

## Visiting Volunteers Program

### Background

Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital strives to maintain an international reputation for excellence in paediatric health care. This commitment to excellence is enhanced by the partnerships formed between RCH and various charitable individuals, foundations, and support groups.

The involvement of external individuals and organisations brings many rewards, including enhanced care and support of children and families. However, RCH is also required to provide a safe environment for its patients and staff, minimising risks to safety, quality of care, privacy, and confidentiality. The Visiting Volunteers Program (VVP) is one strategy aimed at consistently assessing and minimising such risks, so that the benefits of community partnerships can continue to be safely enjoyed by patients, families, staff, and the organisation.

### Program

The VVP is designed to protect RCH parties by carefully and consistently screening those individuals who are casually visiting the hospital for charitable purposes ("visiting volunteers"). Modelled from the Children's Cancer Centre Visitor Program, the RCH VVP endorses a number of key beliefs:

- Partnerships between RCH and individuals and organisations with charitable aims can benefit children, families, and the organisation.
- The benefits of community participation must be balanced against the risks that such participation may present.
- Any given relationship between an external organisation and an RCH department/ward often represents a rich history of cultivated goodwill which is to be respected.
- RCH will benefit from a formalised, coordinated approach to the assessment of visiting volunteers.
- Promoting and achieving a safe environment represents the opportunity for collegial cooperation and support across RCH departments.

Any queries about the Visiting Volunteers Program can be directed to the Coordinator, Lisa Burke, on (03) 9345 4662 or [lisa.burke@rch.org.au](mailto:lisa.burke@rch.org.au)

## Visiting Volunteers Program Guidelines for External Organisations

The RCH Ward/Department receiving the visit is responsible for the visit. The Ward/Department Head is responsible for ensuring that relationships are established only with credible external organisations. The following guidelines apply:

- Organisations should have a clearly defined purpose or mission aimed at providing support and services to children and their families. Organisations should develop their own goals, activities, and programs.
- Organisations should not give medical advice, treatment advice, or financial advice.
- Organisations should not participate or promote in any way therapies of doubtful or unproven value to children. If families or patients seek information from support groups, they should be encouraged to contact RCH clinical staff.
- If families or patients share relevant medical information with members of a support organisations, these families should be encouraged to make contact with RCH clinical staff.

Expectations of external organisations are detailed below.

- A high level of professional behaviour and integrity is a minimum expectation of any organisation visiting with RCH.
- The organisational structure of each organisation should be decided by the organisation itself, however, at a minimum, the mission or tasks of the organisation must be able to be met.
- Accountability in the form of records including financial transactions, financial position of the organisation, and external sources of funding must be kept and must be publicly available.
- Where external organisations request the participation of the RCH or its staff in media promotion, these requests must be referred to the RCH Public Affairs Department.
- Organisations fielding enquiries from the media in relation to RCH or RCH patients, families, or staff must immediately contact Public Affairs. Likewise, Public Affairs must be consulted before any partner organisation makes an approach to the media.

## Visiting Volunteers Program Guidelines for Individual Visitors

External individuals may become casually involved in the work of the RCH in many ways. For example, individuals may visit RCH as a representative of a support group or external organisation, or they may be engaged by staff on a casual basis, either within RCH or at external functions such as camps. Individuals becoming involved in such a capacity (referred to as a "visiting volunteers") will report to a nominated RCH staff member. This nominated staff member will be the contact point for all enquiries from the visiting volunteer, including application forms & approval to become an authorised visitor, coordination of visits, sign in/sign out procedures, authorisation and consent to take photos, videos, etc.

**To ensure registration as an approved RCH visitor, a VVP checklist must be completed for each individual prior to his/her commencement. Please note that the process of becoming an approved RCH visiting volunteer can take 8-10 weeks.**

### *Recruitment*

- Visiting volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.
- Visiting volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement.
- Visiting volunteers will be required to undertake Police and Working With Children checks, and consent to the release of these results to RCH.
- Prior to beginning their role, each visiting volunteer must be appropriately oriented to the physical environment and their role. This role-specific orientation should be provided by the nominated support group coordinator or staff member, covering such areas as rights, responsibilities, expectations, codes of conduct, ID badges, privacy/confidentiality, infection control, OH&S policies, and emergency procedures.
- Visiting volunteers will be required to attend an RCH Volunteers Emergency Procedures training session.
- **Please note that the process of becoming an approved RCH visiting volunteer can take 8-10 weeks.**

### *Manner and conduct*

- Visiting volunteers are requested to appear neat and tidy, with minimal jewellery. Long hair should be tied back and strong perfume should not be worn.
- Visiting volunteers are to wear their supplied RCH photo identification on their supplied lanyard at all times.
- Visiting volunteers should familiarise themselves with their Starter Pack, including the RCH Really Helpful Guide.
- If a child/family tells the visiting volunteer that something is worrying them, the visiting volunteer should inform the professional staff caring for the child. Genuine complaints should be passed onto the relevant manager.
- Visiting volunteers must NEVER discuss treatment or treatment options, offer advice, or purchase medicine for patients or families.
- Visiting volunteers must NEVER give any gifts to patients or families nor accept any gifts from patients or families.
- Visiting volunteers must NEVER bring an unauthorised visitor with them.
- Any enquiries from the media in relation to RCH or RCH patients, families, or staff must be immediately directed to the nominated staff member, who will direct the enquiry to the Public Affairs Department. Likewise, Public Affairs must be consulted before any approaches are made to the media.
- In the spirit of collaboration and cooperation, visiting volunteers should, in the first instance, raise any concerns or questions promptly with their nominated RCH staff member. In the event that the concern is not satisfactorily addressed, the volunteer should contact the Department/Ward head or the head of his/her organisation.

### *Health*

- Visiting volunteers should endeavour to keep their own immunisations and vaccinations up-to-date.
- Visiting volunteers are reminded to stay away from RCH if they feel unwell or have a suspicious rash, including seemingly minor ailments such as a sore throat.