <http://www.charleston.va.gov/CHARLESTON/services/volunteer/NVOTestwithCertificate.pdf> into search bar
- Complete the assessment and sign the certification
- Sign and complete the Volunteer Application
- Send completed forms
  - Email: [vhachavavs@va.gov](mailto:vhachavavs@va.gov)
  - Fax (843) 789-6132

**\*\*If you are a volunteer driver or a volunteer phlebotomist please contact the Voluntary Services Office at (843) 789-7230 for information on additional documentation required\*\***

# Thank You!

On behalf of the nearly 75,000 Veterans served annually by the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC, serving Beaufort, Charleston, Myrtle Beach, Hinesville and Savannah, we thank you for your interest in serving those who served! Without volunteers like you, we would be unable to provide the exceptional level of care our Veterans deserve.



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