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Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners

The Department of Health is enrolling and activating emergency volunteer health practitioners for the COVID-19 response. While an emergency proclamation of the Governor is in effect, health practitioners licensed in another state may practice in Washington without obtaining a Washington license if he or she is in good standing in all states of licensure and is registered in the volunteer health practitioner system. Health practitioners licensed in Washington can also enroll to be an emergency volunteer health practitioner. These emergency volunteers will help meet emerging demands for health practitioners in areas impacted by COVID-19. The department can do this under the authority of the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner Act (Chapter [70.15 RCW](#)).

The Department of Health has the authority under RCW 70.15.030 to regulate any matters necessary to coordinate the provision of health services during an emergency with respect to volunteer health practitioners, including where they work, for how long they work, and what types of practitioners may volunteer.

Volunteer Instructions: The first step for a potential volunteer is to register online at [waserv.org](#) . [See this registration guide for instructions \(PDF\)](#). Please note that interested volunteers with current WAserv accounts, including local medical reserve corps members, do not need to create new accounts. Applications will be screened to ensure the potential volunteer's health license is in good standing in each state they are licensed in. The Washington State Department of Health will activate approved volunteers as needs arise while an emergency proclamation is in effect.

Volunteers should also consider registering with their [local Medical Reserve Corps](#) .

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Facility Instructions for Requesting Volunteers: Healthcare facilities who want to request approved volunteers, or want to request to activate specific staff under this program as part of their own surge planning, need to complete a [healthcare facilities request form \(PDF\)](#).

Facilities requesting to activate specific volunteers should [complete this spreadsheet](#). Please ensure all fields are complete, they are all required to complete the process. Please do not include any additional fields beyond information on additional licenses a volunteer has.

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Questions can be emailed to the WAserv, at WAserv@doh.wa.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions for Volunteers

What are the requirements for someone to be considered a volunteer?

There are two requirements. A health practitioner must be in good standing and be registered with the Department of Health as an emergency volunteer. Specific criteria for activation will vary based on event and role. Once volunteers are approved, we will share specific criteria for needed volunteer assignments when the department is ready to activate volunteers. This will help volunteers know if they are a right fit for a specific assignment.

What if I don't have a license in a U.S. State or territory, but am licensed in another country?

Only healthcare providers who are licensed in a U.S. state or territory can volunteer through this program.

How will workers compensation be covered?

Workers compensation costs for activated emergency volunteer health practitioners who are not being compensated for their volunteer assignment are covered by the Department of Health. Worker compensation costs for volunteers in paid assignments are covered by the host facility that is paying their wage. Activated volunteers in unpaid assignments will need to [complete and sign this monthly form to verify hours](#). The form must be signed by the volunteer's supervisor and returned to the Department of Health at waserv3@doh.wa.gov each month.

What is the liability of Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners?

Chapter 70.15 RCW provides immunity from liability for volunteers who register and are activated as emergency volunteer healthcare providers, excluding willful and wanton misconduct and gross negligence.

Is this the only option for bringing temporary medical workers into Washington to respond to emergency events?

The Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner (authorized under [RCW 70.15](#)) is just one option for increasing the number of healthcare workforce to help respond to emergency events in Washington State. Other options include:

- Temporary Practice Permits ([RCW 18.130.075](#)) allows the person to practice their scope of their profession for up to 180 days. We encourage health facilities to plan on this option if they are considering bringing in staff who work for their organization in other states. [See more information on temporary practice permits](#).



- Health Care Practitioner Compacts - Allows health care practitioners licensed in other compact jurisdictions to obtain a license quickly. Currently, only physicians (MD/DO) and physical therapists are part of interstate compacts.

How long will I be activated for?

This will vary based on the needs of each volunteer activation. Specific details will be shared before a volunteer commits to being activated.

Are travel costs and other expenses covered?

The healthcare facility (host entity) will be responsible for covering expenses.

What is the scope of practice for the Emergency Healthcare Practitioner Volunteers?

