



Free Clinic of SW Washington

Volunteer Handbook

4100 Plomondon Street, Vancouver, WA 98661

Office 360.313.1399 | Fax 360.313.1391

<http://www.freeclinics.org/volunteer>

Updated 10/11/2011

Volunteers don't necessarily have the time;
they just have the heart.

Elizabeth Andrews

The Free Clinic of Southwest Washington is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

The Free Clinic Staff and Leadership Volunteers Welcome YOU to the Free Clinic Team

Thank you for joining the Free Clinic of Southwest Washington (FCSW) volunteer team. This really is a VOLUNTEER clinic. In 2010, 653 medical, dental and vision volunteers (clinical and clerical) donated services to thousands of patients. You are now a part of the largest free clinic in Washington State with a twenty year history of providing a non-judgmental and compassionate environment to those in our community who are without insurance and unable to afford healthcare.



We hope this handbook helps you learn more about the clinic, the services, and the volunteer experience. Volunteers tell us that sharing their skills and time is extraordinarily rewarding. More details are always available on the Free Clinic website at www.freeclinics.org/volunteer.

What volunteers are saying...

“What I really like about the Free Clinic is helping folks who would otherwise have to go to the emergency department if we were not here. Many of these patients have low paying jobs without benefits of any kind so when they get ill or injured they have to make a decision between paying for health care or paying for food and rent. The Free Clinic bridges that gap, and lets them continue to pay for other necessities like food and shelter.”

Eric Holden, PA-C, MPA, EMT-P



General Information

The largest free clinic in the Pacific Northwest, FCSW began serving patients in 1990 thanks to the efforts of Dr. Sam Beall and Father Ed Rankin. The Free Clinic currently provides more than 14,000 patient visits each year. In 2010, more than 650 volunteers contributed over 25,000 hours to provide services.

Volunteers make this miracle happen. This is *your* clinic.

Free Clinic Location

4100 Plomondon Street
Vancouver WA 98661
360-313-1399 office
360-313-1391 fax
Email volunteer@freeclinics.org
Website www.freeclinics.org/volunteer



[Get directions](#) at www.google.com

Clinic Services and Schedules

Daily Services

Monday - Friday (9:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.)

Health Access information & prescription assistance & lice kits

Urgent Care Clinics

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday *mornings* (9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)

Tuesday & Thursday *evenings* (7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.)

Dental Clinics

Schedule varies, *by appointment only.*

Health Screening Clinic

Friday *mornings* (9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

Screenings for blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol for uninsured adults.

Pediatric Immunizations

First three Wednesday *evenings* of each month. (5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.)

Vision Clinics

Monday *evenings* (5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.) *by appointment only.*

Employed Staff

Although volunteer staff provides the patient care, the FCSW still needs employed staff to administrate the agency and its services. Please don't hesitate to ask them for support, or to otherwise help you in your work.

Medical Services



Patrick Callahan
Clinic Director
360.313.1395
patrick@freeclinics.org



Frances Sandoval
Medical Office Coordinator
360.313.1390
frances@freeclinics.org



Susan Davis, M.D.
Medical Director (volunteer)
360.313.1395 (msg)
susan@tenmaxusa.com



Zac Sanders, C.Ph.T
Dispensary Coordinator
360.313.1392
zac@freeclinics.org

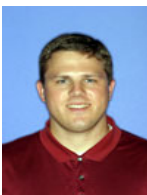
Dental Services



Carolyn Noack, RDH
Dental Program Manager
360.313.1387
carolyn@freeclinics.org



Crystal Alway
Dental Van Coordinator
360.313.1383
crystal@freeclinics.org



Peter Lubisich IV, D.M.D
Dental Director (volunteer)
360.313.1387 (msg)
info@drlubisichvpd.com



