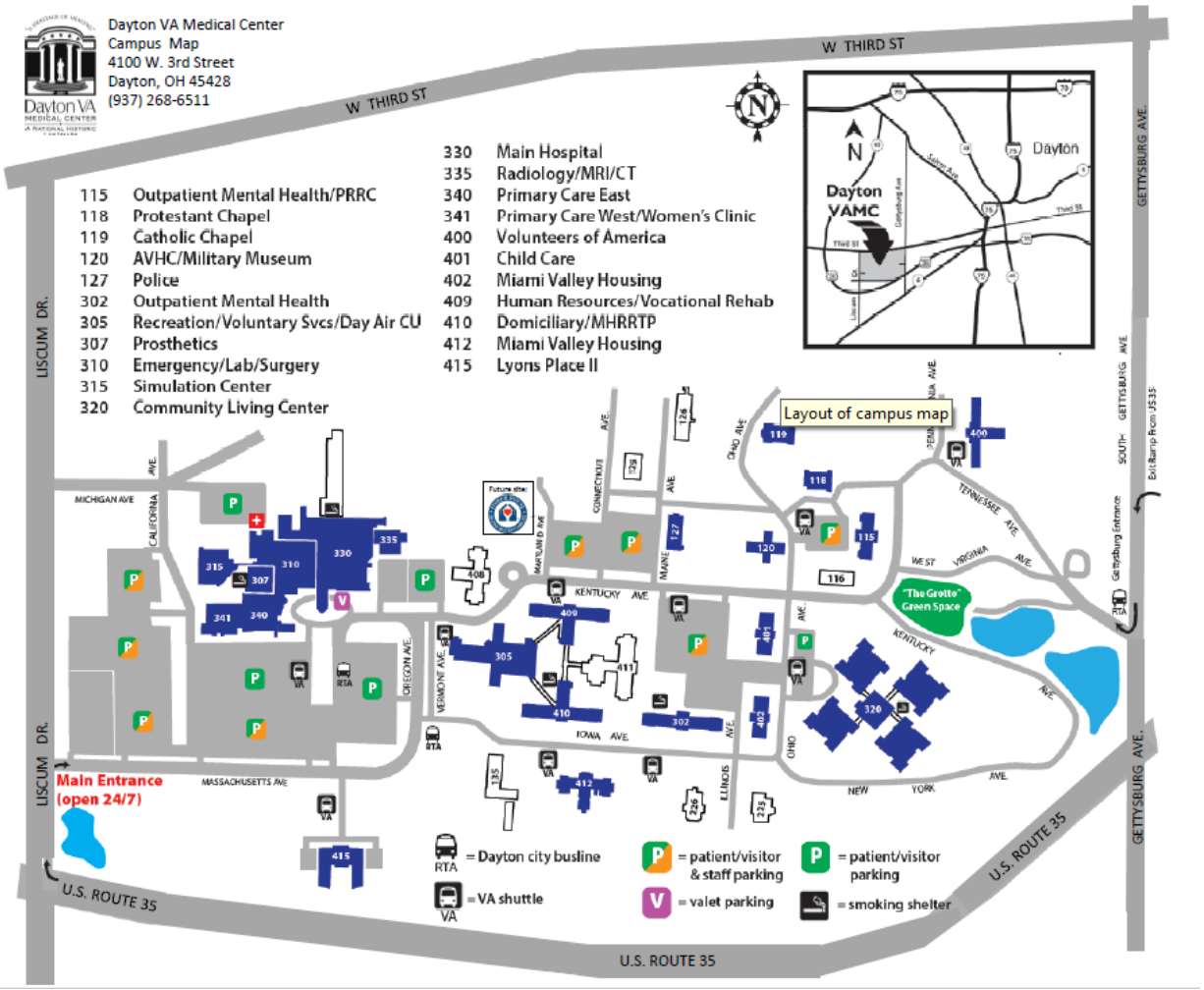
Dayton VA Medical Center

Volunteer Handbook



Volunteers are valuable members of the Dayton VA Medical Center team. Volunteers do not replace paid personnel. Instead, volunteers perform many useful services that are beyond the scope of the regular staff. We hope you will experience the pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment that comes from serving others. Thank you for your willingness to donate your time and talent to our Veteran patients.

