

This guide helps patients and families understand what volunteers can and cannot do, the boundaries they work within, and how they complement professional care.

What is Palliative Care Volunteering?

Palliative care volunteering involves offering support to people living with life limiting illnesses and their families. Volunteers function under a formal volunteering program and are supported by a volunteer coordinator and organisational policies.

What Clients Should Know

- Volunteers support within boundaries and under supervision. They follow guidelines set by the palliative care volunteer program
- Their time is limited. Volunteers usually visit for scheduled periods and cannot provide 24/7 support
- They complement, not replace, healthcare staff. Volunteers add comfort and emotional support but do not provide clinical care
- Clarity builds trust. Understanding their role helps reduce confusion and ensure positive experiences
- Confidentiality matters. Volunteers respect privacy and follow strict confidentiality policies
- Safety first. Volunteers may have limits on physical tasks to protect both themselves and clients.

What to Expect from Volunteers

- Practical help within guidelines. They may assist with light tasks such as reading aloud, writing letters or sitting with the patient while family takes a short break
- Companionship and empathy. Volunteers offer a listening ear, conversation and emotional comfort
- Support for dignity and quality of life. Volunteers aim to make time more meaningful and less lonely
- No medical treatment. Volunteers cannot administer medication, perform clinical tasks or make care decisions
- Communication link. Volunteers can relay concerns to the supervisor but are not decision-makers
- Presence, not expertise. Their role is based on compassion and being there for you.

Why Boundaries Matter

Boundaries protect clients, families, and volunteers. They ensure safety, maintain trust, and clarify roles so everyone knows what to expect.



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