Volunteering at Arnot Health
Questions and Answers for Potential Volunteers (public)

What are the requirements to become a volunteer?
Volunteers must be able to work independently with minimal supervision. Volunteers who need additional support while volunteering must provide a support person, who will also be a volunteer. Volunteers must commit to upholding the mission, vision, and values of Arnot Health, and serve with a friendly, cooperative, and professional demeanor.

What is the minimum age to volunteer?
Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age to begin their service. However, all of the processes regarding service – including the application, medical requirements, and orientation – can be completed as a 13 year old with the expectation of starting after the 14th birthday.

What is the maximum age to volunteer?
There is no maximum age. Our team includes several volunteers who have served into their nineties, survivors of cancer and heart attacks, those who have overcome disabilities and challenges. If you have the spirit to serve, we invite you to apply.

I can only volunteer after school/work. Do you have any roles available?
Yes. As the hospital is a 24-hour per day business, we have roles available during all hours of the day and days of the week, including something that will match your ideal.

I can only volunteer on weekends. Do you have any roles available?
Yes. As the hospital is a 24-hour per day business, we have roles available during all hours of the day and days of the week, including something that will match your ideal.

I need to do community service as the result of a judicial decision. Do you have opportunities?
At this time, Arnot Ogden Medical Center does not have opportunities for those who need to do community service as part of a judicial sentence.

What is your minimum commitment?
Excluding summer volunteers, we ask that volunteers aim to complete at least 100 hours of service and give at least six months to our program.

How do you schedule shifts?
We ask that volunteers commit to a four-hour (three hours for high school and college students) weekly shift. The vast majority of our volunteers schedule a consistent shift (e.g. Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to noon). However, we also accommodate those who want to serve as substitutes or whose schedules may vary due to other factors.
I have work (school, violin practice, church) at a given day/time. Can you schedule around this?
The best volunteer experience is one that works with your life and your schedule. In the interview, we will come up with a day/time that does not conflict with the other events in your busy life. At no time will we ask you to give up another activity by forcing a volunteer shift upon you.

I’m only available in the summer. Can I still volunteer?
Definitely! Summer volunteers complement our team with added service and we look forward to your arrival. However, please be sure that your schedule is open enough to handle volunteering. We ask that our summer volunteers commit to a weekly shift of four hours, and make up every single one of their absences. Therefore, if you are planning to go on vacation or to a sports camp during your service, you will need to pick up an additional shift the week before/after. Summer volunteers are expected to contribute a minimum of 50 hours.

I’m in college, and only here between September and May. Can I still volunteer?
Sure! We ask that our college students demonstrate commitment by serving 100 hours in shifts of three hours per week with 90 percent attendance (including makeup shifts). We will work with changing semester schedules to accommodate you. Please note that we will not acknowledge service of less than 100 hours at a 90 percent attendance rate.

I play a sport in the autumn (winter, spring). Can I still volunteer?
Of course! Many of our students juggle academic requirements, athletic pursuits, and volunteering. Some switch their volunteering time to the weekends, while others take off the semester when their sport is played.

I go south in the winter (or to the lake in the summer). Can I still volunteer?
Certainly! We are glad to accept part-year volunteers. Please discuss this in the interview.

I need to get 40 hours of volunteer service done by next week. Is this possible?
The process to get you started as a volunteer makes a one-week turnaround impossible. If you are extremely diligent in getting your application in, your screenings scheduled, and an orientation session is convenient, it is possible to start as a volunteer within three weeks of receiving an application.

I need to do a limited amount of hours for a school project. Do you have opportunities?
At this time, Arnot Ogden Medical Center does not have opportunities for fulfilling a limited number of volunteer hours.

I want to volunteer with a friend/family member. Is this possible?
Very much so! Many of our volunteers joined our team in pairs, and many roles can accommodate multiple people in the same shift. Some volunteers prefer to stick together, while others choose to serve in different locations. The only limitation on pairing friends and family members is availability and scheduling. Please send in one application per person and speak with us at the interview.
I’m looking for a job with AOMC. Does volunteering help with gaining employment?
Volunteering offers valuable skills that may encourage individuals to seek a career in health care. Occasionally, volunteers assume that volunteering at Arnot Ogden Medical Center may lead to a job opportunity within the health care system. Please note that volunteers donate their services to AOMC without contemplation of compensation or future employment. AOMC is an equal opportunity employer and all employment matters are handled by the Human Resources Department.

What happens if I get sick? Can I miss a shift?
A successful volunteer experience requires punctuality and commitment, but we understand that illness happens. In the case of an illness or emergency that will require you to miss your shift, please notify the Volunteer staff and, if applicable, the unit where you volunteer as soon as possible.

I like to stay active and walk a lot. Do you have volunteer roles that meet this need?
Totally! Some of our roles involve much time upright, and some of our volunteers walk three miles in a single four-hour shift.

I have trouble walking and prefer to remain seated. Do you have volunteer roles that meet this need?
Yes, indeed! Roles in the volunteer office, front desk, and waiting areas involve little to no walking.

