

# Volunteering at Northern Health

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How much time do I have to commit?

Volunteers are expected to make a commitment of 6 months from their first assignment. Volunteers are expected to complete one shift per week, and the length varies depending on the role. We typically ask for between 2 – 4 hours per week.

### When can I volunteer? Can I come in on the weekend?

Almost all volunteer assignments require weekday availability between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm. There are very few opportunities in the evenings and weekends.

### Will volunteering for Northern Health get me a job?

Volunteering is not a direct pathway or a guarantee of a job. Volunteering can certainly help you enhance your skills, make contacts, and improve your resume, but it does not give you preferential access to a job.

### What age do I have to be to volunteer?

We recommend that applicants be over 15 due to the unpredictable nature of health care. Parental consent is required for applicants 15 and under. We have very few opportunities that are suitable for volunteers under 15. Some specialized roles have age restrictions and these will be listed within their description.

### Can I volunteer for one-time events, or for a short time?

In general, Northern Health does not conduct any one-time events, and we do not have short term volunteer roles. You may wish to contact [local health care foundations](#) as they sometimes offer volunteer opportunities for special events. In Prince George, we do maintain a list for volunteers who would be available to help with occasional, temporary projects, however these are few and far between.

### I'm in Canada on a visa/ permit. Can I volunteer?

That depends on your permit.

1. We do not accept volunteers who are here on a visitor visa.
2. If you have a work or student permit, make sure your permit allows you to volunteer. It is up to you to be sure you aren't breaching the conditions of your permit.
3. Check that your permit is valid for 12 months.
4. Check that there are no restrictions that would stop you from working in health care (e.g. "Not permitted to work in health care" or "Not permitted to work with vulnerable people").

If you meet these conditions, we welcome your application.

## What skills and experience do I need to volunteer?

This depends on the role you're interested in. Some roles need more specialized skills. In general, we are looking for people who are caring and compassionate and have strong communication skills.

## Can I volunteer with my dog or other pet?

Certified Therapy Dogs are welcomed at most sites. If you have a Therapy Dog, please talk to us and we can likely arrange a volunteer posting! Volunteers may not bring other pets onsite during their shift.

## How long does it take to become a volunteer?

The time can vary anywhere from a few weeks to a couple months or more. It depends on the time it takes for a Criminal Record Check to return, whether your references respond promptly, and of course how quickly you're able to finish the required training. Staff in our facilities are also very busy and aren't always able to add you to the schedule right away.

## What happens after I apply?

We'll be in touch as soon as we can to help you through your onboarding. There are a number of steps to becoming a volunteer.

- A Volunteer Resources staff will interview you so we can match you with our available roles.
- We will check your 2 references. References must be over 19 years of age, have known you for at least 6 months and not be from your family. Wherever possible, please provide a reference from a teacher, colleague, supervisor, or volunteer leader.
- You will complete a Criminal Record Check, because many of our clients are vulnerable people.
- You will complete our orientation training. This is done online and generally takes between 3 and 4 hours. Some roles require extra training as well.

## Why is it such a big procedure to volunteer?

We carefully screen volunteers because our patients and residents are very vulnerable, and we are legally and morally obligated to protect them. We also want to keep our volunteers safe, so we do our best to ensure they're well prepared for volunteering and understand what they'll encounter while volunteering. Our application procedures are very similar to other health authorities and organizations providing health care.

## Does everyone who applies get to volunteer?

We do our best to find something that works, however applying or being interviewed does not guarantee a volunteer placement. Sometimes the opportunities we have available just don't match an applicant's availability or skills.

Here's what we are looking for:

- Able to make a minimum of 12-month commitment from first assignment.
- Consistent availability. The more flexible your schedule, the easier it is to find a suitable placement.
- Suitability, interests, and experience are a fit for the volunteer role.
- Application **MUST** be filled out in full with no missing information.
- Appropriate written and spoken English language levels.
- Candidates who are passionate about contributing their free time to our mission of providing excellent health services to Northerners.
- An understanding of Northern Health's mission, values and vision.
- Being a health care student, or having an interest in a post-secondary health care program, is an asset.

## What about parking or transit expenses?

Parking is free at most sites but is not guaranteed anywhere. At UHNBC in Prince George, there is a paid parking lot. Volunteers can park for free, if they can find an open spot. We generally recommend transit, if that's an option for you. We do not reimburse for transit expenses.

## Do I contact Volunteer Resources to join a hospital auxiliary?

You can apply [online](#) through Volunteer Resources, and we will send your application to the local auxiliary (with your permission). You can also contact [auxiliaries](#) directly to ask about getting involved.

## I'm part of a music group – can we volunteer together?

Absolutely! We have a simple and [streamlined application](#) for entertainers and group volunteers who are providing entertainment or other activities. You can apply [online](#) to bring your activity to our facilities.

## Is there a dress code for volunteering?

Volunteers must wear their volunteer T-shirt and name tag while volunteering. All volunteers should be neat and tidy in appearance, and your hair should be pinned back if working in a clinical area. Wear closed-toe shoes. Skirts/shorts must be no more than 3" above the knee and clothing should not have any holes.

## **Can I change my shift day or time after starting an assignment?**

A new time or day is not always possible, but we will try to accommodate a request.

## **Can I volunteer for multiple volunteer assignments?**

New volunteers must begin with one volunteer assignment. We ask that volunteers demonstrate their commitment before switching to a new role, because it takes a lot of staff time to bring volunteers into a role.

## **How can I become a successful volunteer?**

Starting out as a volunteer can feel a bit daunting, especially if you're new to interacting with clients or patients. Building confidence in starting conversations is a skill that develops with time and practice. Strong conversational English skills are very helpful in this role. If you're still working on your English and feel unsure, you might consider waiting to apply until you feel more comfortable communicating. This will help you feel more confident and ensure a positive experience for both you and those you support.