Prior to volunteering and as a refresher, please review and become knowledgeable about the material presented in this booklet. Please consult Voluntary Services staff for assistance or clarification. Your understanding of the information in this handbook is very important.

VA Vision

To provide Veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned- and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship.

VA Mission

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise – "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" – by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

The Dayton VAMC is a state of the art teaching facility that has been serving Veterans for over 150 years, having accepted its first patient in 1867. The Dayton VA Medical Center provides a full range of health care through medical, surgical, mental health (inpatient and outpatient), home and community health programs, geriatric (nursing home), physical medicine and therapy services, neurology, oncology, dentistry, and hospice.

The Medical Center has 356 hospital beds:

•185 nursing home beds

•80 acute care beds

•91 domiciliary beds

The Dayton VA Medical Center supports four Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). CBOC Lima serves the Veterans in Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Hancock, Hardin, Logan, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam, Shelby, Van Wert, and Wyandot Counties. CBOC Middletown serves the Veterans in Butler (in addition to the Hamilton VA Healthcare Associates) and Warren Counties; CBOC Richmond, Indiana serves the Veterans in Wayne County; CBOC Springfield serves the Veterans in Clark, Champaign and Greene counties.

Voluntary Services

Our Medical Center is always seeking to improve the comfort and quality of life for the Veterans hospitalized here. Through the generous support of our many friends, both organizations and

individuals, we can provide a rich and diversified atmosphere of recreational and social activities and personal comfort for our Veterans.

The Voluntary Services office maintains a “needs list” which is updated frequently and always available via, www.dayton.va.gov/giving .

Individuals or organizations wishing to make monetary donations to the Medical Center for the benefit of the patients should make checks payable to Dayton VA Medical Center and mail to the following address:

Dayton VA Medical Center (135)
Attention: Voluntary Services
4100 West Third Street
Dayton, Ohio 45428

If uncertain as to what purpose or what account you wish the donation to be applied, prior contact with the Chief, Voluntary Services will ensure prompt and accurate application of the monetary donation. Contact Voluntary Services at 937-262-2162 for further information.

You as a VA Volunteer

The following section is designed to provide you with the basic information needed to begin your volunteer assignment. Please take time to read each item.

Role

The highest standards will be exercised when selecting volunteers. Volunteers contribute to the image and perception of the Dayton VA Medical Center. Volunteers are expected to exercise good judgement in their interactions with Veterans and their family members, visitors, staff, and other volunteers.

- Volunteers are a critical part of our team and must be punctual; conscientiously carrying out assigned responsibilities.
- The ability to recognize your personal limitations is crucial. Volunteers must maintain boundaries; all interaction must be professional.
- Volunteers must resist the temptation to impose their own values on others.

- Volunteers must be skilled in verbal communication in order to provide excellent customer service.

Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers

Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers commit to a minimum of 6 months and 100 hours (equal to about 4-6 hours a week). Regularly Scheduled Volunteers are assigned to a specific regularly occurring assignment. Volunteers who agree to serve on an approved RS assignment will be officially authorized to serve on a "without compensation" basis. To maintain status, volunteers must complete annual training and keep their VA ID badge up to date. All volunteers must sign in their hours prior to their shift. The Chief of Voluntary Services is responsible for making all volunteer assignments meet the current Medical Center needs and the qualifications of the individual volunteer. Volunteer abilities, skill, interest, and career goals are taken into consideration when volunteer assignments are made. If you should ever become unhappy about your assignment, don't stop volunteering. Allow us the opportunity to discuss your concerns. Voluntary Services Staff will make every effort to find a new assignment.

All Regularly Scheduled volunteers must be vetted. Vetting which includes an interview, fingerprinting, completion of a two-step Tuberculosis (TB) screening, and an annual flu shot. If you have tested positively in the past for TB, you may need to have a chest x-ray or complete a questionnaire at the discretion of the Occupational Health Department of the Medical Center. To protect the health of our Veterans, staff and volunteers are now required to either have a flu shot or wear a mask while on duty for the duration of the cold and flu season (December through March). Flu shots are offered to all employees and volunteers free of charge.