Tasha Lambson
Dental Van Coordinator
360.313.1383
tasha@freeclinics.org

Project Access Clark County



Mitch Hustad
Patient Care Coordinator
360.313.1385
mitch@freeclinics.org



Kacey Humbert
Patient Care Coordinator
360.313.1384
kacey@freeclinics.org



Becky Enders
Patient Care Coordinator
360.313.1382
becky@freeclinics.org

Administration



Barbe West
Executive Director
360.313.1398
barbe@freeclinics.org



Dani Leis aka "Leece"
Volunteer & Community Outreach
360.313.1399
leis@freeclinics.org



Haley Overton
Communications & Marketing
360.313.1388
haley@freeclinics.org

AmeriCorps Staff 2011-2012

AmeriCorps is a national network of programs that engage more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive volunteer service. Members serve in their positions *full-time* for 10 ½ months. They receive a small monthly stipend that requires they live at the poverty level, like many of the clients they serve. AmeriCorps members have helped to grow Free Clinic services for many years now, and we are equally grateful for this year's excellent team of AmeriCorps **volunteers!**

Medical Services



Elizabeth Fitzgearld
Medical Clinic Coordinator
Vision & Immunization Clinics Lead
360.313.1380
elizabeth@freeclinics.org

Dental Services



Stephen Hendricks
Dental Clinic Coordinator
360.313.1383
stephen@freeclinics.org

Volunteer Resources



Samantha Tracy
Volunteer Coordinator
360.313.1389
samantha@freeclinics.org

Volunteer Advisory Committee

The Volunteer Advisory Committee oversees strategic goals, policy, and supports recruitment and retention activities. The committee is here to advocate for volunteers. Please feel free to speak with a member here at the clinic, or you may send messages to the committee through the volunteer@freeclinics.org email.



Gerry Bader, MD
Committee Co-Chair
Pediatrics
Board of Directors
Volunteer since 1990



Phil Brenes, MD
Pediatrics (retired)
Volunteer since 2003



Susan Davis, MD
Medical Director
Family Medicine
Past Board Member
Volunteer since 1990



Jeff Fries, OD
Committee Co-Chair
Optometrist
Board of Directors
Volunteer since 2003



Jan Herson, M.Ed.
Educator
Volunteer since 2009



Jay Miller, MD
Neurosurgeon (retired)
Volunteer since 2008



Mike Strickland, RPh
Pharmacist
Board of Directors
Volunteer since 1990



Mary Duke, MPA
Volunteer Resources
Special Events
Volunteer since 2011



Kristine Aaland, DMD
Dentist
Volunteer since 2009



Marlene Varga, LPN
Immunization Team Leader
Volunteer since 2010



Board of Directors

The Board of Directors govern the business affairs of Free Clinic of Southwest Washington (FCSW). The purpose of the Board of Directors is to establish policies and strategies, and oversee and ensure fiscal accountability of FCSW.



Ron Bertolucci

President

First Independent Bank
Sr. Vice President/ Non-Profit Niche Management
Executive Committee - Chair
[Development Committee - Chair](#)



Todd Horenstein

Vice President

Vancouver Public Schools
Assistant Superintendent
Executive Committee
[Development Committee](#)
[Dental Advisory Committee](#)



Mike Strickland, RPh

Secretary

Fred Meyer Pharmacy
Pharmacist
Executive Committee
[Medical Advisory Committee](#)
PACC Advisory Committee
Volunteer Advisory Committee



Karey Schoenfeld, JD, CPA

Treasurer

Ferguson & Schoenfeld, PLLC
Attorney/CPA
Executive Committee
[Finance Committee - Chair](#)
[Dental Advisory Committee](#)



Steve Ebert, MD

Past President

Kaiser Permanente
Internal Medicine Physician
Executive Committee
[Nominating Committee](#)
Medical Advisory Committee



Alan Melnick, MD, MPH

Clark County Public Health
Health Officer, Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania & Wahkiakam Counties
Executive Committee
PACC Advisory Committee - Chair
[Health Care Reform Committee](#) - Chair



Stan Freidberg, MD

The Vancouver Clinic
Cardiologist (retired)
Executive Committee
Development Committee
PACC Advisory Committee
PACC Clinical Review Committee



Gerry Bader, MD

The Vancouver Clinic
Pediatrician
Medical Advisory Committee
Vol. Advisory Committee-Co-chair



