



Volunteering at North Okanagan Hospice Society

Overview & Application

North Okanagan Hospice Society

Vision

“Respect, comfort and compassion in life’s final journey”

Putting Yourself in the Picture —

You believe that dying is natural and death should be neither hastened nor fading life prolonged. You value individual and social differences, and do not pass judgment on others' lifestyle choices and beliefs. You treat clients and families and other team members with respect, dignity and compassion.

If this describes you, you have strong potential as a Hospice volunteer. Training sessions are intensive and self-reflective. Team-building among participants, who share their wisdom and experience, is valued. Skills learned and practiced enhance your effectiveness and comfort levels. The work is both rewarding and demanding, time-wise and emotionally, so we also stress that self-care is crucial.

What Volunteers Can Expect From Hospice —

The North Okanagan Hospice Society Volunteer Program offers moral support and debriefing as required. The Volunteer Program is committed to building a strong, mutually caring team. The Society, through the Coordinator of Volunteers, will keep you informed of Hospice activities through volunteer meetings and phone calls/e-mails as needed, and will provide opportunities to network and enhance/refresh skills at special workshops.

Please take the time to ponder the following questions and answer them for yourself. We may refer to some of these issues at a screening interview. Volunteering is a great opportunity to give back to your community. Thank you for your interest and compassion for others, and your willingness to share the person that you are with North Okanagan Hospice Society — for the benefit of those living through this emotional phase of life.

Questions To Ponder Before You Commit —

- What skills, interests and experience do I bring to this work?
- Are my personal issues under control, so I don't project them onto others?
- Do I have a personal support system in place?
- Am I reliable and motivated?
- Am I able to support my client's belief system? Can I let go of personal agendas, values or needs so that I can be present for the client?



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Volunteer Application Overview

Hospice Palliative Care —

Historically, the term “hospice” originated in the Middle Ages during the Crusades. A Hospice was a place of refuge for the sick, the weary or the traveler seeking comfort and sustenance. Dr. Dame Cecily Saunders developed the modern concept of Hospice in 1967 in London, England.

Today, Hospice Palliative Care refers to the active, compassionate care of those with a palliative diagnosis, where illness has progressed beyond medical treatment aimed at prolonging life.

Services Provided By Hospice Volunteers —

Volunteers are the heart of the Hospice organization and contribute in a variety of ways including: visiting with clients in Hospice House and in the community, keeping vigil with a client in the final stages of their life’s journey, follow-up with bereaved families after a client’s death, co-facilitation of bereavement support groups, meal preparation, baking, office duties, fundraising, grounds maintenance and many other important tasks.

Volunteers are an integral part of the Hospice Care Team and work closely with staff. *All* members of the Hospice Care Team are bound by strict confidentiality.

Volunteers fall into two categories: **Auxiliary Volunteers** and **Client Volunteers**. Volunteer applicants fill out an application form detailing their skills, experience and areas of interest. Training programs vary depending on the desired role(s). Client Volunteer applicants who are accepted into the training program will undergo an intensive, 30-hour training program held in the spring and fall.

Our clients are at a vulnerable stage in their lives and the Society has an obligation to be sensitive and discerning when choosing volunteers for its training programs.

Auxiliary Volunteers —

After an orientation, volunteers in this category generally enjoy performing tasks not intensively involved with clients. They may assist with the following:

- Fundraising events
- Office functions: library, reception, mail-outs, data-entry, document formatting
- Hospice House Reception and household tasks: laundry, arranging flowers, pharmacy runs etc.
- Practical help around the House such as: grounds maintenance under direction, minor repairs, reorganizing supplies by request, assisting in the kitchen, etc.

Client Volunteers —

After successfully completing the 30-hour client training program, volunteers in this category may offer the following:

- Emotional/social support to an assigned client (community or in-house) and his/her loved ones
- Emotional/social support to clients and families in Hospice House as needed (i.e. “floating”)
- Companionship and a listening ear — but not advice
- Running of small errands with or for the client, reading, cards or puzzles
- Vigiling with a resident during the final stages of their life’s journey
- Meal preparation, baking, clearing up
- Relief of caregivers for short time spans
- Follow-up with bereaved family after client’s death and facilitation of their own support systems
- Assistance at events such as our Memorial Ceremony or our Celebrate-a-Life event
- Further training could lead to co-facilitation assignments of specific groups

Screening, Recruitment and Training —

Prospective volunteers may be invited to attend a personal interview with the Coordinator of Volunteers and references are followed-up. A suitable applicant will be invited into training if spaces remain available.

A three-month probationary period will follow all of the volunteer training sessions. For Client Volunteers a mentoring period will allow new volunteers to receive further practical training and an increased level of personal comfort during a shift in the House. The Society asks for a minimum of 2 to 4 hours per week commitment after training and for a one year minimum. We anticipate a long and mutually rewarding association.