

Purpose:

The Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) is a volunteer-based support program that works with older identified patients who are at an increased risk of developing delirium or at risk of functional decline during their hospital stay. HELP Volunteers provide empathetic support, companionship, and information for older patients and families coping with acute illness and hospitalization.

The HELP Volunteer Team supports PRHC therapy and clinical teams by working alongside staff to provide additional, enhanced support to patients. The support provided by volunteers is similar to the support a visiting family member or friend would provide to a patient.

Coverage: 2 volunteers 7 days a week, 3 shifts per day (morning, afternoon and evening coverage)

Supervision: Elder Life Specialist (ELS), Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP)

Expectations for All HELP Volunteers:

- Please sign in before your shift and out at the end of your shift in volunteer services. Accurate records of when you are on duty are very important in the event of an emergency or incident.
- If you know in advance that you will be absent, try to find a replacement within the HELP volunteer team. Fill out a green HELP absence slip with Volunteer Services and notify the Elder Life Specialist (ELS) by phone or email.
- If the ELS is unavailable, please contact Volunteer Services and/or Seniors Lead. Our program – and most of all, our patients – rely on our dedicated HELP Volunteer Team every shift, every day. If you do not contact the ELS (or Volunteer Services/Seniors Lead, if ELS unavailable) and do not come in for your scheduled shift, this will be considered a No-Call, No-Show.
- On three (3) occurrences, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the future of your position with the HELP team. Always call or email to avoid this from occurring.
- Please report any personal injuries and/or incidents to the ELS and Volunteer Services so that an Incident Report can be completed.
- Confidentiality of patient information must be maintained at all times.
- Please respect guidelines and duties for role of volunteers; do not infringe on role of staff or become involved in duties for which you have not received training.
- Volunteers are the “friendly face” of Peterborough Regional Health Centre. Therefore, please remember that it is not your role to enforce policies – this could put you in a compromising situation – please defer to staff.
- You may on occasion be faced with the challenge of dealing with an upset or distressed patient/family/visitor. Please do not take this personally and do everything possible not to further escalate a situation. Seek support and assistance from staff.
- Seek assistance from hospital staff if patients have questions.
- **Please note: While on duty, if a volunteer feels what they are asked to do is unsafe they have the right to refuse to do the task**

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Limitations:

- Volunteers must **not** interfere with a patient's medical treatment or professional advice.
- All dietary, mobility and/or activity restrictions must be cleared by supporting therapy staff and/or unit nurse prior providing support.
- Volunteers must not provide direct feeding with patients; this requires additional, specialized training and is outside of the scope of the HELP volunteer role.

Duties:

- Review patient assignment sheets at the beginning of each shift check-in with the Charge/Primary Nurse and/or ELS prior to individual visits for any important patient updates (change in status, isolation, recent falls, mobilization considerations).
- Support HELP patients through the following key program interventions:
 - a) **Daily Visiting** –providing communication, orientation, and socialization to prevent mental confusion during hospitalization
 - b) **Early Mobilization** - providing daily assistance with walking and exercises (as directed by the physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and/or nursing teams)
 - c) **Hearing & Vision Support** – ensuring older patients have access to clean glasses and/or hearing assistive devices
 - d) **Therapeutic Engagement** - providing meaningful, tailored activities to keep patients mentally and socially stimulated during their stay
 - e) **Meal Support & Hydration** – providing meal assistance (such as tray set-up, verbal cues, hydration reminders where appropriate) and companionship during meal time. **This does not include feeding patients.**
 - f) **Sleep Health** – providing non-pharmacological interventions that promote better sleep for older patients (such as listening to soothing music, using sleep masks, therapeutic hand massages, etc.)
- Complete daily HELP worksheets on each patient on completed interventions.
- HELP Volunteers must complete Infection Control training, perform hand hygiene protocol, and be comfortable visiting patients who may be on isolation precautions (contact). If you are unable to visit patients on isolation precautions, please discuss with ELS.
- Participate in HELP team meetings, training, and/or special events (optional), as required.

Time Commitment:

- A minimum time commitment of one 4-hour shift per week, for six (6) months or 100 hours is required. A less than six (6) month commitment is subject to approval by the ELS. This minimum time commitment is a requirement because the volunteer training process is intensive and poses a substantial time commitment of the program staff.
- A written Letter of Reference can be requested from the ELS after 100 hours are completed.

Effective Date: September 2019
Original Date: June 2019
Date Revised: September 2019