Phil Baker, PhD, CPA

The Vancouver Clinic
Chief Financial Officer
Finance Committee



Donna Bleth

Sole Purpose Salon
Nail Technician
Development Committee
Friends of the Free Clinic of Southwest Washington



Diane Buel

Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center
Director of Clinical & Support Services
Health Care Reform Committee
PACC Advisory Committee



Jeff Fries, OD

Vancouver Eye Clinic
Optometrist
Medical Advisory Committee
Vol. Advisory Committee – Co-chair



Peter Lubisich IV, DDS

Vancouver Pediatric Dentistry
Pediatric Dentist
Dental Director
Dental Advisory Committee - Chair
Nominating Committee
PACC Advisory Committee



John Nusser, MD

Family Medicine of Southwest
Washington
Primary Care Physician
Health Care Reform Committee
PACC Advisory Committee
PACC Clinical Review Committee



Alden Roberts, MD

PeaceHealth Southwest Medical
Center
Chief Medical Officer
PACC Advisory Committee
PACC Clinical Review Committee



Tricia Roscoe

Providence Health & Services
*Chief Executive for Clark and Southwest
Washington*
Health Care Reform Committee



Gene Sakai, DMD

Sakai Dentistry
Dentist
Dental Advisory Committee



Maryann Schwab

Kaiser Permanente
NW Regional Compliance Officer
Health Care Reform Committee
Medical Advisory Committee
PACC Advisory Committee



Tom Tucker

Minister (Retired)
Development Committee
Nominating Committee



Sally Williams, MD

The Vancouver Clinic
Infectious Disease Physician
Medical Advisory Committee
PACC Clinical Review Committee

Volunteer Positions

Urgent Care Clinics

M/W/F: 9:30 am -12:00 pm & T/Th 7:00– 9:30 pm

1. Clinic Specialist (*internal promotion*)
2. Clinic Coordinator (*AmeriCorps*)
3. Dietician/Nutritionist
4. Front Office Assistant
5. Patient Registration
6. Patient Triage
7. Interpreter-Spanish
8. Lab Technician
9. Medical Director
10. Nurse or Medical Assistant
11. Nursing-Health Screening
12. Pharm Tech Student
13. Pharmacist
14. Pharmacy Clerk
15. Pharmacy Technician
16. Physical Therapist
17. Physician/Provider

Board of Directors/Committees

18. Board of Directors
19. Dental Advisory Committee
20. Development Committee
21. Executive Committee
22. Finance Committee
23. Health Reform Committee
24. Medical Advisory Committee
25. Nominations Committee
26. PACC Advisory Committee
27. Volunteer Advisory Committee

Dental Clinic

Dental Mobile Van - Schedule varies

28. Clinic Assistant (Clerk)
29. Dental Assistant Extern
30. Dental Assistant
31. Dental Hygienist
32. Dental Program Coordinator (*AmeriCorps*)
33. Dental Director
34. Dentist

Non-Clinical Services

Mon – Fri 9:00am -4:30 pm – schedule varies

35. Administrative Assistant
36. Event Volunteer
37. IT Consultant
38. Marketing Consultant
39. Professional Services
40. Special Projects
41. Volunteer Coordinator (*AmeriCorps*)
42. Volunteer Program Associate

Project Access Clark County

Mon – Fri 9:00am -4:30 pm – schedule varies

43. PACC Administrative Assistant
44. PACC Administrative Coordinator
45. PACC Clinical Review - Consultant
46. PACC Clinical Review Committee
47. PACC Medical Director

Pediatric Immunization Clinic

1st , 2nd & 3rd Wednesdays 5:30 pm -7:30 pm

48. Patient Intake Clerk
49. Data & Inventory Specialist
50. Immunization Nurse Trainer
51. Immunization Nurse
52. Immunization Program Coordinator
53. Nursing- Adult Flu Shots
54. Outreach Eligibility Specialist
55. Vaccine Educator

Vision Clinic

Mondays 5:30 pm -8:00 pm

56. Clerk
57. Opt/Ophth Tech- Refraction
58. Opt/Ophth Technician
59. Optometrist or Ophthalmologist
60. Vision Program Coordinator

Volunteer Registration

Commitment

In the interests of sustainability and continuity, we ask our volunteers to make a small commitment of one volunteer shift per month, for one year. This amounts to 30 hours per year, or 2.5 hours per shift. An exception can be made for busy health professionals - one shift per quarter (10 hours per year). Some of our volunteers have been volunteering since our inception (20 years) and still have passion for this work!

