

Iowa City Hospice Volunteer Opportunities

Iowa City Hospice volunteer opportunities are many and varied. The assistance provided by volunteers is as varied as the patients, families and communities we serve. Many volunteers work directly with patients and families, others help with administrative tasks like mailings and phone calls, still others educate the community or assist with fund raising. We welcome those who want to give their time and talent to help others.

Following is information on a variety of volunteer activities at Iowa City Hospice.

Patient Care Volunteers

Patient care volunteers provide companionship and support to terminally ill patients and their loved ones. Volunteers provide many forms of assistance, at all levels of skill. Many are relatives and friends of former Iowa City Hospice patients. They have seen first-hand how Iowa City Hospice's care impacts quality of life and they want to help others experience its unique benefits.,

Training and Requirements for patient care volunteers

All Iowa City Hospice volunteers who work with patients and families receive **16 hours** of training to prepare them for the challenges and rewards of working with people at the end of life. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old, attend all training sessions, pass an adult abuse and criminal background check, and complete a Tuberculosis (PPD) test (provided free of charge by Iowa City Hospice). Direct patient care volunteers are asked to make a one-year commitment to volunteering for Iowa City Hospice.

The training for direct patient care volunteers includes:

- The hospice philosophy
- Family skills communication and dynamics
- Spirituality
- Grief and bereavement
- Universal precautions
- Signs and symptoms of death

Direct patient care volunteers are required to complete timesheets documenting their interactions with patients and families, and receive training on how to complete these forms. Timesheets are due twice monthly.

Annually, all direct patient care volunteers are required to:

- Agree to the Iowa City Hospice Privacy/Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement; and
- Review Universal Precautions and Hazardous Materials policies.

Every 4 years, all direct patient care volunteers are required to:

- Complete a Tuberculosis (PPD) test, which is available through Iowa City Hospice.

Volunteers who have completed the Patient Care Volunteer training may also be interested in these specialized programs...

Final Days Volunteers

A hospice patient is placed on **Final Days** when a nurse makes an educated prediction that the patient is within **5-7 days of death**. The patient may have periods of unresponsiveness or be sleeping more than usual. The patient may have decreased appetite or may choose not to eat. Families may begin to sit vigil with the dying patient, which can be emotionally, spiritually and physically exhausting.

Iowa City Hospice staff may ask for Final Days volunteers to provide the patient and family with support or respite, or to provide comfort and companionship to patients whose family and/or friends are not available to the patient.

Volunteer shifts vary; often volunteers are provided once or twice a day for two- to three-hour periods.

11th Hour Volunteers

When it is anticipated that a patient is within **24-48 hours of death**, Iowa City Hospice staff or families may request volunteer support 24 hours a day to ensure that the patient does not die alone or to provide support to the family. **11th Hour** volunteers are those willing to spend time with a patient who is actively dying.

Volunteers may hold the patient's hand, read aloud to the patient, alert staff if the patient appears to be in pain, or be a listening ear for the family. Because the patient may be completely unresponsive, 11th Hour volunteers are encouraged to bring a book to these assignments. Volunteer shifts vary; often volunteers are asked to spend two- to three-hour shifts with the patient/family.

Long-Term Care Facility (LTCF) Specific Volunteers

Many long-term care facilities (LTCF) have multiple residents who are Iowa City Hospice patients. An Iowa City Hospice direct patient care volunteer may choose to do the majority of their volunteering at one (or more) facility, often because it's close to the volunteer's home or the volunteer is comfortable working with the facility's staff.

LTCF-specific volunteers only care for Iowa City Hospice patients who are residents of the LTCF, not the facility's other residents. The relationships formed between Iowa City Hospice's LTCF-specific volunteers and the facility staff foster a wonderful exchange of information and support that results in outstanding care for the patient and family.

These Volunteer Programs that require specialized training beyond the Volunteer Training Class.

Volunteers may choose to specialize or volunteer for all of these programs.

CALM (Creating A Low-stimulus Milieu) Volunteers

Most people with advanced dementia lose meaningful communication skills and memories. The Iowa City Hospice CALM program helps find new ways to be present with those who have dementia. Sensory stimulation is used to spark connections to lifelong habits, interests and preferences, aided by the use of sensory kits. The kits, made up of lotions, fragrances, bubbles and more, help volunteers, staff and family members make meaningful connections with the person affected by dementia.

Specialized Training and Requirements

CALM volunteers must complete an additional **six hours** of training to learn to work with patients who have dementia or dementia-like symptoms. This training includes:

- Information on the signs and symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- Information on the effect of terminal dementia on the patient and family.
- An understanding of the unique challenges of working with dementia patients.
- Instruction on ways to identify a successful volunteer visit, establish contact with the patient and deal with a terminally-ill dementia patient.

CALM volunteers also receive a sensory "toolkit" and training on using it effectively.

ALS Volunteers

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's disease," is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Ultimately, patients are immobile, although sight, smell, touch and cognitive function remain intact. They require complete assistance with all activities of daily living. Iowa City Hospice direct patient care volunteers can offer much assistance to family and hospice caregivers, but it is important to understand the issues associated with caring for this population.

Specialized Training and Requirements

ALS specific volunteers require an additional 2 hours of training focusing on the progression of the disease, the significant care needs for patients struggling with ALS, and an introduction to the community resources available to patients with ALS and their families.

Volunteers Supporting Veterans (VSV)

The influence of military culture and the effects of combat can profoundly impact the end-of-life experience for veterans of the armed forces. Some veterans have come to terms with their military experiences and may be better equipped psychologically to cope with their own deaths. For others, the effects may remain buried for years, emerging when the veteran is very sick and dying. Volunteers Supporting Veterans (VSVs) provide empathic, nonjudgmental support to veterans and their families.

