

Volunteer Handbook



Fargo VA Health Care System
DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS
2101 N Elm Street
Fargo, ND 58102

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK INDEX	PAGE
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
History of VHA	4
About Fargo VA Health Care System	5
Mission, Vision and Values	5
Voluntary Service Goals	6
Basic Qualifications of volunteers	6
Orientation	6
Supervision	7
Assignment and Duty Hours	7
Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers	7
Occasional Volunteers	8
Awards	8
VA Core Values and Characteristics	9
Volunteer Rules and Ethics	9
Boundaries	10
Uniforms and Apparel	10
Time and Attendance	11
Customer Service	12
Political Activity	13
Publicity	13
Unauthorized Solicitations/Financial Transactions	13
Meals	13
Credit Union	14
Occupational Health	14
Infection Control	14
Health	17
Patient Privacy/Confidentiality	18
Patient Abuse	19
Sexual Harassment	19
Emergency Codes	20
Elopement Risk Patients	28
Hazardous Materials	28
Patient Safety/Risk Management	29
Patient Food Policy	32
Actively Dying Veteran Door Sign	33
Escort Volunteers	33
Wheelchair Safety	35
Geriatric Patients	36
Women Veterans	37

INTRODUCTION

Dear Volunteer,

It is our privilege to welcome you to the Fargo VA Health Care System. Soon you will blend into your work environment and will work side by side with paid employees to provide seamless service to our very important Veteran patients.

To prepare you for your new challenges, you are requested to review and become knowledgeable about the material presented in this booklet. Should you have difficulty with any of the material, please consult Voluntary Service staff for assistance or clarification. Your understanding of the information is very important. This handbook is designed to assist you in carrying out your assigned duties more effectively and efficiently.

You, as a volunteer, are considered a valuable member of the health care system team, and you will function as a part of that team under the direct supervision of a staff member. You do not replace paid personnel. To the contrary, you perform many useful services that are beyond the scope of the regular staff.

Through volunteer service, you not only provide very necessary and worthwhile assistance to the patients and staff, but you can also gain valuable experience. If nothing else, we hope it will give you a deeper consciousness of the responsibility for helping others and the satisfaction such service brings.

Once again, welcome! We are glad that you are a member of the Fargo VA Health Care System team!

Sincerely,



Karinn R. Davidson, MBA
Chief, Voluntary Service
701-235-3700 ext. 9-3395

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA)

The idea of providing health care to soldiers dates back to colonial America. In 1776, the Continental Congress encouraged enlistment by providing pensions to those who became disabled.

During the Civil War, President Lincoln called upon congress and the American people **“to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan.”** This has become the motto of the VA.

During World War I, Congress established new Veterans’ benefits including disability compensation, insurance, a family allotment program, and vocational rehabilitation. The Veterans Administration (VA) was established in 1930 when Congress authorized the President to consolidate and coordinate government activities affecting war Veterans. Initially, this new agency served over 4.7 million Veterans.

During World War II, it became necessary to expand VA facilities to accommodate the vast increase in Veteran population. The Korean and Vietnam conflicts added more Veterans. By 1982, the Veteran population was estimated at 28.5 million. The VA currently operates hospitals, clinics and nursing homes. In addition, the VA operates an outstanding medical research program that has made significant improvements in health care treatments and participates in educating nearly half of the physicians trained in the United States.

The Veterans Administration became a cabinet level department in 1989 and was renamed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Department of Veterans Affairs is comprised of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA), and the Veterans Cemetery Administration (VCA).

Currently, the VA operates the nation’s largest integrated health care system, with a budget of more than \$65 billion and a staff of 225,000 employees in 162 hospitals, approximately 175 nursing homes and domiciliaries, more than 800 outpatient clinics and 206 counseling centers. In addition to providing medical care to over four million Veterans annually, VA’s medical system conducts major research, trains medical professionals through affiliation with academic centers, and provides medical support in national disasters.

Historically, the VA patient population has been primarily male. The VA is increasing services to women Veterans. During 1996, nearly 180,000 women sought outpatient care and 16,000 sought inpatient care at VA facilities.

The VA is a major national research asset conducting basic, clinical, epidemiological and behavioral studies across the entire spectrum of scientific disciplines.

FARGO VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The Fargo VA Health Care System is one of nine VA facilities in the nation that provide combined medical and benefit services through Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration.

The Fargo VA Health Care System provides medical care to Veterans residing in North Dakota, western Minnesota and northern South Dakota. The Medical Center is a general medical/surgical/psychiatric facility with a Community Living Center (CLC) that provides extended care to Veterans. Veterans are referred to the VAMC Minneapolis for tertiary care.

The Fargo VA Health Care System also supports nine Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) located in Bismarck, Grafton, Williston, Dickinson, Jamestown, Minot, and Grand Forks, North Dakota as well as Bemidji and Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

The Fargo VA Regional Office (VARO) employs 36 employees who administer over \$86 million in benefits to Veterans and their dependants in the regional area. Professional, technical, and support personnel assist Veterans with compensation and pensions, insurance, education, home loans, and other benefits.

The Fargo VA Health Care System employs over 890 employees with an annual budget of approximately \$70 million for medical care. An active research program and a successful academic affiliation with the University of North Dakota School of Medical and Health Sciences are maintained. It supports residencies in Internal Medicine, Psychiatry, and Surgery, and provides training to allied health professionals.

The VHA is divided into geographic areas called Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs). The Fargo VA is a member of VISN 23, which includes the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, western Wisconsin, western Illinois, northern Kansas, northern Missouri, and eastern Wyoming. VISN 23 provides a continuum of high quality care services to all eligible Veterans. VISN 23 is built on a foundation of primary care and is accountable for community health, joint-venture initiatives with Department of Defense (DOD), major research initiatives, and education affiliations.

OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION: Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. (The most important thing to remember is that we are here for the patients. Veterans are the focus of all our services.)

VISION: To be a patient-centered, integrated health care organization for Veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; a community partner and a back up for national emergencies.

VALUES: Trust, Respect, Excellence, Commitment, Compassion, Collaboration, Empowerment, and Continuous Improvement.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE GOALS

- Orient, place, train and utilize volunteers sufficient in number to make Voluntary Service a continuing stakeholder in the VA Health Care System's Design for Excellence.
- Recruit, motivate and supervise the volunteers that will support the VA Health Care System's staff.
- Support the continued successful operations of the Fargo VA Health Care System by providing VA staff with administrative, clerical and technical volunteers.
- Maintain and expand our current active volunteer roster through aggressive recruitment and effective structured orientation, and training.
- Secure quality service to the Veteran patients through creative programs.
- Serve the Veteran patients, medical staff and community with excellence.
- Recognize the unwavering dedication of the volunteers who give their time and talents to enhance the quality of life for our patients.
- Veterans and volunteers are our focus.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

- Sincere interest in rendering service.
- Conscientious and reliable.
- Business-like approach to work.
- Willingness to accept Health Care System standards of orientation, conduct, and supervision.
- Sense of responsibility and dependability in accomplishment of purpose.
- Ability to work with groups as well as individuals.
- Tact, congeniality, patience, warmth, kindness and humanity.
- Physical ability to perform a volunteer assignment.
- Sense of pride in the work.
- Must be at least 14 years of age.

ORIENTATION

All regular scheduled volunteers will receive appropriate orientation before entering their Voluntary Service assignments. This includes an electronic fingerprinting check (background check) for all volunteers.

The orientation you will receive is your introduction to the Fargo VAHCS and its care and treatment program for the patients.

The basic purposes of the orientation are to provide you with:

- Knowledge of the policies, functions, and objectives of the VA Health Care System.
- An understanding of the nature and significance of the VA Voluntary Service program.
- An understanding of the fundamental principles and procedures of volunteer service in the Fargo VA Health Care System.