- Volunteers will need to work within scope of Washington State Law for each provider type, unless the scope of practice is narrower in their home state, and then the volunteer would need to work within the narrower scope.
- The host entity/facility will need to ensure volunteers work within scope of practice.
- The Department of Health is authorized to modify scope of practice if needed. This will be determined on a situation by situation basis.

Can an emergency volunteer health practitioner be paid?

It depends on any existing contractual relationship between the emergency volunteer health practitioner and the healthcare facility (host entity) for a specific volunteer assignment.

- A practitioner can provide unpaid services to any Washington State healthcare facility (host entity) and qualify as an emergency volunteer health practitioner under chapter 70.15 RCW, provided all requirements are met.
- An out-of-state licensed health practitioner may provide services for compensation to a host entity in Washington and qualify as a volunteer health practitioner under chapter 70.15 RCW as long as he or she does not have a preexisting employment relationship with the Washington host entity or an affiliate that requires the practitioner to provide health services in Washington. Practitioners should review the terms of their employment relationships to determine whether they are required to provide services in Washington.
- A practitioner does not qualify under chapter 70.15 RCW if the practitioner is compensated under a preexisting employment relationship with a host entity or affiliate which requires the practitioner to provide health services in Washington, unless the practitioner is a non-Washington resident employed by a disaster relief organization. RCW 70.15.010(16).



- A practitioner who is licensed in another state and is contracted to provide services at a facility in another state may practice without a Washington license at a facility in Washington that owns, is owned by, or is affiliated with the out-of-state facility where they normally work, provided that his or her employment relationship does not require him or her to provide services in Washington. For example, a health system with a hospital in Washington and a hospital in Idaho may bring Idaho-licensed practitioners whose contracts do not require them to provide services in Washington from its Idaho hospital to provide services in its Washington hospital and those practitioners would qualify as volunteer health practitioners under chapter 70.15 RCW.

Please note: All eligible practitioners or employees must complete an application to serve as an Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner. The Department of Health decides where and for how long volunteer health practitioners are activated.

Can health practitioners licensed in Washington serve as emergency volunteer health practitioners?

Yes. A practitioner licensed in Washington can provide unpaid services to any host entity and qualify as a volunteer health practitioner under RCW 70.15, provided all requirements are met.

A practitioner licensed in Washington can be paid as an emergency volunteer health practitioner under chapter 70.15 RCW if he or she provides services to a Washington host entity or affiliate with which the practitioner does not have a preexisting employment relationship that requires the practitioner to provide services in Washington, provided all requirements are met. For example, if Hospital A and Hospital Z, both in Washington, are not affiliated or associated in terms of ownership, Hospital A could send its in-state licensed employees to work at Hospital Z and those employees would qualify under chapter 70.15 RCW, provided that Hospital Z pays them and they do not have an employment relationship with Hospital Z or an affiliate requiring them to provide services in Washington.

All eligible practitioners or employees must complete an application to serve as an Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner. The Department of Health decides where and for how long volunteer health practitioners are deployed.

Will I have to be quarantined after I have served?

Movement and monitoring decisions for emergency volunteer health practitioners with exposure to COVID-19 should be made in consultation with public health authorities. Review the most current Interim [U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with 2019 Novel Co](#)

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Can volunteers decline an activation?

Yes, Volunteers can decline any specific activation.

Frequently Asked Questions for Healthcare Facilities

How do healthcare facilities request emergency volunteer health practitioners?

Healthcare facilities should work with their local health jurisdiction and local emergency management agency, who can make staffing requests on their behalf to the Department of Health. Facilities should have exhausted local resources first before making a request, including working with their local healthcare coalitions and medical reserve corps. Tribal nations have the sovereign authority to set and follow their own processes for request, and may reach out directly to the state, local authorities, or local healthcare coalitions.

