University of Illinois College of Medicine

Guiding principles for medical student volunteering during COVID-19
April 1, 2020

As we work our way through the COVID-19 pandemic we have been inspired by the desire of our medical students to volunteer their services to help our communities respond to this international emergency. The desire to volunteer, and to support our neighbors during a medical crisis, is in the truest tradition of the profession of medicine. We are proud of your efforts and will work through the Student Affairs office on each campus to provide a list of organizations that are calling out for volunteers. We offer the following guidelines to maximize your personal safety while volunteering.

This document is reflective of input from students, faculty, and College of Medicine leadership across our campuses and is in response to the requests and opportunities for medical student volunteers as we are facing the COVID-19 pandemic. One of our top priorities is to keep medical students safe and healthy as well as our patients, faculty and staff. All members of our community should assess the risks (e.g., exposure, interaction, location) of an experience before volunteering.

These guidelines are in alignment with the updated AAMC Interim Guidance on Medical Students’ Participation in Direct Patient Care During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak March 30, 2020

Medical Student Volunteer Experiences (Guidelines):

• Volunteer activities should be done for public service or humanitarian reasons only
• When possible and appropriate, are intended to be collaborative and interprofessional to promote students learning, with, from and about each other through service.
• All activities should be within the student’s competence and scope of practice
• We discourage any volunteer activities which would place students in a situation of having a dual role with faculty who are evaluating them.
• Volunteer activities can augment ongoing learning activities but should not disrupt continued participation in any core activities.
• There is no financial compensation associated with volunteer activities

The following guidelines may be updated as local circumstances evolve:

• Facilitate social distancing as permissible
• Should preferably be conducted without direct face-to-face patient contact at this time; if face-to-face contact is part of the experience, students should understand clearly the risks and benefits and must be able to use appropriate personal protective equipment.