



Family Support Volunteer Role Description

Family Support is Side-by-Side's year-round, relational response to needs of families in Seattle for the treatment of serious illness. We match our screened, trained and supported volunteer teams to families who are referred by social workers and staff from Seattle Children's Hospital, the Hutch School and other local organizations. Volunteers provide support to assigned families while patients are in active treatment in Seattle—which can last anywhere from 3 months to a year or longer.

When we explain Family Support to a new family, we often sum it up by saying that our volunteers are “professionals at play”. By focusing on play and relationships, we fill a huge unmet need. The activities of a “typical” volunteer team might include:

- Visiting during in-patient hospitalizations or at the Ronald McDonald House
- Befriending and supporting siblings who may need special attention
- Taking kids to a local park or on a walk to University Village
- Bowling or other age-appropriate activities
- Providing opportunities for parents to have time alone together

Common traits of Family Support Volunteers

- Energized by being around kids
- Playful
- Adventurous
- Resourceful
- Committed to be available for 2-5 hours per week for at least one year (with breaks for vacation and other major commitments, of course)
- Willing to be accountable and in touch with the Side-by-Side staff
- Motivated by joy, not pity
- Able to respond in difficult situations with patience, compassion, sensitivity, selflessness and healthy emotional boundaries
- Fueled and informed by the faith, hope and love found in Jesus Christ
- Ready to be part of a team/serve with a volunteer partner
- Teachable and trainable
- Willing to follow our boundaries, guidelines and rules (see below)

Family Support Volunteers agree:

- To serve in the volunteering role to the best of one's ability
- To attend the on-going Family Support Meeting to share experiences, training, and support (held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7-8:30 pm at UPC)
- To carry out volunteer activities as a team of at least two people
- To be available to an assigned family 2-5 hours per week, not going over this time limit unless given permission by Side-by-Side staff
- To provide tangible support to an assigned family for one (1) year, extending this time only by permission of Side-by-Side staff

- To read and follow the Code of Conduct and all Addendums set forth by Side-by-Side and the Children and Family Ministries Department at University Presbyterian Church as well as all other UPC policies, guidelines, rules and procedures
- To maintain confidentiality, within the Side-by-Side program, of information disclosed to the volunteer by the family, including names and specifics surrounding their medical treatment and care
- To discuss related questions or concerns with the Side-by-Side staff
- To document time spent with the family, submitting this information monthly to the Side-by-Side staff
- To know and follow institutional guidelines when visiting the family

Training

Volunteers are required to complete training sessions, prior to being assigned to an individual family. Training will be provided by Side-by-Side Staff, Family Support Volunteers and medical professionals in a “live” session in October or on DVD the rest of the year.

Support

Through the course of the volunteer commitment, support is provided by the Side-by-Side Staff and other Family Support Volunteers. They are available to provide encouragement, prayer and assistance with difficult situations and to share updates on assigned families’ needs.

Personal Rewards

- Membership in an amazing team of fellow volunteers
- The potential for a broken heart, more hope and more joy in suffering
- The opportunity to bless and care for “strangers within our midst” and to be a neighbor and friend to those “exiled” from their communities by illness
- Being with kids!
- The satisfaction of making a positive difference that will last forever

Questions? Please contact Marla Malone, Family Support Coordinator at

marlam@upc.org 206.524.7301 x273

or visit our website at www.sidebyside.org