Healthcare facilities can also make a request directly to WAserv@doh.wa.gov. They need to include:

1. [Healthcare facilities request form \(PDF\)](#)
2. If requested specific volunteers, also [complete this spreadsheet](#). The spreadsheet includes the following required fields:
 - First Name, Middle Name, Last Name
 - City, State
 - Email
 - Contact Method 1
 - Contact Number 1
 - Occupation 1
 - License Validation
 - State License 1-1 Number
 - Date of Birth

All of these fields are required for the department to be able to process your request. Please do not add any additional fields, with the exception of any additional license types, license numbers and states the licenses are from if that is needed for any potential volunteers.

Who gets to decide where an emergency volunteer health practitioner is assigned when they are activated?

The Department of Health has the authority to regulate any matters necessary to coordinate the provision of health services during an emergency with respect to volunteer health practitioners, including where they work, for how long they work, and what types of practitioners may practice. Under RCW 70.15.030, a health system may bring in out-of-state employees, and DOH gets to regulate how they are used during an emergency. A health system is not entitled to have exclusive use of its out-of-state volunteer health practitioners, although it may be likely that the department and the health system will agree with that allocation of the workers.



The department's current priority is supporting health systems and facilities with their own staffing surge plans. Health systems or facilities can make a request to have approved volunteers activated for their specific needs. The benefit to the health system or facility using volunteer health practitioners registered in the department's system is that the department covers workers compensation coverage costs for activated volunteers and activated volunteers have immunity from liability when activated, excluding willful and wanton misconduct or gross negligence. If a health system or facility does not agree with the department having decision-making authority over the placement of volunteers, then it is recommended that they use a different option for staffing surge plans, such as temporary practice permits or health care practitioner compacts.

How does this apply to telehealth and virtual care services?

Emergency volunteer health practitioners providing services for host entities operating in Washington under the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act, chapter 70.15 RCW, are authorized to offer telehealth or virtual care services to patients in Washington to the same extent that practitioners licensed in Washington are authorized to offer such services. Practitioners must be affiliated with a host entity operating in Washington to provide telehealth services. Practitioners should [contact the board, commission, or Department of Health program](#) that governs their profession in Washington with any questions.

Some professions have guidelines for telehealth services, including the [Medical Commission](#), [Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission](#), and [Examining Board of Psychology](#). Emergency volunteer health practitioners within these professions are authorized to provide telehealth services under these guidelines and do not need a Washington license to do so.

Other federal and state agencies regulate the use of telehealth services and technology for Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurance and payment-related purposes. The Department of Health does not generally enforce or provide guidance on these requirements but provides the following information that may be relevant to practitioners:

- The Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner has issued [orders and guidance pertaining to telehealth](#).
- The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a [notification of enforcement discretion related to telehealth technology and HIPAA](#).
- HHS has issued an [1135 Waiver suspending certain telehealth-related requirements](#), including the mandate to use HIPAA compliant technology (e.g. store and forward technology), and allowing audio and visual technology (e.g. smart phones) to be used in providing telehealth services. If an additional 1135 waiver is needed, providers and entities are encouraged to coordinate requests through MaryAnne Lindeblad, Medicaid Director, via email at MaryAnne.Lindeblad@hca.wa.gov. More information is available on the [Health Care COVID-19 page](#).



Can healthcare workers be paid?

For a paid out-of-state licensed health care provider to be covered by RCW 70.15, he or she must meet the following requirements:

- Not have a preexisting employment relationship with the health care entity that requires the practitioner to provide services in Washington. Paid providers can qualify as emergency volunteer health practitioners under RCW 70.15. Unpaid emergency volunteer health practitioners under RCW 70.15 can provide care essentially anywhere and for any entity in Washington.
- Be licensed in another state and be in good standing in every state in which he/she is licensed.
- All eligible practitioners or employees must register to serve as an Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner and then be registered in the Department of Health's volunteer health practitioner system before starting to practice in Washington or provide services to Washington patients.
- Unless modified or restricted by the Department of Health, health care practitioners must adhere to the scope of practice of the equivalent license type in this state, though not outside the scope allowed by his/her state of licensure.

Will I get the specialty service/personnel I request?