What benefits do you offer to volunteers?
Volunteers are honored through annual recognition (National Volunteer Week, Appreciation Dinner), recognition for hours and years of service, and special recognition. As part of the hospital team, volunteers are entitled to cafeteria discounts and invitations to some hospital and educational events. Volunteers receive a weekly newsletter, free flu vaccinations, some hospital discounts, and have the opportunity to request recommendation letters. Volunteers may park on a space available basis in parking spots designated for volunteers.

Do you supply recommendation letters for college/medical school/etc.?
The volunteer department will provide letters of recommendation and other acknowledgment of service for volunteers who have a served at least 50 hours.

I live on a hill and sometimes it is hard to get out in winter weather. I’m afraid that I might have to call out once or twice. Can I still volunteer?
AOMC is located in an area where virtually any type of weather is possible, from frigid cold to vicious tornadoes. Though the hospital system never closes because of weather, there are times where snow, ice, or other hazardous conditions may make your travel to the facility hazardous. Please use your best judgment when deciding whether to fulfill your volunteer commitment on these days. If you feel you can come in, use caution. If you feel you cannot come in, please inform us.
I still have questions. Who can I contact?
Please call Theresa Swain or Rob Toonkel at 607-737-4105, or e-mail tswain@aomc.org or rtoonkel@aomc.org.

I’m hooked. How do I get started?
Click [here] to access the application. Please note there are separate applications for [high school students], [college students], and [adults].

How do I submit the application?
The application can be sent to: Volunteer Services, Arnot Ogden Medical Center, 600 Roe Avenue, Elmira, NY 14905, dropped off at the volunteer office, or filled in electronically and e-mailed to rtoonkel@aomc.org

Do you offer an online application?
Due to the fact that we require your signature, we do not offer an application that can be filled in on the web.

What happens after I submit an application?
After we receive your application and references, we will contact you for an interview. At the interview, which takes about 30 minutes, we will learn about one another, discuss the next steps in the process, decide on a role and a tentative schedule, and talk about orientation.

What medical screenings do you require?
We want to make sure that you and our patients are as safe as possible in the hospital environment. Therefore, we require:

- Proof of having or receiving the vaccine for: measles (rubeola), mumps, rubella, and varicella (Chicken Pox). A vaccination record is the most typical form of documentation we receive. Those born before 1980 may need to have titers drawn to prove immunity.
- Proof of a flu vaccination during flu season (generally 01 Nov-30 Apr, but subject to the declaration by the New York State Department of Health)
- Proof of two (2) recent negative tuberculosis tests (or a recent negative chest x-ray). If you can submit proof of a TB test conducted within the last 12 months, only one test is necessary.
- Documentation of fitness to serve in the medical environment. Generally this is achieved by your granting us permission to send a form to your personal physician. If you do not have a personal physician, you can have a medical screening performed at AOMC.

Who pays for the cost of any medical tests required?
The volunteer department takes on the cost of any medical screenings.

Where do I get these screenings done?
TB tests, titers, flu vaccinations, and medical screenings can all be done at AOMC. This can be discussed in the interview.
What happens at orientation?
Volunteer orientation is an enjoyable experience of learning about AOMC, staying safe, and serving our patients, guests, and staff in the best manner possible. During the 3-1/2 hour interactive session, you’ll find yourself in an enthusiastic and supportive learning environment, where laughs and smiles outnumber power point slides. At the conclusion of orientation, you will complete documentation.

What happens after orientation?
After orientation, we will schedule your first day of volunteering. On your first day of volunteering, we will get an ID, and train you to your new role alongside a staff member or experienced volunteer.

Do you have roles that specifically involve working with pediatrics?
While every volunteer role may include the possibility of encountering pediatric patients, we do not have any roles that exclusively involve pediatric patients.

Do you have roles that specifically involve working with babies? How about in the NICU?
While every volunteer role may include the possibility of encountering infants, we do not have any roles that exclusively involve infants.

Will I get to shadow a nurse or doctor as a volunteer?
While the volunteer role makes it almost inevitable that you will interact with medical caregivers, volunteering provides an experience in the medical environment beyond merely walking in someone else’s footsteps. If you are interested in shadowing, please see information on the shadow program [here]. Note that the medical requirements for shadowing are exactly the same as the medical requirements for volunteers.

Do you have roles that are around patients?
Positively! Our roles all offer some degree of customer interaction, and some very much involve interaction with patients. If you are interested in a role on one of our patient units, please mention that at the interview.

I’m not really comfortable around patients and guests. Do you have any office roles?
Unquestionably! Our wide range of roles includes a number that take place in the office setting, and some that take place outside of the main hospital environment. Please ask at the interview.

I want to volunteer, but it is difficult for me to get out of my house. Do you have any opportunities that I can work on at home?
Indisputably! We invite you to help our team even if you can’t get to the hospital each week. Examples of how our community volunteers assist include special events, baking for events, knitting, addressing, envelope stuffing, and assembly work. Please note that you will need to provide your own transportation/arrangements to get these items to and from AOMC.
I have special skills that I would like to use in the hospital environment (e.g. event planning, accounting, engineering, design, etc.). Do you have a use for me?
Let’s talk! Volunteer roles have expanded greatly from what is typically imagined in the hospital environment. If you have a talent, let’s see how we can utilize it to grow our program and facility, and continue making AOMC the best place to receive care.

