VOLUNTEER SAFETY ORIENTATION

We take the safety of our Veterans, volunteers, staff and visitors very seriously. The data provided within this packet contains a wealth of information for you to safely perform your volunteer duties. Topics covered include tuberculosis, the infection control policy for Voluntary Service, fire and safety procedures, sexual harassment, hazardous material management and equipment/utilities management. PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY AND SIGN THE LAST PAGE. THIS INFORMATION WILL BE PLACED IN YOUR VOLUNTEER FILE.

INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish procedures for the implementation of infection control measures as a safeguard for patients and volunteers.

2. **POLICY:** The Voluntary Service Program Manager is responsible for the orientation of volunteers in infection control measures which relate to their participation with patients. This orientation of volunteers will follow the intent and needs of the Infection Control Committee.

3. **RESPONSIBILITY:**
   a. The Voluntary Service Program Manager will collaborate with the Infection Control Nurse for infection control needs and will ensure that service employees receive yearly training for infection control and for “universal blood and body fluid precautions.”

   b. These needs will be communicated to volunteers through orientation, newsletter and other forms of communication and periodic meetings with volunteers, VAVS Committee members, etc.

   c. Volunteer-sponsored activities will be monitored by service employees to ensure hygiene and food sanitation. The Infection Control Nurse will assist with any necessary changes in services, procedures and preparation. Service employees will cooperate as directed by the Infection Control Nurse when any indication of food-borne or epidemic illness results from a patient group activity. All volunteer sponsors of patient activities receive instructions on the Medical Center’s food policy, the type of acceptable foods and refreshments, and proper serving procedures, including the wearing of gloves while serving food items. These procedures are supervised by the Voluntary Service Assistant in charge.

   d. Gifts to the medical center which will be used by more than one patient, such as electric razors and other personal hygiene items, are recognized as a potential for cross infection and, therefore, will not be accepted.

   e. No pets will be accepted as gifts unless approved by the Infection Control Committee and medical center administration.

   f. Volunteers will receive a routine mantoux (TB) skin test or chest x-ray upon initial entry. All volunteers will be referred to the Employee Health Physician during the first month of their volunteer status. If the volunteer does not wish to return for a mantoux (TB) skin test reading in
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48 to 72 hours, the volunteer may elect to provide our Employee Health personnel with proof of mantoux (TB) skin testing from a private physician. Volunteers are referred for counseling and, if deemed necessary by medical center staff, will receive appropriate testing at VA Medical Center expense should they be exposed to Veteran patients with contagious diseases such as tuberculosis.

g. Volunteers’ assignments are continually assessed for the potential for exposure to blood or body fluids. These activities include feeding patients or transporting specimens. Those volunteers who are engaged in these types of activities are identified by the service chief/care line manager and are referred to the Employee Health office personnel where hepatitis B vaccine series is offered. A list of volunteers is maintained in the Voluntary Service office to readily identify those volunteers who are particularly high risk.

h. Volunteers will be instructed not to report for assignments if they are not well or if they have been exposed to a contagious disease.

i. If a volunteer has an open cut or abrasion on their hands, they are responsible for protecting it through the use of gloves or bandage.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited under Title VII, Section 703, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Sexual harassment is deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature, or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

2. Sexual harassment is a flagrant form of illegal discrimination that generates a harmful and threatening atmosphere and undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. Sexual harassment also weakens morale and interferes in the work productivity of its victims and co-workers. Sexual jokes and remarks with sexual innuendoes can also be a form of sexual harassment and are not acceptable in a professional work environment.

3. There are three basic forms of sexual harassment: (1) VERBAL – Unwelcome suggestive remarks, sexual insults, innuendoes, jokes and humor about sex or gender-specific traits, sexual propositions and threats; (2) NON-VERBAL – Unwelcome suggestive or insulting sounds, leering/ogling, whistling, obscene gestures and obscene graphic materials; and (3) PHYSICAL – unwelcome touching, pinching, brushing the body, cornering and actual or attempted rape or assault.