The more unique the skill set, the less likely you are to get an exact match. Overall the goal is to help bridge the staffing/personnel shortage facilities have due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend you request personnel with the least required qualifications that can support your critical staffing need.

How long will it take for me to get a volunteer?

We will try to identify a volunteer for your request in several days, but it will be dependent on a number of factors including, the number of available volunteers, specific qualifications needed, if the volunteer has to travel for another geographic area, and competing demands for the volunteers.

What type of orientation should I provide for the volunteer?

Facilities should provide activated volunteers with a briefing at the beginning of their assignment with specific instructions on their assignment, including emergency contact information and what to do if they get sick.

The volunteer will not know your facility, so it is important for you to review emergency code procedures. Please also provide any life safety training you typically provide for new staff orientation. This will help keep patients, staff, and the volunteer safe. Please provide a tour of the facility including emergency exits, door access codes, and computer/network codes needed for them to support your facility.



What is the scope of practice for the Emergency Healthcare Practitioner Volunteer?

- Volunteers will need to work within scope of Washington State Law for each provider type, unless the scope of practice is narrower in their home state, and then the volunteer would need to work within the narrower scope.
- As the host facility, you will need to ensure the volunteer is aware of the scope of their licensing standards and policies within your facility and practice within those guidelines.
- EMS providers will need to work under the local county protocol for their level of certification

What do I do when the volunteer arrives?

Since a review of the licensing website will not indicate the volunteer has a Washington license, it is important to verify their identity.

Activated volunteers will get an activation notification from the Department of Health. Validate identification of the volunteer with the volunteer names provided to your facility to ensure their identity.

What do I do if the volunteer becomes ill or is unable to work when scheduled?

If the volunteer becomes ill, you should notify the Department of Health Volunteer Coordinator at WAserv@doh.wa.gov. Your facility should follow your own infection control guidelines for care and isolation of the volunteer.

What liability protections are afforded to volunteer health practitioners?

Under RCW 70.15.110, registered volunteer providers are immune from liability, except for acts or omissions that are the result of gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct.

Who is providing their workers compensation?

The Department of Health is responsible to track volunteer hours and pay workers compensation coverage during the volunteer's activation. Activated volunteers will need to complete a monthly form to report on the hours they worked.

If the volunteer practitioners are not licensed in WA, do they need to complete any state requirements, like the required HIV/AIDS training, the suicide assessment/treatment/prevention training?



No, this training is not required as part of the 70.15 Emergency Healthcare Practitioner Volunteer program.

If volunteer practitioners want to extend their time here, who do they contact?

All volunteers will be given an orientation when assigned to your facility that will include contact information for who to go to if anything changes. If you and the volunteer agree to the extension, the department will accommodate that request if possible; however, if there is a need for that volunteer at another location, the department may decide to reassign the volunteer to that location.

What if the volunteer is no longer needed or decides to leave earlier than planned?

Notify the Department of Health Volunteer Coordinator at WAserv@doh.wa.gov.

If volunteer practitioners want to get licensed in Washington, where do they apply?

They would apply through the normal licensing processes, including considering if a temporary practice permit or a healthcare practitioner compact is an option for them. [See the licensing page for each profession for more information](#).

Can the volunteer work independently in my facility?

Although we know you are requesting the volunteer due to support critical unfillable resource needs, please consider assigning the volunteer someone to serve as a go-to resource to answer questions and become familiar with your facility.

What should I consider for patient and volunteer safety?

- The volunteer can refuse an assignment if it seems unsafe or outside their skill set.
- It is the facility's responsibility to provide appropriate personal protective equipment for the volunteer.
- Ensure the volunteer knows who to ask at your facility if they have questions or concerns and how to get in touch with that individual.
- Consider work hours and methods to prevent errors related to fatigue of the volunteer and other healthcare workers.

What if there is a concern about the care or work being performed by a volunteer?

If there are any concerns about the volunteer, facilities have a right to ask the volunteer to stop work. They should also notify the Department of Health at WAserv@doh.wa.gov.