While we never like for a volunteer to leave, we respect and honor the needs of our volunteers. If you are no longer able to volunteer, kindly notify Voluntary Services. We will request that you return your ID. In rare instances volunteers will be dismissed from service. In accordance with VHA Handbook 1620.01: "The Voluntary Services Program Manager may remove a VAVS volunteer for unsatisfactory performance, inability to perform the assignment, or a violation of established policy or procedures. "

Supervision

Each volunteer works under the direct supervision of a VA staff member. Staff supervisors provide area specific training and assignments. Volunteers commit to a regular schedule to support their assigned area. If you are unable to come in for any reason, please notify your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible.

Volunteer Standards

It is your responsibility to assure the hours that you volunteer each day are recorded. Please note that driving time, to and from, does not count towards "volunteer hours". All volunteers must sign in prior to reporting to their assignment. Three computers have been set up for signing in and are strictly for that purpose:(1) Information Desk (Main Hospital Lobby) Building 330; (2) Voluntary Services Office, Building 305; (3) Community Living Center, Building 320. If the system is not working, sign-in sheets will be provided in these areas. If the system is not working and no sign-in sheet is available please notify Voluntary Services Staff.

A benefit of volunteering at least four hours prior to 12:00pm is a meal allowance. Meal tickets are printed at one of the three computers designated for volunteer sign-in. Canteen Service will not honor the meal allowance unless your meal ticket is signed and you are wearing your official Volunteer ID Badge. Meal tickets are valid only for the day they are printed and only for the named volunteer. Falsifying hours to receive a meal ticket will result in termination of volunteer.

Your **Valid VA ID badge** must be clearly displayed while volunteering. The appearance and first impression given by our volunteers is of the upmost importance. Shorts, open toe shoes, and revealing clothing are not permissible. For most volunteer assignments jeans are acceptable. Hats are generally not allowed unless the volunteer assignment is outside. To maintain a professional standard destressed and casual clothing such as athletic tops, pants, and pajamas are not appropriate. All clothing must be appropriate for a medical facility, clean and neat.

- All volunteers must be **groomed and hygienic** this includes facial hair, nails, smell and overall appearance.
- All volunteers will adhere to **infection control** guidelines. This is especially pertinent when handling food, specimens, and on inpatient units.
- Volunteers represent the Dayton VA Medical Center. Open criticism of the Medical Center, any program or staff member while on duty is unprofessional. **Criticism should be discussed in private** with your supervisor or to the Chief, Voluntary Services.
- **Accept assignments/suggestions** graciously and cooperatively.
- Volunteers should be **flexible**, accepting of unforeseen changes in the daily routine.
- Never sit or lean on a patient's bed. Likewise, **do not give food**, beverages, or smoking materials to a patient unless directed to do so by a VA supervisor.
- **Do not exchange money** with patients. Volunteers are prohibited from lending money or making purchases with patient's funds. Volunteers may not accept tips from patients.

- **Maintain professional boundaries**. Do not give information about yourself, such as your home address, telephone number, etc., or accept gifts from patients.
- **Avoid discussing subjects of a controversial nature** involving the patient's family matters or religion. If these subjects are raised, inform your VA supervisor so that the Social Work Service or Chaplain Service staff can professionally assist the patient.
- Do not offer medical or benefit advice.
- **Avoid showing favoritism**. As a rule, you should not concentrate all your attention on a single patient or small group to the exclusion of others in your assignment area.
- **Remain in the area** to which you are assigned, unless your VA supervisor sends you on an errand.
- **While on duty as a volunteer, you must not canvass or solicit** support for any political party, candidate, or faction, nor do any act on their behalf. In addition, clothing and pins must be free of political affiliation or endorsement.

Hours Accrual, Awards and Recognition

It is our pleasure to recognize the contributions of the volunteers. Volunteers have a significant impact on the VA. Volunteers will accrue hours when services are rendered within a VA facility, clinic, or off-station site approved by VA. Credit will be given for hours volunteered.

Each year Voluntary Services hosts an Adult Regularly Scheduled Volunteer Recognition Ceremony, generally during the month of April. Hours are cumulative and based on the total from the previous fiscal year, October 1- September 30.

Occasional Volunteers

Occasional Volunteers are individuals who assist on an infrequent basis. Occasional Volunteers are not vetted; therefore, they must be accompanied while in the medical center. Occasional volunteers are escorted by regularly scheduled volunteers or staff. Occasional Volunteers are most often utilized for group activities such as bingos, barbeques or special events. If you belong to an organization and are interested in facilitating an activity on campus or would like to be added to the list to assist with special events please inform Voluntary Services Staff.