It is the responsibility of the VA staff members supervising volunteers to orient and give the necessary on-the-job instructions in the specific program area in which the volunteer is assigned.

SUPERVISION

Each volunteer works under the direct supervision of a VA staff member.

ASSIGNMENT AND DUTY HOURS

Your volunteer assignment and hours of duty will be arranged by the supervisor of the Service line where you will be working.

Any change in your duty schedule must be approved by your supervisor. If you are unable to continue in your volunteer assignment, please let Voluntary Service know.

If you should ever become unhappy about your assignment, please don't simply stop coming in. Contact Voluntary Service and we will discuss another area for you. We have many assignments, and we know we can find the right one for you. You must not change any assignment on your own.

REGULARLY SCHEDULED (RS) VOLUNTEERS

Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers are those volunteers who normally participate in VA Voluntary Service on a regularly scheduled assignment, under VA supervision, at least once a week or once a month. RS volunteers are considered by the VA to be "without compensation" employees.

All regularly scheduled volunteers are expected to be present at their scheduled assignment(s). Plans for anticipated absence should always be made with your VA supervisor.

OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEERS

Occasional Volunteers are individuals who assist on an infrequent basis. They do not have a regularly scheduled assignment under a VA staff member and are not eligible for the benefits and privileges to which the RS volunteer is entitled.

AWARDS

VA awards are presented through the Voluntary Service Program to volunteers in recognition of their volunteer hours and years of service. The following awards are presented each year to volunteers who meet the following requirements:

<u>HOURS</u>	<u>AWARDS</u>	<u>YEARS OF SERVICE</u>
50	Pin (youth)	15 years - 15 year pin
100	Pin	20 years - 20 year pin
150	Pin (youth)	25 years - 25 year pin
300	Pin	30 years - 30 year pin
500	Pin	35 years - 35 year pin
750	Pin	40 years - 40 year pin
1000	Pin	
1750	Pin	
2500	Pin	
3750	Pin	
4000	Pin & Certificate	
5000	Pin	
6250	Pin	
7500	Dedicated Service Plaque	
8750	Outstanding Merit Award Plaque	
10,000	Honor Award Bowl	
12,500	Outstanding Service Award Pyramid	
15,000	Exceptional Honor Award Medallion	
17,500	Superior Service Award Plate	
20,000	James H. Parke Achievement Award Tray	

VA CORE VALUES AND CHARACTERISTICS

On June 20, 2011, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced VAs Core Values and Characteristics. As VA volunteers, you are an integral part of this organization and a defining aspect of its spirit and heart. It is important for you to be aware of these Core Values and Characteristics and to incorporate them into your volunteer work. The Core Values are the basic elements of how we go about our work – they define “who we are” – and form the underlying principles we will use every day in our service to Veterans. The Core Characteristics define “what we stand for” and what we strive to be as an organization.”

VA Core Values: "I CARE"

Integrity
Commitment
Advocacy
Respect
Excellence

VA Core Characteristics:

Trustworthy
Accessible
Quality
Innovative
Agile
Integrated

INTEGRITY	Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.
COMMITMENT	Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.
ADVOCACY	Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.
RESPECT	Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.
EXCELLENCE	Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

Please keep these Core Values and Core Characteristics in mind as you are performing your volunteer duties. In a message from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, he stated, "These are more than just words. They represent our promise to do our best every day to perform our crucial mission of caring for Veterans, family members and other beneficiaries. I ask for your enthusiastic support in instilling the results of this work into VAs culture. Let us challenge each other to embrace these Values and Characteristics and look for ways to exemplify them each day."

VOLUNTEER RULES AND ETHICS

- Be punctual and dependable.
- Information concerning patients and their records is considered confidential.
- Speak softly in wards, corridors, and the library.
- Advise patient to refer pension and compensation problems to the Veterans Benefits Counselors or to Service Organization representatives.
- Do not lean or sit on the patients' beds.

- Do not discuss religion, politics, or patient illness with patients.
- It is not a good idea to give your home address or telephone number to patients.
- Do not make suggestions to patients about treatments or suggest remedies.
- Due to the nature of illness with patients on ward 4B, youth volunteers are not allowed access to this area.
- Avoid showing pity to a patient, but do not be excessively cheerful. Patients know how they feel. Let them do the talking; be a good listener.
- Volunteer workers should not enter a room that is posted “Isolation” or “No Visitors” unless asked to do so by a nurse or doctor.
- Observe the rules. Consult your supervisor in the event you wish to learn the reason for some specific rule or regulation.
- Do not take food, beverages, or medicine to a patient without permission from proper authority such as a doctor or nurse.
- If a situation arises which is awkward and you do not know how to handle it, go to your supervisor. Volunteers should not argue with patients.
- Smoking is prohibited in the medical center.
- Possession of contraband, alcohol/illegal drugs, or being under the influence of either while at the VA will be grounds for immediate dismissal.
- Exercise good judgment in completing your assignments and show initiative where required.
- Be friendly and cooperative with members of other organizations with whom you come in contact.
- Do not work in an assignment that causes you any mental or physical strain or anguish. Report such problems to your supervisor and/or Voluntary Service for reassignment.
- Inform the nurse when you take any patient off the ward.
- Do your work cheerfully.

BOUNDARIES

Like employees, volunteers must maintain appropriate relationship boundaries with employees, other volunteers, patients, former patients and/or patient’s families. This means volunteers must not establish personal friendships or intimate relationships with employees, patients, former patients, or family members of patients.

Additionally, should an employee, volunteer, patient, or patient’s family member initiate an inappropriate relationship, the volunteer is responsible for refusing the initiative. We understand that, in certain situations, pre-existing relationships are present. In the course of volunteering, if a pre-existing relationship should surface, please notify your supervisor.

UNIFORMS AND APPAREL

The Fargo VA has a business casual policy Monday through Thursday. Employees and volunteers are permitted to wear blue jeans on Fridays. Volunteer workers identified with an organization are permitted and encouraged to wear insignia and/or uniforms as adopted by their organization and in conformity with their organization's regulations.

All volunteers are expected to keep themselves neat, clean, and well groomed while working. **Volunteer ID badges must be worn at all times.** All footwear should be kept clean and neat. Hosiery or socks must be worn at all times. No open-toed shoes or sandals are permitted. All clothing is to be neat and clean and in good repair. Clothes should be conservative in nature. Clothes should not present a provocative image or exposure of one's body that can be considered distasteful or create an unpleasant atmosphere for the patients, volunteers, or hospital staff. No article of clothing shall include inappropriate illustrations or inappropriate advertising. Examples of inappropriate slogans, illustrations and advertising include clothing that promotes or displays alcohol, tobacco products, illegal drugs, or might be degrading to individuals based on sex, age, race, national origin, or sexual orientation. The following items of clothing are considered to be **inappropriate**:

- Athletic warm-ups/sweat suits (to include items made of spandex).
- Tank tops/tube tops/halter tops.
- Short shirts revealing the abdomen.
- Miniskirts.
- Shorts.
- See-through clothing.
- Hats, caps, bandannas worn on the head (unless working outside or in an area where dirt, dust or foreign matter may be a problem).
- If you work with patients, it is best to leave most jewelry at home. Also perfumes or colognes may disturb the patients (some departments may prohibit the use of these products). Hair and nails should be kept clean and neat.
- Blue jeans are prohibited Monday through Thursday unless you are a Volunteer Transportation Network driver or an evening Recreation volunteer. Colored jeans are acceptable.

