

Alabama ReadyOp, Volunteer Health Professionals Registration Program

Volunteer Information:

Compensation

A volunteer is just that, a volunteer. Some of the additional statutory liability protections depend upon the fact, among others, that the volunteer is serving without compensation. Further, the state government's merit system and contracting and procurement systems introduce rules that would make any sort of compensation, even a reduced fee arrangement unknown in an emergency situation. For these reasons, a volunteer serves without compensation. While provisions may be made for certain expenses to be paid, a volunteer should not have any expectation of such.

Confidentiality Policy

Provides that patient information, identified by HIPAA as "protected health information (PHI)" such as name, address, social security numbers as well as medical chart information should be used, and maintained in a confidential manner. It should only be viewed by employees and volunteers who have the "need to know" and only to the extent that comports with HIPAA's "minimum necessary" standard. PHI, without the written authorization of the patient, must be shared only with like individuals for treatment or operations except as specifically allowed to other individuals such as police, emergency responders, national security personnel or others with specific authority. Breaches of confidentiality are taken seriously, must be reported promptly and corrective action must be taken.

Volunteer Policy

Provides that volunteers are subject to verification of information and must possess the license or certification for which they are performing. Volunteers will be given a Volunteers' checklist including policy summaries. Volunteers must follow ADPH policy. Failure to do so is grounds for termination of the relationship. In addition to confidentiality, volunteers are expected to perform in a professional manner as measured by their discipline. Volunteers will receive and sign off on a checklist which documents the volunteers' review of policies, procedures and equipment.

Discretionary Function (State Agent) Immunity

The State of Alabama maintains its sovereign immunity from a civil suit. As a function of sovereign immunity, under case law, employees, and by extension, volunteers who are called upon to make discretionary decisions may be able to assert an immunity from suit known as discretionary function or state agent immunity. This immunity protects the decision-making process. It does not protect against simple negligence. As a volunteer, there are other immunities that protect against liability for simple negligence.

[View Code of Ala. 1975, Section 31-9-16](#)

Title 31 or "Emergency Management Worker" Immunity

Code of Ala. 1975, §31-9-16 provides that when the Governor proclaims a state of emergency, individuals who are performing state functions during the emergency are deemed to be "emergency management workers." The section provides that except for willful misconduct, gross negligence or bad faith, any "emergency management worker" is granted state officer immunity. They will not be held liable for acts or omissions which take place within the scope and line of their duties. An "emergency worker" is anyone performing functions for the State whether paid or not.

[View Code of Ala. 1975, Section 31-9-16](#)

Volunteer Service Act Immunity

Code of Ala. 1975, §6-5-336 provides similar immunity from liability for volunteers who are volunteering for the state or a nonprofit organization, a nonprofit corporation, a hospital, or another governmental entity if the volunteer is serving without compensation.

[View Code of Ala. 1975, Section 6-5-336](#)

Communication

During an event, ADPH will contact the Governor's Office of Volunteer Services to post contact and other communications information in the Alabama ReadyOp system and in appropriate points throughout the Alabama ReadyOp webpage. We will send out requests for volunteers through this and other websites, e-mails, text messages and phone calls using the contact information that is entered into the Alabama ReadyOp volunteer registration system. The volunteer database may contact you with routine information, or in the event of an emergency. If you are contacted by the system, you will receive necessary information relative to the event, including where you should report to.

Credential Verification

Credential verification allows the system to identify volunteers who have the qualifications needed for the current emergency. Obtaining, verifying, and assessing qualifications of a healthcare professional are aspects of credential verification. Only volunteer healthcare professionals with verified credentials will be utilized to provide patient care, treatment and services in/for a healthcare organization during an emergency event. Appropriate licensing boards will be utilized to verify the status of licenses.

Questions?

For questions regarding volunteering, you may contact the Governor's Office of Volunteer Services (GOVS) at 334-242-1549 or by email at alreadyop@servealabama.gov.

You may also contact GOVS staff for Technical Assistance in completing online volunteer forms, or for issues pertaining to Alabama ReadyOp. GOVS staff can be reached Monday-Friday, 8:00am - 5:00pm.