

**JCAHO Expectations
for the
Department of Volunteer Services**

**American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services
of the
American Hospital Association**

ASDVS is committed to advancing the profession of volunteer management. This white paper addresses how JCAHO expectations impact the Volunteer Manager. While HR.4 is the only Joint Commission Hospital Standard that directly mentions volunteers, there are other standards in the manual which provide the basis of what is communicated to volunteers during orientation. This white paper also addresses broader interest areas where individual health care facility administrators may be recommending added participation by their Volunteer Managers.

Section II

Management of the Environment

Explicit Application

The goal of this function is to provide a safe, functional, and effective environment for patients, staff members, and other individuals in the hospital.

Standard EC 1

The organization designs a safe, accessible, effective, and efficient environment of care consistent with its mission, services, and law and regulation.

Standard EC 1.4

A management plan addresses security.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department staff ensures and documents that volunteers are oriented and educated to the health care facility's policies on personal and patient security [HR.4].

Standard EC 1.7i

A management plan addresses life safety ... including a life safety orientation and education program that addresses specific roles and responsibilities of other personnel who must participate in the fire plan, such as volunteers, students, and physicians.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department staff ensures and documents that volunteers are oriented and educated to the health care facility's fire safety policies, including fire drills, unit-specific policies for volunteers assigned to particular areas; and to the health care facility's disaster plan and disaster drills [HR.4].

Section II

REQUIRES COMPLIANCE

Management of Human Resources

The goal of the management of human resources function is to identify and provide the right number of competent staff to meet the needs of patients served by the health care facility.

Standard HR 4

The orientation process provides initial job training and information and assesses the staff's ability to fulfill specified responsibilities.

Standard HR 4 – Intent

When the hospital uses volunteer services, volunteers are oriented to patient care, safety, infection control, and any other activities they are expected to perform competently.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department ensures and documents that volunteers are oriented to the health care facility, its mission, and its policies, including those policies addressing patient confidentiality, safety, infection control, and other policies consistent with employee orientation.

Standard HR 4.2

Explicit Application

Ongoing in-service and other education and training maintain and improve staff competence.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department staff provides annual training for volunteers. In those health care facilities where competencies are addressed for volunteer assignments in direct patient contact areas, Volunteer Department staff reassesses and documents volunteers' competencies with skills, age-specific competencies, and roles for these particular volunteer placements.

Standard HR 5

Implicit Application

The hospital assesses each staff member's ability to meet the performance expectations stated in his or her job description.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

JCAHO does not explicitly require volunteers to be assessed for competencies. Volunteer Department staff, however, should seek the advice and guidance of senior administrators and HR leadership within their own health care facility to determine whether to implement competency assessments for volunteers.

Section II

Explicit Application

Surveillance, Prevention and Control of Infection (Overview)

The goal of the Surveillance, Prevention, and Control of Infection is to identify and reduce the risks of acquiring and transmitting infections among patients, employees, physicians, and other licensed practitioners, contract service workers, volunteers, students, and visitors. All hospitals run the risk of nosocomial infections – that is, infections acquired in the hospital, as well as infections brought into the hospital.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department staff ensures and documents that volunteers are oriented and educated to the health care facility's policies on infection control and conducts initial and annual health screenings compatible with the health care facility's policy. [HR.4]

Section I

Patients Rights and Organizational Ethics

Implicit Application

The goal of the patient rights and organization ethics function is to help improve patient outcomes by respecting each patient's rights and conducting business relationships with patients and the public in an ethical manner.

Standard R1.1e

The hospital establishes and maintains structures ... that include the patient's right to security and personal privacy and confidentiality of information.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The Volunteer Department staff ensures and documents that all volunteers are oriented and trained on matters relating to patient confidentiality, personal privacy, and a fundamental understanding of the patients rights as defined by the Patients Bill of Rights. Volunteer Department staff ensures that volunteers have an understanding of how to report ethical concerns and keeps documentation on file to verify this [[HR.4]

Section I

Care of Patients

Implicit Application

The goal of the care of patients function is to provide individualized care in settings responsive to the specific patient needs.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

There are no explicit references to volunteers. However, volunteers support the care of patients in a variety of ways, including such tasks as feeding, transporting, and visiting. Volunteer Department staff ensures and documents that all volunteers are oriented and trained in a manner that upholds the health care facility's commitment to providing quality patient care [HR.4].

Section I

Education

Implicit Application

The goal of patient and family education function is to improve patient health outcomes by promoting healthy behavior and involving the patient in care decisions.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department staff ensures that volunteers participating in and/or supporting patient and family education are trained in content and in presentation to meet patients' needs and guarantee patient privacy [HR.4].

Section II

Implicit Application

Improving Organizational Performance

The goal of improving organization performance is to continuously improve patient health outcomes. While there are many approaches to improving organization performance, all have essential processes in common:

Process design, performance measurement, performance assessment; and performance improvement.

Standard P1.5

The health care facility systematically improves its performance.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteer Department is not explicitly referenced in this standard. Volunteer Department staff may show evidence and documentation of initiatives that demonstrate performance improvement.

September, 1999



Joint Commission
on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

September 10, 1999

Patricia Rowell
Director, Volunteer & Interpreter Services
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Ms. Rowell:

Thank you for your letter of September, 1999 in which you request review and comment on the document titled, *JCAHO Expectations for the Department of Volunteer Services* that is to be distributed at the American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services of the American Hospital Association meeting. Although the Joint Commission does not routinely review documents submitted by organizations for the purpose of consultation, critiques or approval, I would like to share some observations. I have faxed the document that you sent me with some edits that I am recommending. As we have discussed, HR.4, is the only standard that we specifically survey as it applies to volunteers. My edits, I hope, clarify this issue.

I trust this is of assistance to you. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (630) 792-5909 or E-mail: lponiatowski@jcaho.org.

Sincerely,

Larry Poniatowski, RN
Associate Director
Department of Standards