

Volunteer Program FAQs

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document has been developed as a guide for nursing homes to use to aid in developing a robust volunteer program. Each nursing home must establish individual policies and procedures related to their volunteer program. In addition, nursing homes must comply with Federal Regulations in Appendix PP of the State Operations Manual (SOM) which includes the Requirements of Participation (RoP) for Medicare and Medicaid certified providers.

1. ***Are we required to have a volunteer program?***

No, volunteer programs are optional. If you have a volunteer program, the nursing home shall designate a staff member to direct the program. This doesn't include community groups such as the Boy and Girl Scouts or other similar civic organizations.

2. ***Prior to an individual volunteering, is a background check necessary?***

Yes, under [955.100](#), the applicability of the Health Care Worker Background Check code includes "all unlicensed employees of licensed or certified long-term care facilities who have or may have contact with residents or access to the living quarters or the financial, medical, or personal records of residents."

3. ***Is physical examination necessary for a volunteer?***

Possibly, [300.655](#) indicates that a health evaluation shall be completed on each employee not more than 30 days prior to the employee beginning employment in the facility or more than 30 days after employment has begun. However, the rules don't include the definition of an employee.

A physical examination isn't included in the Volunteer Program section of the rules in [300.1440](#).

4. ***Is Tuberculosis Screening necessary for volunteers?***

Yes, according to [696.100](#), a health care worker "includes a paid or **unpaid** person working in a health care setting who has the potential for exposure to M. tuberculosis through air space shared with persons with infectious TB disease, or contact with clinical specimens."

5. *What training is required for volunteers?*

Abuse policies and procedures according to F607 and F943 in [Appendix PP](#).

- Prohibiting and preventing all forms of abuse, neglect, misappropriation of property and exploitation.
- Identifying what constitutes abuse, neglect, exploitation, and misappropriation of property.
- Recognizing signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation of property such as physical or psychosocial indicators.
- Reporting abuse, neglect, exploitation and misappropriation of property, including injuries of unknown origin, to whom, and when staff and others must report their knowledge related to any alleged violation without fear of reprisal.
- Understanding behavioral symptoms of residents that may increase the risk of abuse and neglect and how to respond including but not limited to aggressive and/or catastrophic reactions, wandering or elopement behaviors, resistance to care, outbursts or yelling out, and difficulty adjusting to new routines or staff.

Behavioral health based on resident population and needs as outlined in the facility assessment. Volunteers are included in F949 there may be interactions depending on the role of the volunteer that training may be beneficial and determined necessary.

Resident rights as outlined in the Federal regulations under F942.

Quality assurance and performance improvement, consistent with the volunteer's role according to Federal regulations under F944. This may include understanding what QAPI is and how to identify/report potential problems and ideas for improvement.

Infection control according to Federal regulations under F945. This includes written standards, policies, and procedures for the program consistent with the volunteer's role.

Compliance and ethics training under Federal regulations under F946. At a minimum, this should include definitions of crimes that must be reported and who suspicion of a crime is required to be reported to.

Additional training may be necessary as outlined in your individual facility assessment based on roles and responsibilities of volunteers.

Illinois state rules include a standard orientation program, in accordance with responsibilities and policies that govern the volunteer program which shall include but not limited to:

- Resident rights
- Confidentiality
- Disaster preparedness
- Emergency response procedures
- Safety procedures/precautions
- Infection control and body mechanics