

HEALTH INSURANCE COUNSELOR

Volunteer

GUIDE



Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Schuyler County Office for the Aging (OFA). OFA volunteers are making a huge difference in the lives of older adults age 60+ in Schuyler County.

Health Insurance Counselor is a rewarding position! Volunteers that assist with the Health Insurance Information and Counseling Assistance Program (HIICAP) provide free, unbiased counseling for individuals of any age on Medicare.

This handy guide will provide you with all of the essential information to help you decide if Health Insurance Counselor is the right position for you. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

**Best regards,
Holly Patelunas**

**Holly Patelunas
Volunteer Coordinator
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607-535-7108**

History

Schuyler County Office for the Aging was established as a result of the Older Americans Act of 1965 with the core function being provision of information/referrals and services for county residents age 60 and over, as well as their caregivers. A variety of programs are offered through nutrition services, in-home services, benefits assistance and general services.

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The Office is funded by the Administration on Aging, the NYS Office for the Aging, County of Schuyler, client contributions, sponsorship, and general donations.

Our mission



To advocate for, educate and assist the senior and disabled populations of Schuyler County to live in the most independent and integrated setting through community collaboration providing for well-being/health, security, dignity, autonomy and choice through innovative home and community-based services.

If you, or someone you know is in need of services, please Call Schuyler County Office for the Aging at 607-535-7108.

Benefits of Volunteering

MIND



- Improve your mood
- Reduce stress & anxiety
- Combat depression

BODY



- Stay active
- Reduce risk of high blood pressure & heart disease
- Live longer

SOCIAL



- Create new connections & friends
- Develop emotional stability
- Combat loneliness/ isolation

CAREER



- Build confidence
- Develop skills
- Build your resume



Position description

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Provide free, unbiased counseling for individuals of any age on Medicare as well as those age 60 or older with any type of insurance
- Assist with billing disputes, plan selection, issues with prescriptions, fraud, enrollment in Medicare and related programs and screening for low income assistance programs
- Keep HIICAP Coordinator informed regarding your availability and give ample notice prior to cancelling an appointment
- Report any incidences, accidents or concerns to the HIICAP Coordinator

SKILLS REQUIRED

- Understand the limitations experienced by some individuals
- Must be detail oriented, objective, good organization skills, patient, strong verbal and written communication
- Ability to maintain strict confidentiality regarding client information
- Familiarity with Medicare system is helpful but not necessary
- Computer skills required

Volunteer FAQs

WHY IS THERE A VETTING PROCESS FOR VOLUNTEERS? Older adults are a vulnerable population and all volunteers go through the process which includes a volunteer application, criminal background check, motor vehicle record check, reference check, phone interview and approval from both the Director and County Administrator.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BE APPROVED TO VOLUNTEER? It typically takes about 1-2 weeks to review the application, provide a motor vehicle records check, criminal background check, reference check, phone interview and get final approval from the Director of Office for the Aging and the County Administrator.

HOW MANY HOURS AND HOW OFTEN WILL I BE EXPECTED TO VOLUNTEER? We can set up a volunteer schedule that works for you. Whether that be once a week, once a month or as needed, just mention your preferences when you complete the volunteer application.

WHEN DO I START TRAINING?

Once OFA receives your completed volunteer application, they will review it and an OFA staff member will reach out to you when we have an open position and set up training.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING IS PROVIDED?

The training is completed online while shadowing a counselor in person or over the phone. You will work one-on-one with the HIICAP Coordinator until you feel comfortable with the material. Medicare is complicated and you are NOT expected to know all the answers. You will need to pass an "open book" HIICAP Counselor exam once per year to maintain your status as a HIICAP counselor.

HOW OFTEN WILL I NEED TO BE AVAILABLE TO VOLUNTEER?

The schedule is very flexible for when you want to counsel. We typically provide counseling during our regular business hours (Mon-Th 9-5 & Fri 8-4). Medicare Open Enrollment is our busiest time of year from October 15- December 7th, and we may request additional hours depending on your availability. Each counseling session is approximately 1 hour long.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL COUNSELING SESSION LOOK LIKE?

We provide information and assistance without opinions. We give a client options by comparing plans using Medicare Plan Finder (an online tool free to all) and assist with the enrollment process if needed.

DO I NEED A MEDICAL BACKGROUND?

Definitely not! HIICAP volunteers have a variety of professional backgrounds and are committed to lifelong learning opportunities.

WHAT IF I DON'T LIVE IN SCHUYLER COUNTY? We accept volunteers from outside of Schuyler County. Snowbirds are welcome too!

WILL I ALWAYS VOLUNTEER WITH THE SAME CLIENTS? Not always. While we do try to keep it consistent, it's not guaranteed.

DO I NEED A CAR? Not at this time. HIICAP volunteers are currently only providing appointments over the phone or virtually.

WILL I BE REIMBURSED FOR MILEAGE IF I DRIVE? Yes! There is mileage reimbursement available. OFA will provide a mileage sheet with instructions for completion and submission available.

ARE FACE MASK, GLOVES & HAND SANITIZER PROVIDED? Yes! Please call 607-535-7108 to request masks, gloves and refillable hand sanitizer bottles & refills and we will prepare it for you, marked with your name to pick up from the deputies at the front desk in the Human Services Building located at 323 Owego St., Montour Falls.

CAN I RESCHEDULE IS SOMETHING COMES UP? Yes! Please give us as much advance notice as possible.

Volunteer Opportunities



HOME DELIVERED MEALS- deliver delicious & nutritious meals to homebound older adults.



SHOPPING ASSISTANCE - Assist older adults with grocery shopping and/or medication pick up.



PERSONAL & MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION - provide transportation to meet the personal needs of clients such as medical appointments, ride to grocery store, pharmacy, banking, hair appointments & more.



CONGREGATE MEAL SITE ASSISTANT & KITCHEN HELPER - Assist at congregated meals sites with various kitchen related duties.



ENTERTAINMENT - Professional performers volunteer their time to provide entertainment.



EDUCATION - Professional educators to provide both virtual or in person courses to older adults For example history, writing club, book club, arts & crafts.



HEALTH & WELLNESS - Health & Wellness professionals volunteer their time to provide a program or service.



VIDEO CAMERA OPERATOR/VIDEO EDITING - Assist with operating and shooting video and/or video editing for social media and other special projects.



HELLO NEIGHBOR - Friendly phone chat and safety check once a week to homebound older adults.



HEALTH INSURANCE COUNSELORS - provide free, unbiased Medicare counseling to Medicare beneficiaries.



CLERICAL - Handling all types of office duties including but not limited to making phone calls, filing, data entry, preparing mailings.



ADVISORY COUNCIL - Voluntary group that provide information, guidance, advice and support to the Office for the Aging to develop, coordinate and administer services to older persons.



PUBLIC RELATIONS - Public relations including the Golden Glow newsletter and many other custom opportunities available.

LEARN MORE

about our Volunteer Opportunities

CALL 607-535-7108