Paperwork

All applicants must complete and maintain on file:

1. Online Volunteer Registration
2. Volunteer Expectations Agreement
3. Confidentiality Agreement (HIPAA certified health professionals are exempt.)
4. Criminal Background Check (WA Health Professionals are already screened, and therefore exempt.)
5. A copy of current identification (State ID, Drivers License, Passport).

Health Professionals must have:

1. **WA Dept of Health** professional license, registration or certification.
2. **Physicians & Dentists** must provide their own Professional Liability Insurance (Free insurance is available for professional volunteers. See page 10.)
3. **Physician Assistants** must file a practice plan. *This plan must be approved before the applicant is allowed to volunteer. We will assist applicants with the completion of this form.*

Job Specific Training

This is a volunteer-run clinic, so experienced volunteers teach new volunteers. You are encouraged to “shadow” an experienced volunteer until you feel comfortable working alone. Detailed job position descriptions are available online at VicNet. Please do not hesitate to ask job specific questions of your peers, or the team leader. There are **group trainings** scheduled quarterly for immunization nurses, lab technicians, and interpreters. Your team leader will alert you when these are scheduled. Some areas will have guidelines or manuals for reference. Please ask your team leader if one is available where you work.

Volunteer Information Center Network (VicNet)

The Free Clinic uses a web-based database called Volgistics to manage volunteer data. This features an excellent online Volunteer Information Center (VicNet) that allows you to manage your information and schedule from any computer with internet access. You may download this handbook, your job description or other supporting documents and view announcements. You may schedule new volunteer shifts, or cancel existing shifts, complete time sheets for off-site work, update your profile information, or see who else is on shift with you. If your email is on file with us, you can access VicNet at any time. Please keep your profile updated with any change in your personal information.

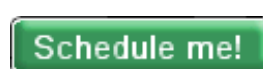


Free Clinic Volunteer Information Center

<http://www.volgistics.com/ex/portal.dll?FROM=6079>

login = your-email@address.com

password = (can be sent to you immediately with link on login page)



Participation Guidelines

Absences/Cancellations

We know you'll do your best to fulfill your shift commitments, but we also understand that emergencies and illnesses happen. If you must cancel a shift, you may do so in the online schedule up to a week in advance. If less than this, please notify your supervisor (or team leader) who will seek a substitute if possible. Any absence will be recorded in our system (unless notifications are in advance of one week). These are considered no-fault absences, and help us understand the bigger picture of attendance. However, if absences become chronic, your program leader will discuss alternate scheduling options with you.

It is important to note that Urgent Care Clinics are walk-in (not appointment) and the number of patients we accept reflects the number of providers and nursing staff scheduled to work that clinic. **If a provider is ill and will be absent, it is important to notify the clinic at least two hours before the start of clinic**, so we can adjust the number of patients we accept.

Announcements

Volunteers can read and share announcements on the volunteer bulletin board, across from the name badges, or the online VicNet home page. You may also receive messages when you login to VicNet. Emails are sent to share newsletters, scheduling needs, and announcements. If you have an announcement to share with other volunteers, email it to volunteer@freeclinics.org and we will post it under the VicNet Mail Tab.

Building Access

You may enter the medical clinic through the back door, to the left of the awning, which will be unlocked for you at the start of clinic. Please enter through the front door for scheduled dental clinics.

Commitment

As a registered volunteer, most of you have agreed to an *initial* commitment of one shift per month for 12 months. Approximately 25% (150) of our volunteers have been serving for more than 6 years, many of these 10+ years, and some since the beginning – twenty years! Consistency of staffing is a critical element in running effective clinics and we appreciate your willingness to make this initial commitment. We hope you will renew your service when the time comes!