TIME AND ATTENDANCE

Volunteers are reminded to enter their hours in the computer (located in the hallway outside the Voluntary Service Office) each time they are in to volunteer. Some volunteers may have more than one assignment or combination code. If so, the volunteer must be sure to record the hours for that day under the proper combination code. The combination code identifies the volunteer's affiliation, work schedule, and assigned department. If any of this information changes, please contact Voluntary

Service. If the computer is down or not functioning, volunteers may log in their hours on the daily sign-in sheet located next to the computer, or may contact Voluntary Service staff for assistance.

Attendance is crucial to the success of each department. If you commit yourself to a set schedule and do not adhere to it, you could jeopardize the mission of the service department. Schedules are developed so proper training and supervision can be provided, as well as developing a workflow. If you are unable to come in for any reason, please notify your supervisor as soon as possible so that they may find a temporary replacement for you.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer Service is any activity that enhances the Veterans' experience and exceeds their expectations. Every day, there are many ways we can effectively respond to the needs of those we serve and those with whom we work. Never forget that it is an honor to be able to serve our nation's Veterans. Most patients appreciate what you do for them and will respond with a smile. There are exceptions. Remember that when a patient is cranky or even insulting, the patient is sick and this could account for their actions. As a volunteer, you must learn to empathize with their feelings, appreciate their concerns, and let them know that you are there if they need you. A good volunteer works on developing empathy, tact, courtesy, and a smile that lets the patients know that you care about them. The following gestures and statements do not take much time and the return on your investment is very gratifying:

- **Introduce** – Establish a personal identity with the person by introducing yourself. Let the person know who you are and what department you represent.
- **Identify** – Many times, people feel a loss of personal identity. Call the person by name to reinforce that you related in a personal way.
- **Respect** – Show respect by addressing him/her by their proper name (Mr. Hernandez or Mrs. Smith, for example). Individuals who prefer to be addressed by their first name will let you know.
- **Knock** – The patient's privacy is invaded at all hours of the day and night. Be considerate. Tap lightly on the door before you enter a patient's room.
- **Smile** – Smiles help to promote a friendly environment. Administered at an appropriate time, a smile may be the most comforting medication you can give to a patient.
- **Greet** – As you walk through the corridors and other public areas of the facility, greet everyone by saying "hello" or "good morning." This short interaction will help people feel welcome.
- **Compliment** – Simple observations can reveal many opportunities to pay sincere compliments.
- **Initiate** – Anticipate needs and respond before you are asked. Your perceptiveness and thoughtfulness will be appreciated and admired. If someone

looks confused or needs assistance, stop and lend a hand. By taking the initiative, you can exceed all expectations.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

A volunteer must not canvass or solicit support for any political party, candidate, or faction, nor do any act on their behalf while on duty as a volunteer.

PUBLICITY

All pictures or photos of patients must be cleared with the Public Affairs Officer. Consent forms for use of a picture and voice must be signed by a competent patient before any pictures are taken. Any completed consent forms must be reviewed and approved by the Public Affairs Officer.

UNAUTHORIZED SOLICITATIONS/FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

No one may solicit contributions or otherwise promote any national or local welfare campaign or other type of campaign while on any VA premises unless that campaign has the appropriate VA endorsement. No one will sell stocks, tickets, articles, commodities, or services on VA premises without the proper authorization. This policy avoids bringing embarrassment or discredit to the VA, individuals, or organizations.

Volunteers are also not to engage in any financial transactions with patients of the VA Health Care System. Prohibited transactions include, but are not limited to, borrowing money from patients, purchasing items for patients and cashing checks for patients. If a Veteran is in need of a financial transaction, please let the ward/clinic clerk or nurse know.

MEALS

The Health Care System Director has authorized a \$6.00 stipend to help defray the cost of noon meals for regular scheduled volunteers whose assignments extend over the noon lunch period. Noon meals are served between the hours of 10:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. Volunteers must work a minimum of four hours, some of which cover the noon meal hours, to be eligible for a meal ticket. Volunteers must sign in on the computer next to the Voluntary Service office in order to pick up their printed meal tickets. Please sign the meal ticket and present it to the cashier in the cafeteria.

CREDIT UNION

Regularly scheduled volunteers are welcome to join the Fargo VA Federal Credit Union, located in the basement.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Welcome to the Occupational Health Clinic, a central location where your needs are met. Services are geared specifically for all Volunteers.

What we can do for you:

- Occupational Injury Care and Follow Up
 - Band-Aids
 - Ice packs
 - Ace Wrap
 - Vehicle Operating Physical Exams
- Wellness Programs
 - Employee Fitness Center (EFC)
 - Volunteers receive a free courtesy membership

Located in basement Room BA-82 or call extension 2205

INFECTION CONTROL

The risk of infection is always present. Volunteers should take precautions to prevent or minimize the risk of spreading infections. Even if your volunteer assignment does not involve direct contact with patients, you can help prevent the spread of infection by following some basic guidelines.

First and most importantly, **hand washing or hand hygiene is the single most effective way and the most important thing you can do to help prevent the spread of infection.** You must wash your hands or use a hand hygiene product supplied by the Health Care System:

- Upon arriving at a VA facility before beginning your assignment
- After personal care activities such as blowing your nose, touching your face for any reason, or applying makeup
- After using the rest room
- Before and after eating
- After having contact with any soiled or contaminated items or environmental surfaces, such as after transporting specimens or pushing wheelchairs

- Between any contact with patients or their surroundings
- Before and after preparing or serving food
- Before leaving the Medical Center

The Health Care System supplies hand hygiene foam (Purell) in dispensers in all patient care areas. The foam can be used for cleaning your hands provided your hands are not visibly soiled. It should not be used after using the bathroom, after eating, or when preparing or serving food. Hands should be washed with soap and water in those instances.

Other things to remember to prevent and/or control infections include:

- Do NOT come to volunteer if you are sick or have an illness that might be contagious.
- If you are unsure of what you should do in a situation (such as whether you should enter a room, or assist a patient with a specific activity), ask a staff person to advise you
- Do not bring food in to patients. They may be on restricted diets and, for some people; food can be a source of infectious illness.
- Do not “share” items between patients such as lap robes, blankets or personal care items.
- Gloves are not to be worn outside of a patient’s room.
- Infection control is everyone’s concern.

Hand Hygiene Methods:

Hand Washing Procedure

- Pump paper towel dispenser to have paper towel available.
- Turn on faucet and wet hands.
- Keep hands lower than your elbows and apply soap.
- Wash vigorously for at least 15 seconds, use friction and pay attention to fingertips, between fingers, under rings and around nails.
- Rinse well, keeping hands in downward position.

- Tear off paper towels and dry hands.
- Use paper towel to turn off faucets.
- Discard paper towels in the trash.

Use of Purell Foam Hand Sanitizer

- Make sure your hands are not visibly soiled (do not use if they are visibly soiled, after using the bathroom, or after eating – wash with soap and water).
- Place one hand under the dispenser.
- Allow the premeasured amount of foam to collect in your palm.
- Rub hands together, distributing the foam on all surfaces of hands.
- Continue to rub vigorously until your hands are dry.

Body Substance Precautions

Working in a health care facility has the potential to place you at risk for exposure to possible diseases contracted through exposure to another person's blood or body fluids. Do **NOT** clean up spills of blood or other body fluids, including urine or vomit. Do not pick up any sharp item, such as a needle found lying on the floor, or handle any linen or patient clothing soiled with blood or body fluids. While it may appear to be a simple way to help by cleaning or picking it up, you have not been trained on how to do so safely. Immediately notify staff in the area so they can take care of it.

