



Volunteer Handbook

**Norwalk
Free Clinic**

98 South Main St.
Norwalk, CT 06854

**Danbury
Free Clinic**

76 West Street
Danbury, CT 06810

**Bridgeport
Free Clinic**

115 Highland Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604

Administrative Headquarters
88 Hamilton Avenue
Stamford, CT 06902
(203) 658 – 9500 (phone)
(203) 685 – 9612 (fax)

www.AmeriCaresFreeClinics.org

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AmeriCares Free Clinics Overview

History/Mission Statement

The AmeriCares Free Clinics (AFC) were established in 1994 in response to the growing problem of uninsured individuals in Connecticut. **Our mission is to provide free quality health care to Connecticut's uninsured, while protecting each patient's sense of dignity and self-respect.** Through the generosity of hundreds of medical and non-medical volunteers, and by reaching out to local hospitals, labs and specialists for donated services, we are able to help those in the community who do not qualify for public assistance and do not earn enough to afford health insurance. By treating each patient with compassion and dignity, we inspire patient compliance and the formation of true partnerships in managing health care.

Who We Serve

To be eligible for our services patients must be:

- 18 years old (except at our Norwalk clinic which offers pediatric services)
- A resident of the area where the clinic is located (see website for specific towns)
- Uninsured
- Low income (earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level)

Scope of Services

At the clinics we provide the following medical services:

- Diagnosis and treatment of episodic and chronic illnesses, as well as minor injuries;
- School and pre-employment physical exams;
- Specialty services such as continuity care, diabetes management and other services specific to each clinic location;
- Laboratory tests and medications, as well as referrals for radiology and other diagnostic services; and
- Patient education and referrals to other health and social services as needed.

How we are Funded

AmeriCares Free Clinics are funded through donations from corporations, foundations, and individuals in the community. Fundraising is vital to our program and we are continually seeking opportunities to form new partnerships for support.

Volunteers

Unique and essential to the Free Clinics program are the nearly 250 medical and non–medical volunteers who make up our on-site staff. Simply put, without our volunteer doctors, nurses, medical assistants, intake screeners, interpreters and administrative assistants we would not be able to do what we do. You are truly the heart of our program!

As a volunteer it is your responsibility . . .

- To remember that “free care” in no way implies second-class medicine. Patients are treated with the utmost courtesy and respect, and receive the highest-quality patient care possible.
- To respect the confidential nature of our work.
- To accept an assignment with only as much responsibility as you can handle.
- To sign up for future clinic sessions, to be punctual when reporting for duty, and to give the Clinic Director as much notice as possible if you are unable to keep your commitment.
- To use good judgment in terms of your own physical condition, and not attend the Clinic with any communicable illness, or with any condition that could negatively impact on your ability to deliver quality patient care.
- To follow dress code guidelines
- To discuss any patient requests (e.g. asking for a ride or money) with the Clinic Director, and to not commit to any such services.
- To refuse gifts or tips, except when a patient makes or offers something of nominal value as a way of saying “thank you”.
- To provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations to the clinic director and/or staff. To be considerate, respect competencies and work as a member of the team with staff and volunteers.

It is our responsibility . . .

- To provide a safe, efficient and organized environment in which to work.
- To assure a professional atmosphere with flexible guidelines, allowing you to exercise your best judgment.
- To maintain a friendly work place, demonstrating a feeling of camaraderie and always demonstrating mutual respect for one another’s skills.
- To acknowledge you for your efforts through positive feedback, notes and tokens of appreciation for service hours.

- To quickly identify and remove any patient under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or who demonstrates abusive or abrasive behavior.
- To provide you with information that will clearly acquaint you with your role and with the mission of the AFC, through an orientation, shadow experience and written materials delivered in advance of your first clinic session.
- To communicate to you whether your work is effective and how it can be improved.
- To keep you informed about the AFC program through newsletters, telephone contact, e-mail and special events.

Attire

AFC expects its volunteers to use good judgment in maintaining a neat, well-groomed and professional appearance. If you are a medical volunteer you may wear scrubs or lab coats. Volunteers must wear an ID badge (provided by AFC) at all times while at the clinic.