Compensation

There is no monetary compensation for Free Clinic volunteers. However, the reward of helping fellow members of your community is limitless. Patient gratitude is the best compensation of all.

Complaints/Concerns

Complaints and/or concerns should be addressed to your team leader or supervisor, or the volunteer program manager.

Discretionary Service

Volunteer service is at the sole discretion of the Free Clinic. The Free Clinic reserves the right to end the volunteer relationship at any time for any reason. Likewise, the volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to dissolve their relationship with the Free Clinic. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to Volunteer Program staff.

Dress Code

The dress code is casual. Lab coats or scrubs are preferable and help to present a professional image, but you are welcome to dress comfortably. Please restrict the use of strong perfumes or scents as some patients have sensitivities to them. We ask that volunteers wear close-toed shoes for their safety.

Getting to Know You... *socializing between volunteers*

Socializing is encouraged! However, there are 10 permanent staff at Free Clinic and 3 AmeriCorps volunteers, yet more than 650 volunteer staff in a year, and 250+ *different* volunteers serving each month. It can be quite a challenge for us to get to know one another. Please introduce yourself to your teammates during your shift. If you have been around for a while, you might take a new volunteer under your wing. Signing up for a regular shift is the best way to get to know your team! Suggestions for team building in these unusual circumstances are *gratefully* accepted.

Low-Volume environment

Please help us maintain a professional environment. In the medical clinic, clinicians appreciate a quiet space in which to consider their patient cases and consult with colleagues. Please keep your voice low so that providers may effectively consider patient treatment. We have also heard from a few patients who hear socializing outside their room, that it can seem as if we are not focused on the task-at-hand, patient care. (Of course we know that is not the case, but the patients may not!)

Name Badges

You will have your photo taken for a volunteer name badge. Badges are kept on the wall of the hall. If you don't have one, or it has been misplaced, please ask the volunteer office staff to make another.

Orientations

Thanks to the 2009-2010 AmeriCorps team, we have a video orientation for new volunteers. We will also give you a tour of the premises. Your supervisor will provide you with job specific details and training as required.

Parking

Free parking is available in the Jim Parsley Center parking lot, located on the east side of the building. Additional parking is available along Plomondon Street. Please keep your car locked, and valuables in the trunk.

Phone Use

A phone is located on the bench top in the back of the medical clinic. Dial 9 to get an outside line, then dial as normal to complete your call. Free Clinic has no long distance service, so all calls other than area code (503) require a personal calling card.

Photocopier Use

The photocopier is located next to the dispensary in the medical clinic. It requires a code specific to your program and these codes are listed on the copier.

Patient Privacy

All information about patients is considered private or confidential, whether written on paper, saved on a computer, or spoken aloud. This includes their name, address, age, Social Security number, and any other personal information. It also includes the reason the patient is sick, the treatments and medications he or she receives, caregivers' notes, and information about past health conditions. Do not read patient files, even when filing. Do not reveal a patient has visited Free Clinic to anyone. If you see a patient outside of clinic do not "recognize" or identify them as a patient unless they acknowledge it first. If you are not a licensed health professional, please make sure you have signed our confidentiality agreement.



If you reveal any of this information to someone who does not need to know it, you have violated a patient's confidentiality

Restrooms

One restroom restricted for staff use is located in the administrative offices area (through the hallway to the opposite side of the medical clinic). You may use the patient restroom next to the laboratory, if you choose. There is a restroom for patients in the waiting room.