4. The key word in defining sexual harassment is “UNWELCOME.” When any unwanted, unwelcome or unsolicited sexual conduct is imposed on a person who regards it as offensive or undesirable, it is sexual harassment. When a person communicates that the conduct is unwelcome, it becomes illegal. Even if the conduct is implicit in nature – hidden in subtlety or innuendo – as long as it is unwelcome, it is unlawful.
5. HOW TO PREVENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT. There are a number of suggestions for an individual to follow to help prevent sexual harassment:

**Conduct yourself in a business-like manner.**

**Dress appropriately for the job.**

**Become familiar with your right to work in an environment free from discrimination based on sex.**

**Become acquainted with your company’s policy and procedures for reporting harassment.**

**Take a few minutes to stop and decide, ahead of time, what kind of action you would take if you were harassed.**

6. WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY HARASSED. Follow these guidelines if you are ever sexually harassed:

**Remain cool and professional. Avoid being overly dramatic.**

**Be direct and candid with the person. Let your feelings be known, and let them be known RIGHT AWAY! If behavior continues, report the incident to your supervisor. If the harasser is your supervisor, you have the right to go to his/her supervisor.**

**When reporting the harassment, be prepared to tell all the facts surrounding the incident. Tell them who, what, when, where & how. You can help the process by writing down the important details so that you do not leave anything out. Sit down and relax – collect your thoughts before you begin your story. Be prepared to supply the interviewer with the names of witnesses or others who can support your complaint. Set anger aside and be thorough.**

7. OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO VICTIM OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT. The following suggestions are offered as ways to address continued harassment and GET IT STOPPED:

**Confront the offender and make it known to that person that you are not interested. By dealing with the person promptly and forcefully the first time, you may be able to prevent the incident from happening again.**

**Talk with your supervisor or a supervisor above him/her.**

**Contact Voluntary Service immediately.**

**File an EEO complaint.**
PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION

1. It is our responsibility to handle all patient information in a confidential manner. It is our responsibility to protect the confidentiality of all patient information. This responsibility extends to all employees/volunteers and not only to those who provide actual patient care or maintain medical records. Any patient information, whether overheard, noticed at a copy machine or desk, read during hand-carrying, seen in correspondence, etc., must be kept confidential by all employees. Our patients have a legal right to privacy and we, as their caregivers, have a legal and moral responsibility to protect that right.

2. Patient information will not be discussed with anyone when off-duty. When on-duty, we should refrain from discussing our patients with ANYONE, including other patients, visitors and other employees who do not have a need to know the information in order to carry out their official duties.

3. The Privacy Act and other Federal statutes provide penalty and fine provisions for the willful misuse or disclosure of confidential information to any person or agency that is not entitled to receive it. Anyone disclosing patient information is subject to a $5,000 fine. You may contact the Privacy Officer, Annette Damico, at extension 7020, Robert Barnhart, Information Security Officer, at extension 7071, with any questions.

WORK RELATED INJURIES

1. Report any injury to your supervisor immediately.

2. Report to Employee Health for first aid (if needed).

3. Light duty reassignment may be proposed to aid in keeping you at work or speed up your return to work.

4. The service to which you are assigned is responsible for completing proper injury paperwork and reporting the injury to the Safety Officer.

5. Voluntary Service is to be made aware of any and all injuries received by our volunteers.

6. Volunteers who are injured or incapacitated while on duty are eligible for injury compensation.

TRAFFIC, FIRE AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

1. TRAFFIC:

**Please observe the medical center’s 20 MPH speed limit.

**Pedestrians have the right of way when crossing a street from any point within the geographical limits of the grounds.
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**There will be no passing or stopping except of pedestrians or in an emergent circumstances on the two main streets – Hines Boulevard and Taft Circle.**

**When leaving any motor vehicle unattended, remove the keys from the ignition and lock the doors.**

**Volunteers may park in designated parking spaces. Several specific spaces have been reserved for volunteers in Parking Lot #6 (beside Building 9). PLEASE READ SIGNS. Do not park on grass, in driveways or in reserved parking spaces designated for other than volunteers (i.e., handicapped, doctors, carpools, etc.) Please obey ALL traffic rules.**

**Vehicle identification decals will be required for all regular volunteers who drive and park their privately-owned vehicles on medical center grounds. The decal may be obtained in the Police section, Protective Services (located in the basement of Building 18 – entrance at the rear of the building). The decal must be affixed to the rear left side of the interior rearview mirror.**

**Liquor and firearms are prohibited on government property.**

2. FIRE – Use the “RACE” instructions below:
   
   **R**escue/alert others in immediate area.
   
   **A**ctivate alarm systems:
   
   *Pull handle on fire alarm box.
   *Dial 444 & report location:
   *Building, floor, room number, etc.
   