If you should have an accidental exposure (contact on non-intact skin or mucous membrane or a stick or cut by a sharp object such as a needle) to a patient's blood or body fluids, wash the area with soap and water or rinse mucous membranes (e.g. eyes) with plain water and report it to your supervisor immediately. We all know that, despite our best efforts, accidents happen, so do not hesitate to report an exposure. It is in your best interest and gives us the opportunity to assess the situation to determine if there is anything else that needs to be done for your safety and well-being.

Other Types of Isolation

Other types of isolation are sometimes used within the facility to prevent the transmission of some diseases, such as flu. You should not enter a room if you see a STOP sign indicating the patient is in a special type of isolation precaution posted on the door. You will be given specific directions by staff if you are to assist

in any way with patients in isolation. As a general rule of thumb, you will not be given any assignment to assist with patients in isolation.

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

TB is short for an airborne disease called tuberculosis. You cannot get TB by touching someone. TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called TB infection and does not mean you have TB, that you ever will have the disease, or that you can give the infection to anyone else. It is important, however, to know if you are infected with the TB germ. All volunteers are required to be screened for exposure to TB prior to beginning their volunteer assignment. The Voluntary Service Office will arrange for a lab order to be placed through Occupational Health. When you visit the lab, you will receive a blood draw. You will not have to return to the VA to have your test read. If you are not contacted after your blood draw, you can assume your results were clear and may begin volunteering.

Gloves

Food handling gloves should always be worn when handling and serving food. Always wash your hands with soap and water before handling utensils or serving platters and before putting on gloves. If the gloves become damaged in any way, remove them, wash your hands, and then put on another pair. Do not wear the same pair of gloves for doing different types of food preparations, such as handling meat products and then placing cookies on a plate. Wash your hands and put on a new pair of gloves. Also, wash your hands and put on a new pair of gloves if you have any contact with soiled or “dirty” items such as trash cans, soiled table service, or other non-food items.

If there are any circumstances when you should wear gloves when assisting with patient care activities you will be given direction by staff in the area. If you have any concerns or questions about an activity you are being asked to assist with, always ask staff in the area before you perform the activity.

Flu Shots

All volunteers are entitled to a free flu shot each year. Flu shots should be scheduled through Occupational Health or may be received at one of the scheduled blitzes each fall.

HEALTH

Volunteers will not report to work if they have any infection that poses a hazard to patients or other personnel. Do not come to the hospital if you have a fever, flu, do not feel well, or if you have had recent exposure to a disease (i.e. chicken pox, measles, tuberculosis, or Hepatitis A).

PATIENT PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY

Whose business is it? It's everyone's business.

This VA facility has an assigned Privacy Officer (PO) who can help answer questions about patient privacy. The PO for this facility can be reached at extension 3978 for further questions.

Maintain complete confidentiality of all medical and patient-related information including information in computerized records, paper records and verbal exchanges. Volunteers must abide by all provisions of the Privacy Act. Any breach of confidentiality will result in termination. If your volunteer assignment requires you to deliver comfort items, escort patients, or provide special activities for patients, you are legally obligated to keep all information you may learn about a patient's name, medical condition, or even the fact that they are hospitalized, confidential, even if you know the patient personally. The basic rule of thumb is, "What you see and hear here, stays here."

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which was passed by Congress on April 14, 2003, is the law that states how your health information may be used and disclosed, your patient rights regarding their health information, and the VA's legal duty to protect the privacy of your health information.

The federal "HIPAA" regulations and Privacy Act require all staff to use physical, technical and other safeguards to keep protected health information secure and private. Cyber Security is the responsibility of everyone working at the VA, whether you are an employee, volunteer, student, or contractor. Even if your role in the facility does not require you to have computer access, you routinely are in areas or have access to areas that have computers containing vital information essential to our mission. It is important that you do your part to ensure the safety of patient medical records and other critical information related to VA health care operations. Additional safeguards to remember:

- Protect all records. Keep records secured, and ensure that only authorized staff access records for valid treatment, payment and healthcare operations purposes.
- Keep all patient information covered. Do not leave patient information displayed on computer screens. Only authorized personnel may review medical records whether in paper or electronic formats.
- Don't talk about patients in public. Be careful not to discuss confidential information where patients, visitors or other employees might overhear.
- Use care with telephones and fax machines. Make sure that all department printers, fax machines and other devices used for transmitting or storing patient information are secure.
- If you print a document with patient information on it, know what printer you're sending it to and go pick it up **PROMPTLY.**
- Don't leave patient information lying around. Secure in a locked cabinet or locked room.

- Placing no longer needed patient information in **locked** Shred-it bins is the preferred method of disposal at this facility.
- No document with patient information will be disposed of in the garbage.
- Straight line shredding is not an acceptable method of disposing of patient information and still must be disposed of in a locked Shred-it bin **NOT THE GARBAGE OR RECYCLE BIN.**
- Cross Cut shredded material of the size 1 x 5 millimeters can be disposed of in the garbage. (we currently do not have any of these shredders in this facility)

According to VA Regulations, **IF A VOLUNTEER HAS AUTHORIZED ACCESS TO A VA SYSTEM (USER ID AND PASSWORD), THEY ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE ANNUAL PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SECURITY AWARENESS AND RULES OF BEHAVIOR** through the VA employee Talent Management System (TMS).

PATIENT ABUSE

It is the policy of the Fargo VA Health Care System to provide quality health care to our patient population in a respectful and compassionate manner. Patient abuse, defined as any act against patients which involves physical, psychological, sexual, or verbal abuse, will not be tolerated. The penalty for patient abuse is removal.

Health Care System employees, volunteers, students in training, and without compensation appointees who witness or receive reports of abusive behavior toward a patient must report the incident immediately to their supervisor.

The following actions/behaviors constitute patient abuse and are to be immediately reported and documented:

- Acts against patients which involve physical, psychological, sexual, or verbal abuse.
- Action or behavior that conflicts with patients' rights.
- Intentional omission of patient care.
- Willful violations of the privacy of patients.
- Intimidation, harassment, or ridicule of patients.
- Willful physical injury of a patient.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Harassment on the basis of gender is a violation of Section 3, Title VII. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances or sexual favors, verbal abuse, insults, whistles, suggestive comments, jokes, notes, or picture displays, touching and physical aggressiveness, pressure for dates, or threats and sexual assaults. Management, supervisors, employees, and volunteers must take an active role in preventing sexual harassment. The VA is a team and it is everyone's responsibility to be

aware and correct improper behavior. To fight sexual harassment, remember four tactics:

- **Confront** – Voice your displeasure directly to the harasser, repeatedly if necessary.
- **Report** – Report the harassment to your supervisor, or if your supervisor is the harasser, to a higher authority. Also report it to the Voluntary Service office.
- **Document** – While the incident is fresh in your mind, write down what happened, where, when, and how you responded, if possible, word for word; include witnesses, if any.
- **Seek support** – Talk to a friend or a relative or seek support from an organized group.

You have the right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment. You have the responsibility NOT to harass others. Remember, a simple definition of harassment is unwelcome behavior. If you have any questions or think that you are being sexually harassed, contact your supervisor or the Chief, Voluntary Services.

EMERGENCY CODES

In order to standardize the Emergency Code system, the Fargo VA has changed the process for calling codes. Below is a summary of the new code system. Please also pay attention to the new process for reporting codes which is highlighted in yellow.