Schedules

We are trying to increase the number of **regular** shifts each month and hope you can help. If you are able to commit to the *same shift each month* (or alternate months) - please call us to arrange it. You may discuss scheduling options with the volunteer office at 360-313-1399 or volunteer@freeclinics.org

Regulars

When the same teams work together each month they build friendships, as well as improve clinic capacity and team effectiveness. *Regulars are valued for bringing stability and consistency to clinics.*

Month-to-month

If your schedule is always changing, you may log in to the online scheduling center each month to schedule your shift(s). *This scheduling style is valued for it's flexibility to fill the gaps in the regular schedule.*

Substitutes

We occasionally begin new volunteers as a substitute if a regular shift is not available, or does not match with their schedule. Substitutes view the schedule more frequently and fill any – **g a p s** – up to two weeks in advance, until they obtain a regular shift. *Substitutes are valued for their ability to fill the remaining gaps each week and keep the clinics fully staffed.*

Frequent Flyers – those who desire more than one shift per month may fill any – **GAPS** – in the schedule up to two weeks in advance.

Storing Valuables

Coat hooks are located along the wall of the clinic near the dispensary. Storage for smaller valuables is available in the bottom (deep) drawers in the medical clinic center counter.

Timeliness

We all expect to arrive on time. Should something delay you, please call ahead to let us know so we may adjust clinic flow if necessary.

Can't Make Your Shift?

Two hours before start of clinic the number of waiting patients we accept is based on the number of scheduled volunteers. Therefore it is VERY IMPORTANT that we know of a volunteer absence as SOON as possible.

If you are unable to attend your scheduled shift TODAY or TONIGHT, please try to reach your clinic supervisor DIRECTLY via the numbers listed below. If they don't answer, please call back and try to reach a ****LIVE PERSON**** with your message.

VicNet Touch Screen Sign In & Out (service records)

Our Online Volunteer Center is connected to our Touch-Screen sign in, located in the back of the medical clinic. Please sign in and out for each shift you work and the hours will automatically add to your record. Tracking volunteer hours is important for many reasons. Legally, we must know *who* worked, and *when*. When we ask foundations for grants, proving the community supports the clinic is best demonstrated by the volunteer hours they contribute. **All service hours must be recorded within five days of the end of each month.** Please help us achieve our goal of recording all service donated.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the Free Clinic provide care for all medical problems?

The Free Clinic provides basic, urgent medical care. People who have infections, flu, bad colds, or minor injuries can receive care at our urgent care clinics. People with more serious medical problems, or with on-going health concerns, are referred on to other providers, including other free or sliding scale clinics, the emergency room, urgent care, and/or private practices.

We also provide urgent dental care, generally restorations and extractions. There is an application process for dental patients. Children are generally treated without too much delay however there is a wait list for adults, depending on the number of dentist volunteers available (2-6 months).

The Free Clinic also provides vision care, flu shots, and pediatric immunizations.

Specialty care is available with consultations during urgent care clinics, and referrals to our own "Project Access Clark County" program. Patients must qualify financially (200% FPL). Once qualified, the program covers most costs, including hospitalizations, surgeries, labs, imaging and medications.

Are there any services the Free Clinic does NOT provide?

The Free Clinic **does not** provide **STD checks, family planning, women's health, mental health, or on-going (primary care) health services.** The Free Clinic does **not** prescribe narcotic medications.

Who can use the Free Clinic?

The Free Clinic of Southwest Washington serves people with no or low income, and who do not have health insurance or state medical assistance.

How much do services at the Free Clinic cost?

Our services are free of charge, although patients are encouraged to make donations to help defray costs. The suggested donation is \$5 - \$20. No one is refused care because they cannot make a monetary contribution.

Can patients volunteer at the Free Clinic?

Yes.

Who do I talk to about my schedule?

You may bring any scheduling issues to your team leader/supervisor, or the volunteer office.

Who do I talk to about job specific issues?

You should bring these up with your team leader or the program supervisor.

May I bring my teenager to volunteer with me?

Yes. Please have them complete the online volunteer application and make a note of their relationship to you. We will do our best to find them a placement that fits your schedule. Many families volunteer together here (see the spotlight on The Hersons).

May I bring my child with me if the babysitter cancels last minute?

Some providers have brought a child with them last minute, rather than turn away sick patients. Please call the office in advance to make arrangements. Often a quiet office can be made available and a staff person or other volunteer can sometimes help.

Cultural Competency Guidelines

What to keep in mind when interacting with patients...