Appointment to VAVS Committees

Established in 1946, the VAVS National Advisory Committee operates under Public Law 92-463, "The Federal Advisory Committee Act." This committee advises VA staff on how to coordinate and promote volunteer activities within VA healthcare facilities and on matters relating to volunteerism. The committee is comprised of VA staff and the national representatives from many service and community organizations. Each VA medical center and independent outpatient clinic has a corresponding local committee. This committee is comprised of local VA staff and representatives who are appointed by their corresponding National Representatives. If you are unsure who your representative is, we will be happy to introduce you.

Distributions

No item, handout, or gifts should be brought into the Medical Center or distributed without specific permission of the Chief, Voluntary Services. All group activities must be approved and scheduled by Voluntary Services. Appropriateness of items and activities for patients is at the sole discretion of staff. Some items are totally unacceptable. These include drugs, including over the counter medications and supplements, firearms, ammunition, other weapons, and any alcoholic beverages. Violation of these prohibitions may result in arrest and/or fine. If a volunteer is taking medications (including prescription medicines), these medications may be brought into the Medical Center for their use only. Selling of promotional goods or ticket selling is not allowed.

Offering Assistance and Wheelchair Safety Tips

Before assisting any patient or visitor please make sure to ask how you can assist. Many patients would prefer to do things for themselves. Patients should always be afforded this opportunity.

Make sure the wheelchair is in a locked position before a patient gets in or out. Staff members who are requesting assistance with transport of patients to and from appointments should already have patients ready for transport. **Volunteers are not to lift a patient in any way.**

The calf rest and footrest should be in an up position when the patient enters the chair. After the patient is seated, put the calf rest and footrest down for added support and comfort. Remove brakes and navigate chair carefully around corners and away from walls. At elevators, wheelchairs should be pulled through (or backed in) through the doors – not pushed. Volunteers will not be involved in transporting patients on stretchers unless accompanied by medical center staff or personnel who are designated/qualified transporters. Do not transport patients with IV attachments.

Workplace Violence/ Patient Abuse

Whether the personnel in question are paid or volunteer, it is important to have policies and practices which promote accountability. A double standard which does not give respect and dignity to both volunteers and paid staff is not only unnecessary but is also unhealthy for individuals and organizations. The Dayton VA Medical Center hereby affirms its policy that employees and volunteers should work in environments that are free from physical attack, threats, menacing and harassing behaviors. Violent behavior will not be tolerated at this facility. Persons (patients, beneficiaries, volunteers, visitors, employees) committing acts of violence will be reported to the appropriate authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against volunteers that are verbally or physically aggressive.

No patient is to be mistreated or abused in any way, physically or verbally, by any employee or volunteer. Volunteers witnessing abuse must report it immediately to their VA supervisor, Police Service (Ext. 3333), or the person in charge of the activity. Volunteers who abuse any patient will be immediately terminated from the volunteer roles.

Reporting Special Incidents Involving Patient(s)

Volunteers witnessing any special or unusual incidents involving patients should report such incidents immediately to their VA supervisor, Police Service (Ext. 3333), or the person in charge of the activity site. Examples of special incidents include:

1. Patients missing from their assigned activity
2. Any injuries to the patients
3. Patient abuse
4. Attempted suicide
5. Patients damaging personal or government property

Any accident involving you or a patient must be reported to your VA supervisor immediately.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is an unacceptable and unlawful practice which violates Section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; it will not be condoned. This policy applies to all employees, visitors, and patients in the VA workplace and to employees working elsewhere while conducting government business. Sexual harassment is deliberate or repeated unsolicited or unwelcomed comments, gestures, physical contact, or contacts of a sexual nature. It also includes sexually based efforts to control, influence or affect the career, salary or job of an employee. Unwelcome comments can include sexual or gender specific jokes, remarks, and innuendoes. **Key word is *UNWELCOME***

- Unwanted or unsolicited
- Inappropriate use of power
- Sexual advances/pressure for dates
- Slurs, comments, jokes, innuendos
- Threats, inappropriate touching
- Inappropriate gestures, pictures, graffiti, slang expressions

Be an advocate for a harassment-free environment.