FARGO VAHCS EMERGENCY CODES

For ALL CODES call 1111

CODE RED

Activate Nearest Alarm



1. See smoke or fire
2. Smell smoke or other burning material
3. Feeling unusual heat on wall, door or other surface
4. Told by someone of a fire

CODE BLUE



An Adult, child or infant's heart has stopped and they are not breathing

UTILITY FAILURE



Failure of the major utility systems within the medical center include: Power, Water Telephone and Computer (IT)

BEHAVIORAL EMERGENCY

Disruptive, assaultive, or out of control behavior



SEVERE WEATHER ALERT



National Weather Service Warning

MISSING PERSON ALERT

Any patient or visitor reported missing by staff or concerned individuals



CRITICAL INCIDENT ALERT/LOCKDOWN



Incidents that require IMMEDIATE Police

response or assistance

RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

A patient's medical condition is declining and is in need of early and aggressive intervention

(Prior to heart or respiration stopping)



STROKE ALERT



Staff observes or is informed of a patient with Acute Ischemic Stroke symptoms

DISASTER ALERT

Disaster plan activated per protocol. Calling trees activated.



EMERGENCY POLICE SERVICES: CALL 2222

May 2015

CODE BLUE - CARDIAC ARREST TEAM

An adult, child or infant's heart has stopped and they are not breathing. Anytime that you might need medical assistance for you or anyone, **CALL 1111** and report location.

A team of Doctors, Nurses and individuals will arrive to administer CPR or other life saving techniques as indicated by the condition of the individual.

VOLUNTEERS: Anytime that you might need medical assistance for you or anyone, **DIAL 1111 report incident and give the location**

UTILITY FAILURE

There is an established Utilities Failure Plan policy and procedure to promote a safe, controlled and comfortable environment of Care. Dial 1111 and report type of failure and location. Failure of major utility systems within the medical center include: Steam, Power, Water Telephone and computer (IT). Individuals should implement alternate action plans.

ENGINEERING SERVICE: Announce Utility Failure, location, and type of failure (water, etc)

IRM: location, and type of failure (computer, telephone, etc)

Volunteers: Dial 1111 and report type of failure and location.

BEHAVIORAL EMERGENCY

Disruptive, assaultive or out of control behavior.

Assaults are violent acts or threats which occur in, or are related to the workplace, and entail a substantial risk of physical or emotional harm to individuals or damage to government resources or capabilities. Key personnel within the facility are trained to manage disruptive behavior, and will respond to a behavioral emergency. If you feel threatened or find yourself in a hostile environment, attempt to remove yourself from the situation and summon for help.

Behavioral techniques to minimize violence:

- Project calmness. Move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Be an empathetic listener. Encourage the person to talk and listen patiently.
- Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see they are upset.

- Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.
- Use delaying tactics, which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).
- Be reassuring and point out choices. Breaking problems into smaller, more manageable problems.
- Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint may be true, use statements like “you’re probable right” or “it was my fault.” If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
- Ask for recommendations. Repeat back to them what you feel they are requesting of you.
- Arrange yourself so that the person cannot block your access to an exit.

A team of Mental Health professionals and Police will arrive to assist in preventing or reducing a violent situation. **DO NOT USE THE OVERHEAD PAGING SYSTEM IF THERE IS A GUN.**

VOLUNTEERS: If you need immediate Police assistance, DIAL 1111 give information about the behavioral Emergency and give the location.

RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

A patient’s medical condition is declining and is in need of early and aggressive Intervention. (Prior to heart or respiration stopping).

VOLUNTEERS: If someone needs immediate medical assistance Dial 1111 and report the concern and location.

STROKE ALERT

Staff observes or is informed of a patient with Acute Ischemic Stroke Symptoms.

VOLUNTEERS: If someone needs immediate medical assistance Dial 1111 and report the concern and location.

CRITICAL INCIDENT ALERT/LOCKDOWN

Incidents that require **IMMEDIATE** police response or assistance. This code is activated in response to an external problem. Entrances are locked to control entrance to the facility. However, you can always exit. Communication will be given as to the incident requiring a facility total lockdown. If you must leave you can, but you will not be allowed to reenter the facility. **DO NOT OPEN** any outside doors to allow someone to enter into the VA facility. Follow directions given to you by your supervisor or employee in your department. Report to your supervisor or Voluntary service Office, Room 3E-07, to see if any assistance is needed.

Armed assailant/active shooter outside the building:

- Turn off the lights, close and lock all windows and doors.
 - If unable to lock doors, barricade them with desks, chairs, or other furniture
- Stay low and move to the core area of the work space or building, assisting others if able.
- Remain in the area until a **Police Officer** provides notification of an “All Clear.”

Armed assailant/active shooter inside the building:

- If safe to evacuate building; use the nearest exit or **safe** window, move quickly and quietly, be aware that more than one shooter may be present and waiting for people to exit the building or office area.
- If unsafe to evacuate building; move to an office, storage closet, or other room; lock and/or barricade door.
- Remain in place until an “All Clear” is issued by a **Police Officer**.

Armed assailant/active shooter in immediate work area or office:

- If possible notify the VA Police at extension 1111 or call 9-911 for the Fargo Police Dispatcher.
 - Leave line open if unable to talk, be aware that this will not give the VA Police or Fargo PD an exact location of the Assailant
- Only attempt to overcome the armed assailant with force as a ***last resort***.
- If the armed assailant exits the work area, **if safe** immediately evacuate to another location.
 - Do not touch anything in the evacuated area
 - Be alert to responding Police Officers who may mistake you as the armed assailant
 - More than one armed assailant may be present, the best course of action is to wait to be escorted by Police or respond to Police commands
- Follow the directions of responding Police Officers:
 - Put down an items you are holding
 - Keeps hands visible at all times
 - Do not make quick movements towards Officers
 - Do not hold onto officers for safety or point or scream

VOLUNTEERS: If someone needs immediate police response or assistance Dial 1111 and report the concern and location.

CODE RED - FIRE OR SMOKE

Fire Emergency Response

R **Rescue**

A **Alarm**

C **Contain**

E **Extinguish**



It is the responsibility of every employee and volunteers to be alert to potential fire hazards and to report a fire or signs of a fire, regardless of scope or origin. Be sure to know the location of the fire alarm in

your volunteer work area.

Activate Nearest Alarm

1. See smoke or fire
2. Smell smoke or other burning material
3. Feeling unusual heat on wall, door or other surface
4. Told by someone of a fire

If you discover a fire, remember the word **RACE**:

Rescue → remove any person from immediate danger.

Alarm → use nearest fire alarm and dial 1111 to give the location.

Contain → close all doors.

Extinguish → but only if you do not place yourself in danger.

When reporting a fire by phone, state your name and the exact location of the fire. An alarm system will be heard if there is a fire within your area. DO NOT use the elevator in that area – use the stairs.

You should not attempt to extinguish a fire by yourself unless you are in immediate danger (use of the portable fire extinguisher requires special training per OSHA standards).

If you must use a fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**:

P -- Pull the pin or ring on the fire extinguisher.

A -- Aim the fire extinguisher at the base of the fire.

S -- Squeeze lever or handle.

S -- Sweep fire extinguisher from side to side slowly. (Do not discharge the entire extinguisher in case the fire is not totally out.)

VOLUNTEERS: If the fire or smoke is in your area, pull the fire alarm and exit through the next set of double metal doors. If you enter an area where the fire alarm is sounding, STOP and wait for instructions at the double metal doors. DO NOT ENTER the area.

DISASTER (INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL)

Disaster plan is activated per protocol. Calling trees activated.

Internal - follow emergency procedures for exact type of problem (fire, tornado, etc)

External - follow directions from the Voluntary Service Office or Nursing Supervisor

Your supervisor is responsible for informing you of your responsibilities should a disaster occur. All volunteers should report to their supervisor or the staff in their assigned area for instructions. Volunteers may become part of the medical center's manpower pool. Volunteers assigned to Escort, who are not in the vicinity of the disaster, should ensure that all patients being escorted are returned to their assigned

ward or clinical area. The volunteer should then proceed to their supervisor for further instructions.