[The Providers Guide to Quality & Culture](#) reminds us that while culture is an essential mediator in people's health status, culture is not the only factor that shapes us. Other factors including environment, economics, genetics, previous and current health status, and psycho-social factors exert considerable influence on our well-being. These compelling complexities should remind us that we all need to consider many factors before making assumptions.

Cultural Context

Because health care is a cultural as well as scientific construct, arising from beliefs about the nature of disease and the human body, cultural issues are central in the delivery of health services treatment and preventive interventions. When treating patients of a culture that is different than your own it is important not to assume anything. Communication with the patient is the best strategy for creating an appropriate treatment.

Free Clinic patients have little or no income and come from a variety of ethnic cultures. This summary is a brief and general overview and we encourage you to do further readings.

Patient Struggles

- **Pride** - Many patients are dealing with a loss of pride when seeking charity medical care. Some patients deal with life struggles that many of us cannot imagine. Many have suffered unfortunate symptoms for weeks, months, and even years before receiving care. While some may project an attitude of entitlement, this may in fact be a survival 'front', a pride reflex developed to combat a sense of helplessness. Most of our patients truly do not have any other resource for medical care except the emergency room, and no other resource for dental care.
- **Stress** – Many of our patients experience high levels of stress as they engage in the day-to-day survival associated with unemployment and poverty. Some patients work multiple jobs and still live under the federal poverty level with numerous family members to support in their household. You may see health issues severely compounded by stress.
- **Emotional states** - Some patients may slip into an *emotional* or *agitated* state when faced with what might seem a minor barrier, or when overwhelmed by an abundance of new information.
- **Mental illness** – Some patients are dealing with undiagnosed or poorly managed mental illnesses. There are services available to refer them for mental health care.
- **Homelessness** – Only a small percentage of Free Clinic patients are homeless, but it is important to know that many of the homeless in the U.S. do not have a regular place to sleep or have a regular diet. They may not be receiving the rest and nutrition they need to recuperate and it may take longer to bring about the desired health care results.

Language Barriers

Many patients may speak English well enough for conversation, but may need extra time and help understanding medical instructions. When interpretation is successful, the intended message and its meaning are appropriately conveyed.

- **Look and speak directly to the patient**, even when an interpreter is present. Not only do you show respect this way, but you also have an opportunity to pick up on the patient's non-verbal cues.
- **Look for signs of comprehension difficulties**. Please keep this in mind, and remember that speaking in normal conversational tones clearly and slowly may help aid their understanding.
- Verify the patient understands what is being said by **asking open-ended questions**, rather than those which evoke yes/no answers.
- A patient who utilizes an interpreter **may also understand and/or speak some English**, but may be more comfortable, when in a medical setting, with interpretation into their native language.

Working with Interpreters

- Ensure that you face and **speak directly to the patient**. The interpreter will speak in first person as though they are the patient.
- Listen with your eyes – **non-verbal cues** can be missed if your attention drifts to the interpreter instead of the patient.
- **Speak simply** - avoid highly idiomatic speech, complicated sentence structure, sentence fragments, changing your idea in the middle of a sentence, or asking multiple questions at one time.
- **Speak at an even pace** in relatively short segments. Pause, and wait for the interpreter to finish the segment before continuing.
- Some **concepts** you express may have no linguistic or even conceptual equivalent in other languages. The interpreter may have to paint word pictures of many terms you use; this may take longer than your original speech.
- **Be patient**. Providing care across a language barrier takes more time.

Patient Literacy

Sometimes patients of any literacy and socioeconomic level will **not** tell Health Care Providers when they don't understand something. **Low literacy patients** may respond better to practical advice and demonstrations.

- **Slow down; simplify**, limit the information you offer and repeat the instructions.
- Show patients pictures, models and **demonstrations** to illustrate what you want them to do.
- **Listen and check for understanding** by asking open-ended questions such as "How are you going to take this medication?"
- **Be positive and hopeful**. Emphasize the benefits of compliance, such as living longer or breathing more easily.
- Some patients may be functioning at a lower reading level, or may not be able to read at all. They may be embarrassed to admit this. **Do not assume patients can read** written instructions, and when in doubt, speak or read the instructions to them.
- Take the time to **ensure that all patients leave with a complete understanding** of how to take their medications, what to expect from procedures, and other medical instructions.

