

INFORMATION FOR NON-HEALTH CARE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play many important roles across the province and give back to their communities. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an extremely serious public health threat to Albertans. It is important that all Albertans who are not at high risk of severe outcomes, and are able to volunteer, consider how they might contribute. Volunteers must follow all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus, for their own protection and the protection of those they help.

Volunteers and employees who support volunteer organizations are subject to the same infection prevention requirements found in the document entitled “Guidance for non-healthcare workplaces during COVID-19” at alberta.ca/covid-19-support-for-employers.aspx.

Volunteer organization responsibilities

- Volunteer organizations may have more than 15 volunteers and/or employees in one location. Further, where unavoidable, volunteers and employees may work together at distances of less than 2 metres. Volunteer organizations must undertake actions to prevent the transmission of infection among employees, volunteers and the people they are helping.
- It is important to remember some situations where volunteers would normally play an important role, such as transporting sick or elderly people to appointments or other tasks that would put a volunteer in close contact with a sick person must not continue. This is to limit the spread of infection to volunteers or potentially from volunteers to high-risk individuals.
- All volunteer organizations must:
 - Prevent the risk of transmission of infection amongst volunteers, staff and members of the public;
 - Respond rapidly if a volunteer or staff member develops symptoms of illness while on duty; and
 - Maintain high levels of hygiene.
- Examples of how to reduce the risk of transmission include:
 - Maintaining a two-metre separation between individuals wherever possible.
 - Restricting the number of people in a space at any one time.
 - Installing a physical barrier, such as a cubicle, partition or window, to separate volunteers, staff and patrons.
 - Eliminating or restructuring non-essential gatherings (e.g. meetings, training classes).
 - Limiting the number of people in shared spaces or staggering break periods.
 - Placement of reference markers in work spaces that set out two-metre distances.
 - When consistently maintaining a distance of 2 metres is not possible, workplace hazard assessments should consider the use of non-medical masks for those who are closer than 2 metres along with other appropriate steps to address the risk of transmission. If non-medical masks are worn, safe guidance for wearers should be followed.

Sick volunteers

- Any employee or volunteer with cold-like symptoms, including cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat, is required by law to isolate and may not participate in volunteer or workplace activities.
- If a volunteer becomes symptomatic while on site at a volunteer location, they must immediately tell the person in charge of their activity and leave the site. If a mask or cloth face covering is available, they should put this on to reduce the chance of spread to others. Items they handled during that day should be cleaned and disinfected.
- Symptomatic individuals must stay in isolation for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer. For more information visit <https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx>.

Hygiene and cleaning practices

Proper hygiene and cleaning practices must be followed within the volunteer organization.

- Respiratory etiquette (e.g. coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow, promptly disposing of used tissues in the trash) must be followed.
- Volunteers must wash their hands frequently and use proper hand hygiene. This means using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer with an alcohol content of greater than 60%.
- Volunteer organizations must ensure that staff and volunteers have sufficient means and supplies to perform frequent hand hygiene.

Cleaning guidance

Volunteer organizations must follow recommended cleaning procedures.

- Procedures for increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms and showering facilities must be implemented.
- High-touch/shared surfaces must be frequently cleaned and disinfected.

Resources

Government of Alberta (Alberta Health) | alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx

Alberta Health Services | myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx

Government of Canada | canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html