VOLUNTEERS: Report to your supervisor or Voluntary Service Office, Room 3E-07, to see if any assistance is needed. If someone needs immediate police response or assistance Dial 1111 and report the concern and location.

BOMB THREAT

VOLUNTEERS who receive a threat - Write down all information, the exact threat, and keep the caller talking as much as possible. **Call the Police Officer at ext. 1111 to report immediately to your area. DO NOT SHARE INFORMATION WITH ANYONE ELSE!**

VOLUNTEERS: When a bomb threat is announced overhead, search your immediate area for anything unusual. Report the findings to your supervisor. If anything unusual or suspicious is found, report it to the Police Officer at ext. 1111 and DO NOT TOUCH IT.

BOMB THREAT REPORT

Report call immediately to Ext. 1111

Person receiving the call: _____ **Telephone number:** _____

Date and time of threat: _____

Exact wording of threat:

QUESTIONS TO ASK CALLER:

1. When is the bomb going to explode?
2. Where is it right now?
3. What does it look like?
4. What kind of bomb is it?
5. What will cause it to explode?
6. Did you place the bomb?
7. Why?
8. Can we help you?
9. What is your address?
10. What is your name?

CALLER'S VOICE

<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Rapid
-------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------

<input type="checkbox"/> Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Loud	<input type="checkbox"/> Laughing	<input type="checkbox"/> Crying	<input type="checkbox"/> Profane
<input type="checkbox"/> Slurred	<input type="checkbox"/> Nasal	<input type="checkbox"/> Deep	<input type="checkbox"/> Ragged	<input type="checkbox"/> Raspy
<input type="checkbox"/> Lisp	<input type="checkbox"/> Stutter	<input type="checkbox"/> Disguised	<input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing	<input type="checkbox"/> Cracking voice
<input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent	<input type="checkbox"/> Accent	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiar	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female

BACKGROUND SOUNDS

<input type="checkbox"/> Airplane	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic	<input type="checkbox"/> Trains
<input type="checkbox"/> Voices	<input type="checkbox"/> PA system	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Factory noises
<input type="checkbox"/> Farm noises	<input type="checkbox"/> House noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Office noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Street noises

If the voice is familiar, who did it sound like? _____

SEVERE WEATHER ALERT - TORNADO (TAKE COVER)



Severe weather and disaster shelter signs identify shelter locations that can be used in the case of an emergency, tornado or severe weather. There are clearly marked and designated **Green Shelter Signs** which identify these locations. Always be aware of the closest shelter near you.

Initiated by the National Weather Service radio announcements and when the Operator receives a call from Meritcare Alarm. Basement, 1st floor, 2nd floor, and 3rd floor occupants, take cover in the most internal hallway of the medical center. Sit on the floor until the “All Clear” is given. 4TH floor occupants must move down to the 3rd floor.

There are certain areas in the building that are safer than others. Generally speaking, the safest areas are:

- Interior rooms or corridors.
- Rooms without atriums or exterior windows.
- Rooms on the north or east side of the building.
- Small interior rooms provide better protection than large rooms.



Stay out of large areas such as auditoriums and atriums

All doors to rooms and fire doors should be closed.

TORNADO ALERTS:

- Tornado Watch: Weather conditions are favorable for a tornado, however, one has not been sighted.

- Tornado Warning: There has been an actual tornado sighting or touchdown somewhere in Cass County. Civil Defense sirens sound (steady “Alert” alarm).
- Medical Center Tornado Alert – Audio Page: “Severe Weather Alert”- will be used to announce tornado warnings.

The all-clear will be sounded on the audible page as “Severe Weather Alert – All Clear.”

MISSING PATIENT

Activated in the event of a missing patient or the failure to locate a patient, and activated in the event of a missing child.

Any patient or visitor reported missing by staff or concerned individuals. Patients who are at true risk of wandering wear ‘true’ red pajama tops. Conduct a thorough search of our immediate area and if possible to do so post yourself at the nearest exit and attempt to stop anyone trying to exit with a possible missing child. DO NOT place yourself in harm’s way if you encounter resistance; provide VA police with a description, direction and mode of travel if possible.

ELOPEMENT RISK PATIENTS

Patients are screened on admission for possible elopement risk. Based on the risk assessment, nursing can add interventions:

Red Scrub Top: When a patient is determined to be at risk for elopement, he or she will be asked to wear a red scrub top. If staff see a patient in a red scrub top exiting the building, we ask that you please try to re-direct the patient back to his or her room and let nursing or police know right away to help keep our patients safe.



Wander Guard: CLC and 3M have a wander guard system in place. If you are exiting the area and hear the alarm go off, please ensure there is not a patient in the elevator with you or exiting in the stairwell.

If a Code Missing Person: Patient is called overhead, all available staff are asked to come to the area so police can coordinate search teams.

Detailed steps to follow in the case of a missing patient can be found in the Missing Patient Policy (PI-08) under the ALLUSER drive. For questions please contact the Patient Safety Coordinator, at ext. 3114.

VOLUNTEERS: Call the Police Officer at ext 1111 if you find the missing patient or child.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT



Most volunteers will never come in contact with hazardous materials. If it should happen, however, it is your right to know what it is you've come in contact with, what, if any, treatment should be followed, and possible effects of the contact. There are safety guidelines available to protect you against the dangers of chemicals, medical gases, medical wastes, sharps (i.e. needles), and other hazardous materials. Detailed information regarding the safe handling, storage, and disposal of chemicals and hazardous materials can be found on Safety Data Sheets (SDS). The SDS are stored in a computer system and can be accessed by the supervisor of the area you are working in.

Use good sense around any material that might be hazardous. If you have a concern about a material or your contact with it, ask your supervisor or Voluntary Service staff.

In case of spills on your person or on the floor, please contact the nearest staff member IMMEDIATELY for assistance. Your supervisor may need you to provide a detailed description of the material and how the incident happened.

If you are involved in a chemical spill:

- Evacuate everyone from the area.
- Call your supervisor, Safety Officer, and Environmental Management Service.
- Identify the chemical.
- Ventilate the area.
- If a fire occurs, activate the fire alarm.
- Wait by the spill, well out of danger.
- Complete an Accident Report, if requested.

Escort Volunteers Transporting Hazardous Medication

- Volunteer is to pick up cart at inpatient pharmacy (BB-80) and transport to the Oncology Infusion room (1C-70).
- All medication needs to be transported in the cart and green container pictured below (no exceptions).
- Volunteers are not to open container and handle medications. Nursing and pharmacy is responsible for removing medications from the green container.
- In the event of a spill, volunteer is to place yellow hazardous signs (pictured below) over spill and then call extension 3944 to clean up spill. Volunteer is NOT to touch or clean up spill.



Escorts Transporting Lab Specimens

- All specimens should be placed in a plastic bag (sealed) by the nursing staff before you take the specimen to the laboratory. The wearing of gloves is not necessary.
- Always transport specimens in the blue biohazard bag
- Be sure to wash your hands upon completion of transporting the lab specimens.
- Do not handle used needles, sharps, or bandages. Ask a nurse to dispose of it if you see one that has been misplaced.

PATIENT SAFETY PROGRAM/RISK MANAGEMENT

Patient Safety

The Fargo VAHCS endorses a culture of patient safety that is focused on the identification of system improvements and the prevention of events with a potential for injury to patients, visitors and personnel versus an environment of placing blame.

The Joint Commission has patient safety goals that are required as a condition of accreditation to ensure the safety of patients. The purpose of the Joint Commission's National Patient Safety goals is to promote specific improvements in-patient Safety. You will find the National Patient Safety Goals posted throughout the Fargo VAHCS.

Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals

- Improve the accuracy of patient identification.
- Improve the effectiveness of communication among caregivers.

- Improve the safety of using medications.
- Improve the safety of clinical alarm systems.
- Reduce the risk of health care-associated infections.
- Reduce risk of patient harm resulting from falls.
- Prevent healthcare associated pressure ulcers.
- Identify safety risks inherent in patient population.
- Universal protocol.
- Improve the safety of clinical alarm systems.

Please report any safety related events to the Patient Safety Coordinator, extension 3114, or to the Voluntary Service Chief who will assist you in completing an incident report.

*Remember: We do not make healthcare safe by these goals alone. We need to continue to recognize what we do to put the patient at risk. Even if you are not involved in direct patient care, you are providing a support service that can indirectly impact patient care.

The goal of the program is to improve the quality and safety of care by designing or redesigning patient care systems to prevent the likelihood of injuries that can harm patients, visitors, volunteers, and employees. The program is a systematic approach that emphasizes prevention, not punishment, and then a level of faith and trust is established in the patient safety system. Therefore, these behaviors become a part of all employee and volunteer behavior and a culture of safety is developed.

Why report incidents or events?

Reporting of injuries, adverse events, sentinel events, and close calls is essential to identify underlying causes and system changes needed to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

What are Employee and Volunteers' Responsibilities in Patient Safety?

- Report and document incidents.
- When adverse events occur that result in patient injury, document the patient's condition.
- Respond to patient/family concerns.
- Identify high risk, error prone processes that affect patient safety.
- Ensure equipment is safe to use.
- Maintain a safe environment and inform patients and families how to help keep the patient safe.
- Work toward redesigning processes and system to reduce risks to patients.

Volunteers, as well as staff, have a responsibility to report untoward events. Please report any incidents to your supervisor immediately.

PATIENT FOOD POLICY (Recreation volunteers)

It is Fargo VA Health Care System policy to ensure all food items provided to our patients are safe, wholesome and sanitary. Foods which are not potentially hazardous (do not provide a medium for bacterial growth or food borne illness) and may be served (depending upon patients dietary restrictions) are:

- Cake (without filling), fruit pies, muffins, quick breads or strawberry shortcake (with strawberries and non-dairy whip cream)
- Donuts or pastries (without filling)
- Cookies or crackers
- Fresh fruit (washed prior to serving, excluding melon)
- Fresh vegetables (washed prior to serving)
- Fruit ice, sorbet bars and ice cream
- Granola type snack bars
- Snack type foods in single serving packages (i.e. potato chips, corn chips, etc.)
- Beverages – sugar-free

Food prepared in a private home may not be offered for general patient consumption. Perishable foods which are not eaten within an hour should be properly disposed of. Always wear gloves when preparing and serving food. Always wash hands thoroughly when working around food. Due to infection control and patient safety issues, any food leftover after an event should be taken home. Please do not leave leftover food in the CLC refrigerator. The Fargo VA Health Care System patient population is considered to be a highly susceptible population for food-borne illness; therefore, food safety is a primary concern. In an effort to promote food safety for all our patients, please adhere to the above policy. Should you have any questions regarding the policy or approved food items, please feel free to contact Voluntary Service. As an added note, there may be occasions when hospitalized patients attend a service organization sponsored activity (i.e. bingo etc.) and will have **NPO** (nothing by mouth) orders by the physician. Nursing staff will inform you of this when they escort the patient to the auditorium. **Please ensure these patients do not receive any food or liquids as this may cause a serious adverse reaction. Also as a reminder, no food, snacks or candy should be delivered to patients on the medical units.**

ACTIVELY DYING VETERAN DOOR SIGN



Nursing staff will decide if a Door Sign is appropriate for the dying Veteran
The above sign is placed on the door to inform all VA staff and volunteers to:

- Create an awareness of the environment they are entering
- This environment can only be created once in the life of the Veteran
- This sign will communicate honor and respect for the dying Veteran

Family and friends, or volunteers may or may not be present with the Veteran
All cares and work are to continue as required, however, it is ok to coordinate with one another and communicate to make sure the timing of cares and work are appropriate to allow family and friends time with the dying Veteran

ESCORT VOLUNTEERS

If you are volunteering in the Escort Office, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Escorts should not lift or transfer patients from their beds to wheelchairs or to put patients back to bed.
- Patients should be at the nurses' station and ready to escort when you arrive. If not, contact nursing staff to assist the patient.
- Do not use a wheelchair that doesn't have footrests.
- Please ensure the VA wheelchair does not leave the facility.
- Escorts are prohibited from taking patients outside to the smoking shelters.
- When escorting discharge patients to the front door, escorts are not permitted to retrieve the patient's car from the parking lot or lift patients into the car.
- Escorts should request assistance for patients or belongings that they feel are too heavy or too large to transport by themselves.
- Escort volunteers are not required to transport patients who are on IVs, pumps, and the like.

- Please inform staff when you bring a patient back to the nurses' station or to X-ray, physical therapy, etc.
- Patients' charts/X-rays should be handed to the staff member in the department and not left with the patient.
- Please do not give patients food, water, or medications.
- Keep a safe distance of a patient strikes out at you, and report incident to the nursing staff immediately.
- All specimens should be placed in a plastic bag by the nursing staff before being taken to the laboratory.
- Report faulty equipment to the nursing staff.
- Keep brakes on wheelchair set whenever patient is entering or leaving the wheelchair to prevent an accident.
- Make sure that footrests are folded up and swung to the side and that the patient's feet are resting on the floor before he/she stands up. Stepping on footrests can tip the chair.
- Grasp both handgrips when pushing the wheelchair for better direction and stability.
- Wheelchairs are folded by grasping the center of the seat in the front and back and lifting.
- Always back a wheelchair down a ramp. This provides better control and allows your body weight to provide braking action.
- When transporting a wheelchair on or off an elevator, back the chair into the elevator, turn it around, and then back it out from the elevator. Also, use caution to prevent the door closing and striking the chair.
- Always wash and/or sanitize hands after transporting a patient.

Inpatients: Use of Wheelchair – Fall Risk

- Safe practice is to notify nursing staff if a Veteran needs to enter or exit their wheelchair for any reason. Volunteers should not assist a Veteran in anyway.
- Look on the back of all wheelchairs for a **“BLUE or GREEN box.”** This box is a fall alarm. The box indicates that the Veteran is at great risk of falling if they leave their chair.
 - If you notice this box, please tell the Veteran they must stay in their chair until you are able to notify a nurse.
- Escorting Veterans to the Bathroom: It is best to bring the Veteran to the nurse's station if a Veteran needs to use the bathroom. Nursing staff will assist the Veteran.
- In general, it is safest to ensure all Veterans remain in their wheelchairs unless nursing staff is present to assist with any transition. For the safety of the Veteran and the volunteer, we ask that volunteers do not transfer Veterans in and out of wheelchairs. Please always err on the side of caution and notify a nurse if a Veteran needs to leave their wheelchair. They are there to help.

Procedure for Transporting A Wheelchair Patient

- Identify where the patient is going prior to transporting them.
- The wheel chair must be in proper working order. Do not transport patients in defective wheelchairs. Report defective wheelchairs to Bob Deoliveria (x2781) to be serviced.
- Never transfer a patient from a bed or their car to a wheelchair or from a wheelchair to a bed or car. This is a lift team or nursing responsibility.
- Wheelchairs are to be LOCKED when not in motion - occupied or unoccupied.
- Back the wheelchair into elevators so that patients are facing the elevator door. If the elevator is crowded, wait for the next elevator.
- Never leave a patient unattended. Stay with the patient until they have checked in for their appointment. Always remind the patient or medical support staff to contact Escort Services when the patient is finished with their appointment.
- Patients should be comfortable and safe in wheelchairs. Ensure the patient is not leaning or sliding. Check for feet that are not properly positioned on the foot pedals.
- Always move slowly and with caution. Talk to the patient and explain when you are about to go over small bump or around a corner so they are not caught off guard.
 - Always wash and/or sanitize hands after transporting a patient. Clean wheelchairs between patients with (Red Top) Germicidal Steris disinfectant wipes to help prevent the spread of infectious agents.

