



## FAQs FOR HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS

**Q: Why are volunteers important for the VNA of Somerset Hills Hospice Care program?**

**A:** Volunteers are an integral part of the hospice team and provide patients, caregivers and family members with physical and emotional support during this important and stressful time. Care giving for loved ones with a life-limiting illness can be exhausting. Volunteers offer opportunities for companionship, assistance or a much needed break (respite).

**Q: How long is the training program?**

**A:** Volunteers are required to attend an 18 hour hospice training program. The training takes place once a week for six weeks, typically for three hours each session.

**Q: What topics are covered during the training?**

**A:** In addition to gaining an overall understanding of the hospice philosophy, volunteers will receive instruction in the roles of hospice team members including the patient's physician, hospice physician, nurse, social worker, spiritual care counselor, rehabilitation therapists, certified home health aides, and trained volunteers. Volunteer responsibilities will be discussed so that each individual can make their own decision about what kind of service they would like to provide.

**Q: Other than visiting patients and their family members at home, how else may I be of service as a hospice volunteer?**

**A:** As a volunteer, you will work closely with the hospice team to provide respite for the caregiver and/or companionship for the patient. Help is also necessary at the VNA office for projects such as phone calls, mailings, fundraisers or assisting with grief support. We welcome hospice volunteers bringing special skills that might benefit our organization and clients, such as: massage therapy; pet therapy; Reiki; computer skills; hair styling; home improvements; or sewing.

**Q: I am not interested in working directly with patients. Am I still required to attend the entire training program?**

**A:** Yes. Training not only provides volunteers with a better understanding of how patients are treated and the spectrum of care provided through our hospice program, but also ensures that they are prepared to visit patients immediately, should their interests change.

**Q: After completing the training program, how much time must I commit as a volunteer?**

**A:** There are no set volunteer schedules at the VNA of Somerset Hills. It all depends on the needs of our care team and the availability of the volunteer. Volunteer services are flexible and can work around most schedules. Working in cooperation with our Coordinator of Volunteers, you decide on the number of hours and schedule that you are willing and able to provide. Two hours a week is encouraged.

**Q: Will I ever be required to assist with a patient's physical needs?**

**A:** Our hospice interdisciplinary team includes certified home health aides who provide each patient with necessary personal care assistance. We want our volunteers to feel confident when it comes to the interaction with our clients, and will not expect you to provide care for which you are not comfortable and/or trained.

**Q. As a new hospice volunteer, what kind of support will I receive from the VNA?**

**A:** The Coordinator of Volunteers is responsible for training, supervising, supporting and scheduling our volunteers. Hospice team members are also available to the volunteer by phone or in the office. Our volunteers stay connected and supported through meetings, educational in-services, phone calls, newsletters and more.

**Q. Will I ever be expected to be present when a patient dies?**

**A:** Being present at the death of a client is a very personal and individual choice made by the volunteer and the patient/family. Our hospice offers to keep vigil and be present at the time of death if the family requests this support. Since death is often sudden or unpredictable, it is possible that you may be present.

**Q. What type of environment will I be working in?**

**A:** VNA hospice care can be provided anywhere the patient calls home, including skilled nursing and assisted living facilities. We attend to our patients wherever they live. If you are providing support other than patient care, you will work at the VNA of Somerset Hills headquarters, 200 Mt. Airy Rd., Basking Ridge, NJ 07920.