

This resource is a result of the collaborative efforts of NHPCO's Next Generation Leadership Council.

The Patient Support Volunteer is a member of the interdisciplinary team and provides support that aligns with a patient's plan of care. The purpose of this document is to provide information on common skills that may be considered for the Hospice Patient Support Volunteer role.\*

## Required Skills

The following skills are considered mandatory for Volunteers.

### ■ Compassion

- The ability to demonstrate understanding and concern for those suffering physically or emotionally.

### ■ Patience

- The ability to remain calm while in a potentially emotionally charged situation.

### ■ Empathy

- Ability to use an empathetic approach when facilitating patient and family care.

### ■ Collaboration / Team Player

- Ability to collaborate effectively with the interdisciplinary team.

### ■ Reliability

- Ability and willingness to complete assigned tasks and duties.

### ■ Integrity / Ethical

### ■ Trustworthy

## Mid-level Skills

Ideally, Volunteers will have experience with the skills noted below but may not be experts in this area.

### ■ Observation Skills

- Observing changes in the patient's behavior, speech, appearance, eating habits, and within the family can provide clues to other challenges that may be occurring.

### ■ Flexibility

- No two patients, no two days, and no two deaths will look the same. Flexibility will allow you to adapt to the situation at hand.

### ■ Professionalism

- Ability to maintain professional composure at all times, most especially during challenging and stressful situations.

### ■ Patient Advocacy

- Assist in facilitating freedom of choice.

### ■ Cultural Awareness

- Having an awareness of other culture's customs, beliefs, and needs to help address end-of-life needs.

### ■ Adaptability

- Ability to assess, evaluate and adapt practices in caring for patients and families.

### ■ Ability to multi-task

- Ability to complete multiple tasks concurrently, as needed.

### ■ Experience with death and dying

- Experience as either a volunteer or personally through caregiving of a loved one.

## Preferred Skills

These skills are those that Volunteers may have experience with; however, they are not required for this position.

### ■ Interpersonal Skills

- Not everyone handles stress in the same manner. Interpersonal skills include knowing how to communicate with others, strong emotional intelligence, patience, observation, and compassion.

### ■ Strong Communication

- Strong communication skills are necessary to work with the care team, the patient, their family, and any other medical professionals involved in the patient or family's needs. The ability to be clear and answer questions as honestly and with as much care as possible.

### ■ Emotional Strength

- Caring for the terminally ill can become emotionally exhausting. Self-care is important to maintain balance.

**Note:** State requirements may dictate specific skill sets for Volunteers. In that scenario, please default to the requirements of your state. Please also refer to CMS Conditions of Participation related to personnel requirements.