I have clinical skills (as a nursing student, physical therapist, CNA, retired nurse). Can I use them in the hospital environment as a volunteer?
Congratulations on your dedication to the people of Chemung County as a medical professional. We are enamored of your work. In fact, we encourage you to apply as we can utilize your knowledge in ways to help you, us, and our patients. We will undoubtedly kindle your love of this profession, while augmenting your customer skills. Please note, however, that as a volunteer, there are no hands-on opportunities to physically use that medical training. Volunteers do not perform clinical tasks, and are not permitted to take vital signs, perform tests, or practice CPR.

I'm not interested in becoming a medical professional. Why should I volunteer?
The skills you will learn as a volunteer at AOMC will be beneficial in whatever career path you pursue. Whether it is customer service and community vision, accounting and cash handling, or marketing and communications, you will come away a leg up on your peers. Past volunteers have used the lessons learned in the hospital environment to establish successful careers in business, advertising, teaching, art, music, counseling, entrepreneurship, economics, public policy, dance, and more.

I want to seek a career in medicine (nurse/doctor/therapist). What benefits does volunteering offer?
A volunteer experience at AOMC can be a springboard to reaching your long term career goals in medicine. Suited to your comfort level and growth, we can work with you to provide a taste of the medical environment and prepare you for the next step. Whether you’re looking for a whole palette of options or more knowledge of the field you’ve always wanted to pursue, AOMC can provide it in the always changing, always active hospital setting. We are proud of our legacy of hundreds of young volunteers who have gone on to be the medical caregivers of today, and look forward to having you add to that list.

I want to volunteer, but I don’t want to start until a few months from now (when school ends, I’m done traveling, I retire, etc.). Can I apply now?
Without a doubt! Your application remains active for six months after the date of submission. Many volunteers find it easier to complete all the requirements beforehand and jump into volunteering once their schedule clears.

How often are volunteer orientation sessions held?
Volunteer orientation sessions are generally held once per month. Dates and times will be discussed at the interview.

When are applications accepted?
Applications for all volunteers are accepted on a rolling basis.
What kind of volunteer roles are available?
There are many different volunteer roles available at Arnot Ogden Medical Center. Further discussion of these roles and how they match your skills and interests will be done at the interview.

I am under 18 years of age. Will my parent/guardian need to attend the interview with me?
We trust that anyone mature enough to serve in the hospital setting can interview on his/her own.

What do I do with the reference forms?
Give the reference forms to adults who have known you for at least six months and are not related to you. Ideal choices include: neighbors, work colleagues, coaches, members of your congregation, members of civic groups to which you belong, and employers. If you are still in high school, one reference should be from a teacher or guidance counselor.

How often are orientation sessions held?
Orientation sessions are generally held once per month. The dates and times of upcoming orientation session will be discussed in the interview.

What do I wear?
The volunteer dress code and uniform policy will be discussed in orientation. All volunteers are expected to have a clean and professional appearance, and adhere to the hospital dress code policy which prohibits excessive jewelry, visible body piercings or tattoos, and fragrances.

Can I observe procedures?
The volunteer department does not provide opportunities to observe procedures.

Will I come into contact with blood and/or body fluids?
While any role in the hospital carries a small chance of contact with blood or body fluids, the role of volunteers does not include tasks that involve the expected contact with such substances.

I need leadership opportunities. Are there leadership opportunities available?
Yes! Arnot Ogden Medical Center has numerous chances for students and adults to demonstrate and utilize leadership skills. Leadership roles are available in some of our many projects, as well as with our Auxiliary.

What makes a good volunteer candidate?
The main factors which determine a great volunteer are: a passion for customer service, a dedication to the community, and the ability to make a commitment. Some of our volunteers perform exceptionally well in balancing employment, parenting, grandparenting, academic requirements, athletic endeavors, extra-curricular activities, hobbies, and volunteering. Other volunteers struggle because they cannot balance volunteering with other activities in their life. Before you submit an application, take stock of you activities and availability and determine whether a commitment to our patients, guests, and staff is one you can make at this time.

Does it cost anything to become a volunteer?
No. There is no cost to become a volunteer at Arnot Ogden Medical Center.
I only want to serve in one particular department. Should I apply?
We do our best to meet the desires of all our volunteers, but above all, our commitment is to the hospital, the patients, and their needs. We will discuss available job placements during the interview and determine whether these openings fit with your schedule. It is always possible to switch roles after three months of service.

I am part of a group which would like to volunteer in the hospital. Can we do this as part of a service day?
Please contact us if you are part of a group interested in volunteering. While the volunteer program does not have any group service opportunities in the hospital, there may be some community events held by Arnot Health which may be conducive to your desire to serve.

I need two hours of service for a class project. Can I do that as a hospital volunteer?
Volunteering in the hospital setting requires a longer commitment than just a handful of hours. You may wish to search for short-term volunteer opportunities to fulfill your requirement.