



# Volunteering in a Time of Social Distancing: New Jersey Responds to COVID-19

During this national emergency, the New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism and its partner organizations understand that those who are not suffering from the virus may want to help. However, all volunteer activities should adhere to critical health and safety protocols in order to

- Protect Volunteers
- Protect Residents
- Protect Clients
- Protect Service Agencies

## Volunteer and Volunteer Organization guidelines may change as the situation evolves.

- o First, DO NO HARM
- o IS IT SAFE? How are we minimizing risk?
- o IS THE SKILL SET DEFINED? What skill levels are needed?
- o IS IT NEED-DRIVEN? In response to valid mission requirements. Without volunteers, what will result?
- o LOCAL WHEN POSSIBLE: Matching local resources to local need first. Supporting the Governor's Executive Order minimizing travel.

-- Advice from NJ VOAD

## General Guidelines for Volunteers:

**DO NOT** attempt to volunteer if you have:

- o Experienced symptoms that could be related to COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- o Been around anyone who has COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- o Traveled to any foreign country in the last 14 days
- o Been on a cruise or been in an airport in the last 14 days
- o Been to an event where more than 10 people were in attendance in the last 14 days

**DO NOT** self-deploy to volunteer for any activity without confirming that there is a need for the activity, that it will be conducted, and that volunteer support is needed and expected.

**DO NOT** consider volunteering if you live with or are in frequent contact with people in the higher-risk categories for the virus.

**ASK** about any risk that may be associated with the task and DO NOT take part if you are uncomfortable with the level of risk.

**DO** practice universal infection control precautions.

- Clean and wash your hands with soap and water before, during, and after volunteering for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- 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 physical contact with others and maintain a social distance of 6 feet.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with your elbow or tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

**DO** call ahead to the service agency and ask if any additional safety precautions should be taken before, during and after the shift.

**DO** allow for extra time for additional screening from volunteer organizations or agencies to make sure you are cleared to volunteer for the task.

**DO** clean any used spaces thoroughly before and after. “High touch” surfaces that volunteers may encounter should be cleaned every day. These include counters, door handles, tabletops, bathroom fixtures, toilets, telephones, keyboards, tablets, and remote controls.

**DO** use proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if needed/provided for the task.

**DO** maintain the social distancing of 6ft apart ESPECIALLY when interacting with general public through meal pickups and deliveries. This is critical given the shortage of masks.

**DO** expect that shifts or opportunities may be cancelled; especially volunteer opportunities working with the vulnerable populations. Please be gracious and understanding.

**DO** register your capabilities and availability or find volunteer opportunities that may be available in your area.

## **General Guidance for Medical and Healthcare Volunteers**

If interested in volunteering, we refer you to the Medical Reserve Corps of the NJ Department of Health. Individuals can go to <https://njlmn.njlincs.net/> and click on "Register as an Existing or New MRC Volunteer!" Registration instructions can be followed from there. Medical Reserve Corps Units are county based, and each county has at least one MRC Unit. Health professional and community health volunteers are welcomed.

## General Guidance for Volunteer Organizations:

Realize that traditional services may shift.

Clean and sanitize gathering spaces or meal distribution sites regularly. Dispose of cleaning materials properly and contain any contaminated materials.

Do not compete in the market for scarce supplies that healthcare organizations and providers need every day to perform their duties.

If congregating is necessary for your task, consult public health partners and exercise extra measures.

Keep 6-10 foot social distance rules in place during tasks if possible.

Hang posters in facilities with best practices / social distancing / hand washing etc.

Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g. hand-hygiene products, tissues).

Provide disinfecting wipes and receptacles for their disposal in all locations.

- When in doubt visit [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) for recommendations.

For distribution/delivery:

- For people receiving meals from a distribution point, if a line forms there needs to be chalk or tape on the ground that reminds people to keep at least a 6ft distance.
- For people who are giving meals, they also need to find a way to maintain at least 6ft if possible, use gloves, and wash hands with soap and water frequently.
- With deliveries, setting meals or supplies on the doorstep and waving and holding conversation from that safe distance to protect the seniors and homebound vulnerable folks is key.

Make sure all volunteers understand any risks associated with the task you would like them to do and understand if they are not comfortable with that level of risk.

Screen all volunteers and clients as able and before using them.

- It is recommended to do temperature checks as volunteers come in for shift, especially if handling food.
- Consider having an isolation space ready in case anyone shows up with symptoms.

Realize that many volunteers are over age 65 and at a higher risk for contracting the virus.

Make sure you have the proper PPE available and make sure you train volunteers on its proper use before allowing them to do any tasks that require PPE.

For background and the most up-to-date information, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus Disease 2019 website: [HERE](#)

#### State of NJ Covid-19

- Twitter ([here](#))
- Facebook ([here](#))
- YouTube ([here](#))

#### New Jersey Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (NJVOAD)

- Twitter ([here](#))
- Facebook ([here](#))
- HelpNJNow ([here](#))

#### NJ 211

- Twitter ([here](#))
- Facebook ([here](#))
- E-mail [covid19@nj211.org](mailto:covid19@nj211.org)

#### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- Twitter ([here](#))
- Facebook ([here](#))

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Twitter ([here](#))
- Facebook ([here](#))

#### **What you should know:**

- [Workplace, School, and Home Guidance](#)
- [People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](#)
- [How COVID-19 Spreads](#)
- [Symptoms](#)
- [Steps to Prevent Illness](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Facts about COVID-19](#)
- [Information for People at Higher Risk and Special Populations](#)

#### **Information for Community Events and Gatherings:**

- [Interim Guidance for Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Community- and Faith-Based Organizations](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19PDF](#)

#### **Specific info for NON-PROFITS:**

- <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/trends-policy-issues/the-nonprofitcommunity-confronts-the-coronavirus>

The NJ Governor's Office of Volunteerism recognizes and thanks NJ's 1.6 million volunteers for their service to our state every day. For more information, you can contact the office at 609-633-9627.

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