WHEELCHAIR SAFETY

The following tips should assist you in the safe operation and use of wheelchairs. Usually, health care system staff will assist patients into or out of the wheelchair, but it is good common sense to know the basics:

- Before a patient enters a wheelchair, LOCK THE WHEELS and put the footrests up.
- Travel on the right side of the corridor and be aware of doors that open into the hallway and for other barriers or obstacles.
- Make certain that the patient's arms and legs do not extend beyond the wheelchair so as to avoid injury to the patient.
- Walk at a reasonable rate of speed to ensure a safe and successful transport.
- Use good body mechanics and common sense.
- Back into and out of elevators. Some front tires can become wedged in the space between the elevator and the main floor.

GERIATRIC PATIENTS

The majority of the patients cared for by the Fargo VA Health Care System are from the Korean and World War II era, meaning that they are 65 years of age or older. There are many age-specific competencies that employees and volunteers should possess when caring for patients.

The normal aging process places the geriatric population (age 65 years and older) at a higher risk of illness and injury. For example, there is an increased risk of injury and falls associated with changes in the spine, brittle bones, and osteoporosis (in women). Also, there is an increased risk of infection associated to the weakening of the immune system.

Some measures to promote the optimization of a geriatric patient's abilities, particularly patients in our CLC, are as follows:

- Re-orient the geriatric patient to the environment, time, day, etc., as necessary.
- If a deficiency exists on one side of the body, approach and address the patient from the unaffected side.
- Use assistive devices such as walkers, canes, wheelchairs, and magnifying glasses as needed.
- Allow ample time for decision-making, verbal expression, and activities requiring movement.
- Aging individuals often take longer to learn but have not lost the ability to learn. When educating a geriatric patient, keep instructions simple and direct, while using continued reinforcement of instructions.

Myths and Misconceptions About Aging

Although there are significant changes relating to the aging process, there are many myths as well. Remembering that the following are myths will help when working with older adults:

- **Most older people are senile.** Actually, fewer than 20 percent have a measurable memory impairment.
- **Most older people feel miserable most of the time.** Studies have shown that most older people are just as happy as they were when they were younger.
- **Most older people cannot work as effectively as younger people.** Studies show that older workers are more consistent in their work, have fewer accidents, less absenteeism, and less job turnover than younger workers.
- **Most older adults are unhealthy and need help with activities of daily living.** Actually, 80 percent of older adults are healthy enough to maintain a normal lifestyle.
- **Older people are set in their ways.** People do tend to become more stable as they grow older, but they remain able to adapt to changes. Actually, most older adults have adjusted to more lifestyle changes than a younger person.

WOMEN VETERANS

The definition of Veteran hasn't changed but the population has. The newest women Veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are younger, and with different health care needs. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working tirelessly to enhance women's care, improve services, and change its culture to embrace this growing population. If you know a woman who has served, ask her if she's checked out VA lately.

Women Veteran Demographics

- Women represent nearly 15% of today's active duty military and 18% of guard and reserve forces.
- Women serve in every branch of the military.
- There are 2.2 million living women Veterans.
- The average age of women Veterans using VA care is 48 years, compared to 63 years for male Veterans.
- The number of women Veterans using VA care is expected to increase dramatically.
- Women Veterans using VA health care can expect:
 - Women Veterans Program Managers to assist them at every facility
 - Comprehensive primary care, mental health services, emergency and specialty care
 - Privacy, safety, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs
 - State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology
 - Pharmacy services by mail-order and online

A campaign is under way across the VA system to enhance the language, practice and culture of VA to be more inclusive of women. VA has taken this culture change message to all employees and volunteers encouraging everyone to rethink the term Veteran, recognize the vital role of women in the military, and appreciate what it means to be a woman Veteran.

She served, she deserves the best care anywhere!

LIST OF REMINDERS

Name Badges

All Regular Scheduled Volunteers will be issued a Photo ID Badge. The Photo ID Badge must be worn above the waist at all times while performing your assigned volunteer

duties. In the event you decide to terminate your volunteer duties, you must turn in your ID badge to the Voluntary Service Office.

Accident Reporting

Volunteers need to report any accident or injury they receive while on volunteer duty to their supervisor or Voluntary Service. All volunteers are afforded emergency treatment for injuries occurring in the course of their assigned duties, the same as employees. Voluntary Service encourages all volunteers to be especially aware of safety. Volunteers are covered under the Worker's Compensation Program. If you should observe any condition or situation you feel is unsafe, report it to your supervisor or Voluntary Service. Volunteers are not required to do any lifting.

Veterans Canteen Service

The Veterans Canteen store and cafeteria located in the basement is available to everyone. All items in the VA store are tax-free.

Parking

Volunteers who work on a regular basis and may have some difficulty walking any distance from the parking lot to the front door may be provided a volunteer parking sticker for their vehicle. Parking stickers can be obtained from the VA Police through arrangements by Voluntary Service staff. All other volunteers can park in the south campus lot.

Volunteers working in the evening or on weekends do not need a parking sticker for their vehicle, as there is ample parking space available on the north side (main entrance) of the hospital. The volunteer parking lot is located northeast of the main entrance of the hospital.

Cell Phones

The use of cell phones is allowed in this medical center with the exception of restricted areas such as Radiology, Cardiology, etc. Please do not use cell phones in these areas as they will interfere with medical and diagnostic equipment. Also use common courtesy among staff and the public when utilizing cell phones. Do not hold conversations on the cell phone while performing your duties.

Police/Security

The VA Police act as the enforcement agency in maintaining law and order at this hospital and have full powers of arrest and authority for all violations of federal and related state laws that occur at this facility. It is the responsibility of each volunteer to help ensure security at the facility, including the protection of patients, visitors, staff, and volunteers, as well as guarding against theft or vandalism of government buildings,

property records, and personal belongings. Report any suspicious incidents to the VA Police. The VA Police will escort volunteers to and from their vehicles during hours of darkness. The only entry access after 4:30 p.m. on weekdays and all weekend is the North (main) entrance. To contact the VA Police, dial extension 3299 (or x. 2222 in an emergency) from any phone in the medical center or page them at 691.

Problems

Bring any problems regarding your assignment, attitudes of staff, other volunteers, or patient-related incidents to the immediate attention of your VA supervisor or to the Chief, Voluntary Services.

Blood Donor Program

Blood is vital to the treatment of many patients. Having an adequate supply is mandatory. The VA encourages blood donation. Friends, relatives, Veterans, and volunteers are encouraged to participate in blood donation programs. Volunteers, and their sponsor organizations, are credited with four hours of service for every pint of blood donated. The Fargo VA Health Care System, in coordination with United Blood Services, sponsors five blood drives each year at our facility. Contact Voluntary Service for the scheduled blood drive dates or if you would like further information.

Donations and Gifts

Volunteer assistance in the form of gifts and monetary donations is appreciated. Voluntary Services coordinates the receipt of gifts and donations. Gifts and donations can only be accepted in accordance with VA policy. All items donated become the property of the United States Government. All checks and money orders presented should be made payable to the Fargo VA Health Care System. Please contact Voluntary Service if you would like to make a monetary or non-monetary donation.