Attendance

Volunteers must honor the commitment they have made to the AFC so we can best serve our patients. Volunteer sign-in sheets are maintained at each clinic site. You will be shown how to properly log in your hours. If you are unable to report for your scheduled session, please call the Clinic Director with as much notice as possible. If you plan to be absent for an extended period, please let the Clinic Director know so that we can plan accordingly.

Confidentiality

All information pertaining to any patient must remain confidential and secure in our clinics. Under no circumstances is a patient's condition or situation discussed outside the AFC. Federal law mandates that all patient information is to be kept confidential and secure, and even the fact that someone has come to AFC for service is included in this law. Discussion of any patient outside the AFC may result in termination of a volunteer.

- Patient confidentiality pertains to patient interactions and record keeping.
- It is important to provide privacy at all times when confidential information is obtained: during the screening process, while interpreting, and during the assessment/examination.
- The patient medical record is a legal document used to service the interests of the individual patient. Patient medical records are to be kept strictly confidential and will be maintained in a secure place within the clinic.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unlawful verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It violates both federal and state anti-discrimination laws. Volunteers who believe they have been subject to sexual harassment are urged to report it to the Clinic Director or to the AFC Associate Director.

Termination

If it is determined that it is in the best interest of the volunteer and the AFC to discontinue service, the volunteer will be contacted by the Clinic Director or the AFC Associate Director. Reasons for termination may include poor attitude, sharing confidential information, disregard for AFC policies and procedures, displaying behavior that could jeopardize the health and welfare of another person, and/or reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or not possessing the necessary skills required to perform your assigned duties.

Licensed Medical Professionals

All medical professional: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Nurses, Medical Assistants and EMTs must possess a valid license in the state of Connecticut. Please notify us if there is any change in the status of your license. This is a requirement of our malpractice insurer, who provides medical malpractice insurance for AFC medical volunteers while they are on site at one of our clinics.

Communicable Disease Surveillance

All clinic volunteers are asked to fill out the AFC Health Form during the application process. Each volunteer is required to complete an annual Tuberculosis Screening Form providing evidence of yearly PPD testing or the reason for an exception. Volunteers should maintain good personal health and not report for their required shift with any condition that could negatively impact their ability to provide care.

Parting Thoughts . . .

- Please be sensitive to the patients and do not have personal conversations in their presence.
- If for any reason you are not satisfied with your volunteer role, please speak to the Clinic Director or with the AFC Associate Director.
- Volunteers are expected to be prompt, conscientious, and knowledgeable about AFC.
- We welcome your input. Please feel free to share your thoughts and ideas with AFC management.
- Our heartfelt thanks. For without you, there would not be a Free Clinics program . . .



The three intertwined figures in our logo represent the **community** through whom financial support and donated services are provided; our **volunteers** who selflessly give their time and expertise; and the **patients** we serve. The shading of the figures demonstrates our pledge to deliver culturally sensitive care to our diverse population. All the figures are joined by a heart representing the compassionate support exhibited at our clinics.

Staff Contacts

Stamford Headquarters

Executive Director
Karen Gottlieb, RN, MBA

(203) 658 – 9650
kgottlieb@AmeriCares.org

Associate Director
Terri McCartney

(203) 658 – 9592
tmccartney@AmeriCares.org

Manager, Clinics Administration
Mary Balkun

(203) 658 – 9655
mbalkun@AmeriCares.org

Norwalk Free Clinic

Clinic Director
Barbara McCabe, APRN

(203) 899 – 2494
bmccabe@AmeriCares.org

Patient Care Coordinator
Gail Banigan

(203) 899 – 2493
gbanigan@AmeriCares.org

Staff Nurse
Joleigh Parisot

(203) 899 – 2493
jparisot@AmeriCares.org

Danbury Free Clinic

Clinic Director
Dina Valenti, RN

(203) 748 – 6188
dvalenti@AmeriCares.org

Assistant Director
Judy Hottle

(203) 748 – 6188
jhottle@AmeriCares.org

Bridgeport Free Clinic

Clinic Director
Cathy Sheehan, RN, MPH

(203) 333 – 9175
csheehan@AmeriCares.org

Patient Care Coordinator
Karina Rodriguez

(203) 333 – 9175
krdriguez@AmeriCares.org