   **C**onfine fire by closing doors and windows.
   
   **E**vacuate through smoke barrier doors (Extinguish small fires only).

   When extinguishing a small fire, use the “PASS” method:
   
   **P**ull the pin on the extinguisher.
   
   **A**im the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
   
   **S**queeze the handle to activate.
   
   **S**weep at the base of the fire.

   Fire (ext. 444), police (ext. 222) and other emergency telephone numbers are indicated using stickers located on telephones throughout the medical center. If for some reason there is no sticker and you cannot remember the number, dial “O” for our on-station operator. Please inform the operator who you are, where you are and the nature of the call. Please, NEVER shout “FIRE” as this will cause panic.

3. SAFETY

**Report hazardous conditions such as wet, oily or icy spots on floors or walks, loose handrails or stair treads so they can be repaired prior to someone becoming injured.**

**If a patient is hurt or becomes ill, please do not treat the patient yourself. Get help immediately by reporting the incident to the nearest medical center staff member or going to the nearest telephone and dialing “O.” Tell the operator who you are, where you are and the nature of the call. Emergency response will immediately follow.**
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**Volunteers must report any injury to themselves to their immediate supervisor no matter how slight since, by regulation, they are covered under Federal Workmen’s Compensation laws.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

1. This medical center has a policy to safely manage chemical use from the point of purpose to final disposal.

2. As a volunteer (an unpaid employee), you have the right to know the hazards associated with any chemicals with which you work.

3. Supervisors are to:
   
   a. Maintain an up-to-date inventory and Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each chemical in your area. The MSDS’ are to be easily accessible by all employees/volunteers;
   
   b. Label all containers housing hazardous chemicals;
   
   c. Train employees/volunteers in the safe handling of chemicals;
   
   d. Provide appropriate safety equipment, if necessary;
   
   e. Report spills and accidental exposures to the Safety Office.

4. Employees/Volunteers are responsible for:
   
   a. Consulting MSDS’ to determine hazards of chemicals in use;
   
   b. Follow all safety instructions and use of provided safety equipment;
   
   c. Report all spills to their immediate supervisors;
   
   d. Question proper disposal procedures prior to taking any actions.

EQUIPMENT AND UTILITY MANAGEMENT

1. All direct patient care equipment is on the Equipment Management Program. An annual review of the use of patient care equipment is required to assure that employees and volunteers are aware of their proper use to prevent accidents. If you have any questions in the use of any equipment you are required to operate, please notify the Voluntary Service staff.

2. Any piece of equipment used in the hospital, whether Government-owned or privately-owned, must be safety tested before being placed into service. If you have a radio or coffee maker that you want to use in the medical center, please contact Voluntary Service staff.

3. If you are aware of any equipment failure or run into problems using any equipment, immediately notify Voluntary Service staff so action can be initiated to correct the deficiency or proper training can be provided.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following are questions/answers you may find helpful while volunteering at our medical center:

1. What is the role of a volunteer?
Answer: Volunteers are to supplement, not replace, staff. Volunteers perform duties to enhance the comfort and welfare of our patients.

2. What should you do if there was a fire/disaster in your assigned work area?
Answer: For a fire, you would implement the "RACE" process. Fire alarms and extinguishers are located near stairwells and corridors. Take a few minutes to check the location of alarms and extinguishers in your assigned area. You should know what the disaster plan is for the area in which you work. (A yellow flip chart is located in your area of assignment. Be sure you know its location.) You should know the safe way to exit your assigned area and the building if need be. (Clarify any questions with your supervisor.) In a disaster, your supervisor may ask you to continue in your duties, assist in that area in a different manner or report to Voluntary Service to have your services utilized in another area.

3. What happens when there is an electrical outage?
Answer: Throughout our medical center, there are red outlets that would be used in an electrical outage. These outlets would be powered by a portable generator and used primarily for life sustaining equipment.