

FAQs for planning events for patients at Cook Children's

General:

My group wants to volunteer to help kids in the medical center. What can we do?

Community volunteer groups often provide events including patient projects, patient parties, performances, special visitors or toy cleaning. Read below for more information about these types of events.

What are the steps that I have to follow for my group to volunteer?

1. Determine what kind of event your group might want to provide.
2. Submit an application that details the activities that you want to provide, and possible dates.
3. Your application will be reviewed.
4. If your event is approved*, a date and time will be confirmed. Additional paperwork will be required.

*Sometimes events are not approved because they are not compatible with our environment or with our scheduling restrictions. We are grateful for the spirit of giving behind these applications, but situations preclude us from approving every application that we receive.

Do you have age restrictions on who can volunteer for these events?

For all opportunities besides performances, volunteers must be at least 16 years old. For groups bringing volunteers that are between 16 and 18 years of age, adequate adult supervision of volunteers must be provided by the group (1 adult for every 5 teens).

How many volunteers are we allowed to bring with us?

Due to our current Covid restrictions, volunteer groups should be no more than 5 volunteers.

Our group just wants to deliver toys or cards directly to patients, can we do that?

Unfortunately, due to the immunocompromised nature of our patients and for privacy reasons, volunteer groups are unable to go room to room to visit our patients.

Are there any other Covid restrictions to be considered?

Because we care for the smallest, and sickest of children, our Covid restrictions may feel like the strictest that you encounter. Proof of Covid vaccinations is required of every member of the volunteer group. Upon arrival, the volunteer group will be screened following current Covid, medical center protocols.

Scheduling:

How far in advanced to we need to schedule our event?

Some community groups put their event on the calendar two or more months in advanced, but we ask for a minimum of 3-4 weeks. For Christmas, Easter and Halloween, or other big holidays, we typically schedule at least two months in advanced.

Are there days/times that events are typically scheduled?

Events are typically scheduled on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at either 11 am, 1 pm or 3pm. Some events require us to schedule outside these days/times, we typically choose these days and times because we get the highest patient/family participation.

Patient Projects/Party Hosting:

What is a patient project?

A volunteer group can visit with patients in the medical center and provide a specific activity for them. These activities are usually arts and crafts, but can be game days or activities specific to your group's interests. We recommend providing 2-3 activities for the patients to choose from. Be prepared to list your activities on your application. All activities must be pre-approved. Google and Pinterest are excellent resources for activity ideas.

What is party hosting?

A volunteer group can visit with patients in the medical center and provide a specific party for patients, this is like a patient project, but bigger! Possible party themes include: holiday parties, monthly birthday parties or other special events like: Mother-Daughter Makeovers, Father-Son Poker Party, Cooking Parties, Back to School Party, Luau/ Hawaiian Party, Sport Party, Safari Party, Circus Party, Pirate/Princess Party, Super Hero Party. A party typically involves 5 distinct activities including 2-3 art activities and 2 or more games. Be prepared to list your activities on your application. All activities must be pre-approved. Google and Pinterest are excellent resources for activity ideas.

Who provides supplies for patient parties or patient projects?

The volunteer group is responsible for providing for the majority activity specific supplies. The medical center has basic supplies like scissors, or glue available. Specific questions regarding supplies can be addressed when your activity has been approved.

Are there any materials we are not allowed to use?

Hot glue guns may not be used. Latex balloons may not be included in any crafts.

How many patients should we plan for?

When planning for a craft activity, groups are encouraged to plan for 40-50 children. This allows projects to be delivered to patients who are unable to leave their rooms.

What are the ages of patients that might be participating?

When deciding on an activity, plan for children in the 7-11 year old age range. Staff can help make the activity safe and exciting for patients in the other age groups.

Performances:**What is a performance?**

Performances are provided by groups to inspire, entertain and enrich the patients here at Cook Children's. Performances are varied and may be provided by choirs, bands, theatre groups, dance troupes, magicians or other types of entertainer. Groups must have public performance appearance experience prior to performing for our patients. All song lyrics and scripts must be submitted with the visitor application.

Do we need to submit a sample of our performance?

When possible, it is helpful for you to provide a preview of your performance. Preferably a link or short clip of a past performance. Individual entertainers need to submit an example of their performance.

Are there any special guidelines for magicians?

Magicians' tricks must be approved in advance. There are some very traditional tricks that don't work well in this unique environment.

Are there any materials that cannot be used in our show?

Latex balloons, including any balloon animals, and live animals may not be included in any performance.

What are the guidelines for political or religious content?

Any program content related to race, ethnicity, native language, economic status, age, gender, handicapping conditions, etc., is expected to uphold the value of diversity and the principle of treating other people with dignity, as we all wish to be treated. Program content related to sexuality and sexual issues is largely inappropriate for our pediatric population and must be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Program content may include patriotic material, but may not solicit support for a particular party, platform or viewpoint. For example, "Deep in the Heart of Texas" is an appropriate song to be performed; "Vote for ___" is inappropriate.

Cook Children's has a religious non-solicitation policy. We strive to offer the opportunity for all our patients, families and staff to practice the religion of their choice and to protect the rights of families to determine the religious education their children receive. Because we frequently have young, vulnerable patients in the atrium, we have much stricter guidelines about appropriate content than your group may encounter in other settings. Program content may include references to "God's care and protection," for example; but may not solicit toward a particular religion's way of experiencing or relation to God. Thus, "All Thing Bright and Beautiful" would be an appropriate selection, while a hymn like "There's Power in the Blood of the Lamb" would be inappropriate. Instrumental music is, of course, welcomed with fewer restrictions.

Those persons who speak during a performance are asked to respect the great diversity of beliefs represented here. Almost every group that wants to offer their talents here understands immediately the constraints imposed by our unique culture and seeks diligently to cooperate for the sake of our patients. If you have difficulty determining whether certain selections will be permitted, we offer content consultation through our Pastoral Care department at 682-885-4030.

Special Visitors:

What is a special visitor?

Special Visitors include mascots, celebrities and famous athletes who are easily recognizable by patients, please email before applying for this kind of event.

Toy Cleaning:

What is toy cleaning?

We divide a large volunteer group into teams of 2-4 volunteers, each small team will tackle a deep clean of one of our playrooms. We have ten areas throughout the medical center that teams can help clean. Toy cleaning usually takes 1.5-3 hours. Due to our Covid protocols, toy cleaning groups are on hold.

Other:

We want pictures of our volunteering to share on social media, how does that work?

Out of respect for patient privacy, every child must have written photo consent from their parent or legal guardian on file with Cook Children's before ANY photo is taken. To be prepared for your visit, it is important that your needs related to media be known in advance. There may be restrictions placed on your group's ability to photograph an activity, but every effort will be made to help you achieve your goals. IMPORTANT NOTE: If you will be soliciting media, please contact Cook Children's Media Relations department at 682-885-1080 prior to making any contact with the media.

Who takes care of the patients while they are participating at our event?

Groups are never responsible for the patients' safety or medical needs. Staff, patient families and/or Cook Children's volunteers are present at all events.

My organization is having a Day of Service for its employees, can we volunteer all day long?

Our corporate volunteer experiences are 2 hours, and can be in the form of patient projects, party hosting, or toy cleaning. Email for details regarding toy cleaning.