Specialized Training and Requirements

VSVs must complete an additional **three hours** of training to prepare them for what they may hear in discussing veterans' war experiences. The training includes:

- Education about veterans' issues.
- Insight into experiences the veteran may have had.
- Education about post-traumatic stress disorder.
- A historical understanding of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm and the current Middle East conflict.
- The issues of returning home after war-time service.
- The experiences and feelings of veterans who did not experience combat.

VSV volunteers are required to read the book *Breaking Squelch*, by Stephen Saunders. This book is available at Iowa City Hospice. Although many VSV volunteers are themselves veterans, it is not a requirement.

Compassionate Touch Volunteers

Compassionate Touch is a style of massage that gives special consideration to the physical and emotional needs of the elderly and/or ill patient. Its primary intention is to provide comfort

through techniques that promote relaxation and relief from pain. Compassionate Touch can be given in any setting. A massage table or other special equipment is not required. It can be performed with the patient in a wheelchair, in a hospital bed, a regular bed, in a recliner or in a chair.

Specific Training and Requirements

Compassionate touch volunteers receive an additional two hours of training on hand and foot massage techniques. While some Compassionate Touch volunteers are licensed massage therapists, it is not a requirement.

Pet Peace of Mind Volunteers

Pets hold an important place in many people's families and bring joy, warmth and companionship to our lives. For patients at the end of life, the unconditional love and attention of a pet is even more vital. However, when a family is coping with a terminal illness, the daily responsibilities of pet care may be neglected. The Pet Peace of Mind volunteers provide support services that keep patient and pets safely together throughout the end of life journey.

Specific Training and Requirements

This two hour training emphasizes the importance of pets to patients physical, emotional and spiritual well being, and describes the services offered to patients and families. These include delivery of food/litter, dog walking, cat companionship, waste "management", transportation to appointments, and assistance finding a foster or adoptive home if necessary.

Pet Therapy Volunteers

Pet therapy can benefit hospice patients in multiple ways. Relaxation, decreased anxiety, and even lowered blood pressure have been attributed to the presence of pets. Therapy pets and their handlers visit patients and families in their homes, in long-term care facilities and in hospitals.

Specialized Training and Requirements

Certification by Delta Society or other accredited pet therapy training program is required. All shots must be up to date.

Bereavement Volunteers

Iowa City Hospice provides grief support services to family members and friends of Iowa City Hospice patients who have died, as well as to community members grieving a death. The person who died need not have been a hospice patient. Services are available, free of charge, to anyone who resides in our seven-county service area. Bereavement volunteers assist with these services by:

- Writing cards and letters to families.
- Assisting with bereavement mailings.
- At the family's request, making personal visits to grieving family members.
- Making phone calls to talk with surviving family members.
- Providing administrative support associated with the bereavement program.

Specialized Training and Requirements

Bereavement volunteers receive on-the-job training specific to their role in bereavement and grief support services from an Iowa City Hospice staff person. This training is arranged on an individual basis. Bereavement volunteers are not required to volunteer with *only* grieving individuals.

Youth Bereavement Volunteers

Iowa City Hospice provides grief support services to family members and friends of Iowa City Hospice patients who have died, as well as to community members grieving a loss. The person who died need not have been a hospice patient. Services are available, free of charge, to anyone who resides in our seven-county service area. Youth bereavement volunteers work directly with grieving children and teens, and may provide the following services:

- Work with other volunteers and youth bereavement staff to facilitate a support group.
- Provide transportation so that children may attend support groups.
- Make phone calls to families to provide support and confirm attendance at support group meetings.
- Assist with administrative tasks related to youth bereavement programs.

Specialized Training and Requirements

Youth bereavement volunteers receive on-the-job training from an Iowa City Hospice bereavement professional specific to their role in bereavement and grief support services. This training is arranged on an individual basis.

Non-Patient Care Volunteers

Shawlers

Iowa City Hospice shawlers hand-knit and crochet shawls and lap blankets that are given to our patients upon admission. The shawls include a label that reads, "Hand made with love by a volunteer for Iowa City Hospice." The shawls are soft, washable and a great source of comfort to patients and families. Volunteers from all over the country participate by mailing us their completed projects.

Office and Program Support Volunteers

Iowa City Hospice office and program support volunteers provide invaluable assistance to program and administrative staff. There are many ways these volunteers help Iowa City Hospice achieve its mission, including:

- Hand-addressing envelopes, writing thank you cards.
- Stuffing envelopes for various mailings, large and small.
- Filing important documents.
- Delivering cookies and flowers to our care partners.
- Entering data, updating mailing lists.
- Distributing materials like Walk for Dignity pledge forms or community awareness items.
- Staffing fundraising or community awareness events.

Bakers

Iowa City Hospice relies on a community-wide network of volunteers who love to bake! Cookies, bars, breads and snack mixes are donated and used in a variety of ways. Festive plates of holiday cookies are delivered to our community care partners; quick breads and

muffins are served a monthly board meeting; or a homemade snack mix is provided at a volunteer in-service. These volunteers allow Iowa City Hospice the pleasure of offering a little something extra to all those who contribute to our end of life care.

Iowa City Hospice Friends and Ambassadors

Friends play a critical role serving as Iowa City Hospice representatives in the community and promoting greater awareness of Iowa City Hospice's mission. Equally important, *Friends* sustain the development and ongoing financial viability of Iowa City Hospice by supporting fundraising events like the Walk for Dignity and the Glenn Roberts Elks/Iowa City Hospice Golf Classic or speaking as the voice of Iowa City Hospice, helping educate the community about hospice care, grief support services and other end-of-life issues through our speaker's bureau. *Friends* serve as Iowa City Hospice representatives in their own communities and social circles.