For more information:

US Department of Health and Human Services
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

Cultural Competence Resources for Health Care Providers

<http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence/>

The Providers Guide To Quality & Culture

<http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=1.0.htm&module=provider&language=English>

Office of Minority Health

<http://www.omhrc.gov/>

Malpractice Insurance & You

*We are honored to have so many physicians and other professionals as part of the Free Clinic team. You should know that **we have not had a single claim in our history of operation.** The following information provides you with options for maintaining insurance while you volunteer.*

Good Samaritan Act - RCW4.24.300

There is a "Good Samaritan" Act in Washington State. This law provides protection for individuals who are serving in a purely non-profit capacity. However, this would not provide you with any coverage for legal expenses if it was necessary to defend against a malpractice claim, and you are highly advised to have malpractice insurance. You may see the act in full at <http://www.freeclinics.org/volunteer/liability>

Free Clinic's Professional Liability Insurance

Our insurance specifically *excludes* malpractice for physicians, surgeons, and dentists. It would be cost prohibitive for us to acquire such insurance. It does cover all other licensed professionals.

Your Own Practice or Group Insurance

If you are a physician, please notify your insurance carrier that you are volunteering with Free Clinic. Unless your carrier specifically excludes volunteer service, you should be covered. Many physicians in Clark County are covered for their work at the Free Clinic if their office has already listed the Free Clinic on its malpractice application, like The Vancouver Clinic (whose medical professionals staff four Free Clinic shifts a month.) Please check with your office manager or insurance carrier to learn if your group is covered. If you are *not* covered, you may obtain free insurance through the State of Washington program listed below.

Washington's AHEC Program - Malpractice Insurance & License Fees

~FREE for Volunteers and Retired Professionals~

The Western Washington Area Health Education Center (AHEC) encourages health care volunteers in Washington State by paying the malpractice insurance premiums for those providing non-invasive care to underserved patients. Currently, non-invasive primary and specialty care is covered under the AHEC malpractice insurance. Medical Professionals, who only use their Washington professional license for volunteer work, are also eligible for the cost of the license. Contact AHEC for more information. You may download the liability insurance application at:

<http://wwahec.org/Volunteer%20Malpractice%20Insurance%20Application.doc>

Jana Linder, AHEC Program Coordinator
(206) 441-7137 office jana@wwahec.org

Western Washington Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

2033 Sixth Avenue, Suite 310, Seattle, Washington 98121

Phone: 206-441-7137 | FAX: 206-441-7158

E-mail: jana@wwahec.org

Web: http://wwahec.org/WWAHEC_vrpp.htm

Process Time: Malpractice insurance may take anywhere from 1 to 3 weeks from to become activated.

Licensing for Volunteer Health Professionals

~FREE~ for Volunteers - Washington State License Renewal

Health professionals who use their Washington license solely for volunteer work with medically underserved populations are eligible for a free license renewal. This includes retirees and professionals who work in other states (such as Oregon).

The Office of Community and Rural Health will pay the associated license fees and forward your renewal to the relevant licensing department for processing. Please note, volunteers are responsible for any late fees or external fees such as testing or CME.

Process for obtaining **FREE** License or License Renewal:

1. Download and complete the [License Application or Renewal Form](#) applicable to your professional license.
2. Download and complete the "[Certification to Use WA License only for Volunteer Work](#)"
3. Send all documents to:

Volunteer Retired Provider Program
Washington State Department of Health
Rural Health Programs
P.O. Box 47834
Olympia, Washington 98504-7834

For more information contact:

Mary Roberts
Administrative Assistant
Processes payment for Volunteer Retired Provider
Telephone: 360-236-2804
Fax: 360-236-2830
Email: mary.roberts@doh.wa.gov
Web: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ocrh/>

Your service makes a difference in people's lives.

Thank you for being part of this vital effort.
You may direct further questions to the Volunteer Resources office or a Team Leader.