- Do not ignore sexual harassment problems.
- Be sure you exhibit appropriate behavior.
- If you see something, say something.

You have the right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment. You have the responsibility NOT to harass others. Remember, a simple definition of harassment is unwelcome behavior. If you have any questions or think that you are being sexually harassed, contact your supervisor or the Voluntary Services Program Manager.

VHA Privacy Policy and HIPAA Training for Volunteers

Purpose and Background: In 1996, Congress passed the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). On December 28, 2000, Health & Human Services Department (HHS) published the final rule for Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information, known as the HIPAA Privacy Rule. Revisions have been published, and VHA had to be compliant by April 14, 2003.

Volunteers, as "without compensation employees", are subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974, Public Law 93-579, and the VA regulations that implement this law. Accordingly, volunteers must assist VA staff in safeguarding the privacy of patient information discovered during the course of their duties in their volunteer assignment. Unlawful release of such information could result in prosecution in a court of law and the imposition of a substantial fine.

As a Volunteer, What Do I Need to Know About HIPAA?

Protected Health Information (PHI) must be kept confidential. PHI consists of the following:

- Individually Identifiable Information (i.e. Social Security number, health information, etc.)
- Demographic Information (i.e. address, phone, age, gender, etc.)
- This information can be in any form (verbal, written, electronic)

As a volunteer, you are required to keep all PHI strictly confidential that you may discover in the course of your assigned volunteer duties. Here are some requirements:

- No talking in public areas about Protected Health Information as listed above
- Keep PHI out of public areas. (i.e. elevators, stairways, open areas, etc.)
- Secure any records you may be working with before walking away
- No discussing with anyone, inside or outside the hospital, any PHI you may learn while carrying out your assigned duties as a volunteer.

Possible Outcomes For Not Complying With HIPAA Privacy Policy:

- Organization specific sanctions (i.e. lawsuits, not receiving accreditation)
- Right of Privacy Policy violation victim to file a complaint will be exercised
- Civil and criminal penalties for HIPAA Privacy Policy violators
- Fines up to $50,000 and or imprisonment

As a volunteer, take pride and ownership in the fact that your organization is concerned about privacy and recognizes its importance in providing quality healthcare.

With few exceptions, telephones in the medical center are to be used for official VA business. Courtesy phones are located in areas of the medical center for brief local calls.

All computers in the Medical Center are Federal Government Property and are for official VA business use **only**.

YOU MAY NOT PLUG ANY DEVICE INTO ANY USB PORT ON ANY VA COMPUTER!

While on official duty as a VA volunteer your attention should be devoted to the patients and/or your assignment. As such, the use of cell phones (to call or text) and iPods/MP3 players is **prohibited** while on duty. It is recommended that you leave these items at home or in your vehicle during your shift to also prevent theft of such items.

Photography and Recording

We respect the privacy of our patients and want to ensure their comfort. Therefore, we generally discourage pictures of patients. Taking pictures of patients or even bringing a camera into the facility without prior approval is **prohibited**. Once approved, only written permission from competent patients is acceptable under HIPAA regulation. Any requests for pictures should be discussed in advance with the Chief, Voluntary Services.

Patient Rights

Each patient at the VA Medical Center has certain rights and privileges. These specific patient rights are posted in each unit. Please familiarize yourself with them.

Infection Control Measures

While no environment is germ-free, we can take several simple steps to prevent the spread of infection. The single most effective means of preventing the spread of infection is **handwashing**. This is especially true if you follow these simple steps:

How to wash your hands:

1. Moisten hands with water and add soap.
2. Scrub hands and wrists vigorously for 10 seconds, paying special attention to nails.
3. Dry hands well, and then turn off faucet with a dry paper towel.

When to wash:

1. Before and after your work session
2. Before and after physical contact with patients
3. After using the toilet, blowing your nose, covering a sneeze
4. Whenever hands become obviously soiled
5. Before and after eating, drinking, or handling food.

To further halt the spread of infection, volunteers will **wear gloves** when handling or serving food. In addition, anyone serving food will refrain from eating while serving the food. Gloves must be changed frequently including when touching hair face or other surfaces. When removing gloves, pull them back so that they are turned wrong side out. The gloves should then be thrown immediately in the trash. Volunteers will, without exception, wear gloves to handle lab specimen and will only accept those specimen that are already sealed in a plastic bag.

