

HOSPICE INFORMATION CENTER

for families, friends and professionals

funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

VOLUNTEERING FOR HOSPICE: WHAT YOU (AND HOSPICES) NEED TO KNOW

- 1** *Each year, more than 450 thousand hospice volunteers give more than 20 million hours of service.* From spending time with patients and families to providing administrative assistance and helping with fundraising, volunteers are instrumental in the life of every hospice.
- 2** *Most volunteers come to hospice because of personal experience with seeing the quality of care that hospice provides at the end of life.* Alex, a hospice volunteer, says, “I started out as a hospice volunteer because hospice took care of my grandfather and I saw the care and compassion that they offered and the great relief the volunteers offered to my family and I wanted to be a part of that.”
- 3** *Compassion and commitment are the hallmarks of a great hospice volunteer.* Being with families facing death and loss can be challenging, but volunteers who work in hospice understand how this type of care can bring quality and dignity to those facing the end of life.
- 4** *Hospices provide extensive volunteer training and different opportunities to serve.* Hospice professionals are skilled at identifying why someone wants to volunteer for hospice, placing him or her in roles that meet those motivational needs.

- 5** | *Hospice volunteers are helping at a vulnerable point in a person's life, by listening to and being present with patients and loved ones.* Hospice volunteers are an integral part of the team, and should take advantage of the resources available to them through the hospice program.
- 6** | *Hospices use the talents of some volunteers to offer specialized support to patients and families.* A hospice volunteer who is a veteran brings a unique level of support to another veteran in hospice; some volunteers offer pet or music therapy, adding another element of comfort and joy at a difficult time.
- 7** | *Hospice is the only healthcare system that mandates the use of volunteers.* This reflects the history of the hospice movement in the United States, which started as an all-volunteer system.
- 8** | *Strong hospice volunteer programs rely on good supervision, communication and support from program staff, and the ability to keep volunteers motivated and enthusiastic.* Hospices are required to provide ongoing education for volunteers to maintain their skills and learn new ones.
- 9** | *Hospice volunteers are as diverse as the hospice professional staff.* A hospice volunteer can be an older teenager or adult who serves once a week or a few times a month. Some volunteers work as a group on different tasks or projects that the hospice needs, such as special events in local communities which benefit hospice.
- 10** | *Hospices can demonstrate their appreciation to volunteers by providing support and recognition for their valuable contribution.* Due to the nature of hospice work, hospice volunteers are likely to need strong support, understanding and encouragement.

To learn more about volunteering for hospice, contact a hospice in your community or the Hospice Foundation at www.hospicefoundation.org



For more information on hospice, grief and bereavement, or caregiving and end-of-life issues, please visit our website at www.hospicefoundation.org/hfcares or call us at: 800-854-3402.

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