



Safety tips for volunteering in light of COVID-19

In times of crisis, our natural instinct is to help. And now, more than ever, people are looking for ways to volunteer to support their community and the world around them. However, before you volunteer, you should first take these safety tips into consideration to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you:

1. Stay in the know.

Because things are changing so much on a daily basis, it is important to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and follow the recommendations of the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [U.S. Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), and state and local authorities. Make sure you pay attention to the social media, emails, texts and latest news coverage from the organization you're volunteering with.

2. Consider virtual volunteering.

If you are unsure about your health status, are self-quarantining, and/or have travel restrictions in your city or state, the best way to still give back is by virtually volunteering. Reach out to the cause of your choice to see what virtual volunteering roles they have available. See example volunteer roles [here](#) and check out our website for [volunteer opportunities](#).

3. Understand the risks.

Before you consider volunteering outside your home, make sure you ask about any risks associated with your volunteer role and what the volunteer manager is doing to mitigate the risk. Also, check to see if there is a volunteer handbook you can reference.

4. Are you healthy enough to volunteer?

Based on what the CDC considers [high-risk conditions](#), you should probably not volunteer outside the home if any of these apply to you – for the safety of yourself and everyone around you:

- If you currently have a cough, fever, or any respiratory illness
- If you currently have a heart condition, lung disease, diabetes, or any other serious health condition,
- If you are over the age of 65
- If you or anyone in your household have been in close contact with anyone who is confirmed to have COVID-19
- If you or anyone in your household recently traveled to China, Iran, South Korea, Japan, or Europe

5. Clean your hands often.

Whether you're creating something at home like a care package, or volunteering outside of the home, it is important that you protect yourself and others by following these [guidelines](#) from the CDC:

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.



POINTS OF LIGHT

- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
 - **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- 6. Avoid close contact.**
If you are volunteering out in the community, make sure you continue to exercise [social distancing](#) and keep plenty of space **between yourself and other people**. According to the CDC, this is especially important for people who are at [higher risk](#) if they contract the virus.
- 7. Listen and follow safety protocols.**
Whether doing a project from home or in the community, follow the advice and guidance of staff or local teams at all times. Staff are working around the clock to ensure their volunteers are in a safe environment, both virtually and out of the home. Because of this, it is important that you follow their instructions to ensure the safety of everyone involved.
- 8. Clean and disinfect shared spaces.**
While participating in at-home projects or working remotely, always remember to clean and disinfect [frequently touched surfaces](#) as often as possible. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. **If surfaces are dirty, clean them – use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.**
- 9. Share out best practices and stumbling blocks.**
We are all working towards the best way to do our work but safety is paramount. We are looking to internal affiliate experts and external partners to share best practices so we can all learn and put these systems into action. Reach out and communicate back what is working and what is not, where you are hitting road blocks, and where you have made a breakthrough.

Sources

- [New York Cares – Safety Requirements for Volunteers](#)
- [Volunteer Ireland - Volunteering Safely During COVID-19](#)
- [American Red Cross – Staying and Helping Others During COVID-19](#)
- [CDC – How to protect yourself](#)
- [Engize – Safety in Online Volunteering Programs](#)
- [World Health Organization - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public](#)

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