The Medical Center supplies hand hygiene foam (ALCARE) in dispensers in all patient care areas. The foam can be used for cleaning your hands provided your hands are not visibly soiled. It should not be used after using the bathroom, after eating, or when preparing or serving food. Hands should be washed with soap and water in those instances.

Fire and Safety Procedures

Knowledge of the appropriate response to a fire in a medical center environment is a critical element in quality health care. This medical center practices the "R.A.C.E." system for response to a fire. This means:

Rescue – evacuate the immediate area of danger.

Alarm - Pull the nearest fire alarm box. The telephone operator will announce "**Code Red**" over the loud speakers.

Confine – contain the fire by closing doors and windows.

Extinguish – attempt to extinguish the fire only if it is small enough and you are skilled with an extinguisher.

These rules are universal and may be used in any fire (or fire drill) situation. **Additional service specific instructions are provided by the supervisors in the work area where you are assigned**. Make sure your supervisor explains the instructions to you.

If you see any type of spill, please immediately notify the supervisor in the area. Spills cause trip hazards in addition to potential contamination.

Equipment Safety

Electrical shock accidents can be prevented. Only use equipment as it was intended to be used, and keep clothing, hair, and hands away from moving parts. Make a quick examination of the equipment before every use to spot potential problems. Any potential equipment problems should be reported to the immediate supervisor of the area immediately.

Emergency Preparedness

In the event of an emergency, an overhead announcement will be made to alert staff as to the nature of the emergency. Please make sure you are familiar with your areas safety procedures during an emergency.

Disaster Codes

Code Red - Fire

Code 99 (Blue) - Medical Emergency

Code White - Terrorism

Code Violet - Violent Patient/Combative

Code Black - Bomb Threat/ Explosion

Code Orange - Haz Material Release

Code Silver - Weapon/Hostage Situation

Code Brown - Missing Person

Code Green - Evacuation

Code Yellow - Disaster Plan (Internal/Exernal)

Code Grey - Tornado Watch/Warning

Smoking Policy

Cigarette smoking is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED** in all of the buildings of the VA Medical Center. This regulation applies to employees, volunteers, patients and visitors. Individuals may smoke **ONLY** in the designated outside smoking areas. Electronic cigarettes must follow the same rules as regular cigarettes.

Animals

It is the Dayton VA Medical Center policy to permit service animals to accompany individuals with a disability to all areas of a VHA property on the same terms and conditions, and subject to the same regulations, as generally govern the admission of the public, while maintaining a safe environment for patients, employees, visitors, and the service animal. Non-service animals are not permitted to access Dayton VA Medical Center property unless an exception applies under this Medical Center Policy (MCP). Animal Assisted Activities and Therapy must be approved and registered through Voluntary Services and Recreation Therapy.

Medical Treatment

Volunteers who are injured **during their assigned duties** are authorized medical services. If you have an accident or illness while serving in your assignment, report to your immediate supervisor to determine the course of action to be taken.

Liability, Injury and Damage Protection for VA Volunteers

VA volunteers have the same protections from personal liability as paid Federal employees. Federal law provides immunity to all Federal employees (including VA volunteers) from suits for personal injuries or death, or for property damage, as long as the employee's actions are part of his or her federal duties.
If a volunteer or other VA employee is sued, VA conducts an investigation to determine if the individual's actions were part of his or her official Federal duties and not, for example, the personal business of the employee. VA then recommends to the Department of Justice that the suit, if filed in a State court, be removed to a Federal court and the Federal Government take the place of the employee in the suit. If the Department of Justice agrees, that is exactly what happens, and the employee is no longer a party to the suit.

Employment References and Recommendations

Voluntary Services will provide references and recommendations for employment, scholarships, school, and a variety of other individual needs. Volunteers should notify staff in sufficient time for a written response to be prepared.

Free Parking

General parking is located in several areas on the grounds. Volunteers are welcome to park anywhere which isn't restricted by sign or use the complimentary valet parking. A few designated volunteer parking spots are also available across from building 305. You must display a VA Volunteer Parking decal to utilize the designated volunteer spots. Parking decals are obtained through the Police Service. Please see Voluntary Services Staff for a form.