

MEDICAL VOLUNTEERS FACT SHEET

Q: How can I go on a mission?

A: If you are a medical volunteer, you must first become “credentialed.” You may register to volunteer on the www.operationsmile.org website. Once registered, the credentialing application can be found under the **My Credentials** tab. Once you are registered in our Medical Volunteer Action Center (MVAC) you can view Operation Smile’s **Global Standards of Care** and your medical specialty’s **Job Description** under the **Resources** tab for more information about the organization and your volunteer role. The credentialing application can be found under the **My Credentials** tab. If you meet the criteria, complete the online application and upload all applicable documents. If you are interested in being a volunteer but are not computer savvy or have the required computer settings to apply online, you may request a paper application. To do so, please contact our offices at 757-321-7645.

Q: How long does it take to become credentialed?

A: Each medical volunteer’s credentials (application, license, diploma, specialty diploma, board certification, BLS and PALS, if applicable) are sent to and reviewed by a team of medical professionals referred to as the Medical Advisory Council. Once all documents have been confirmed, the Credentialing Coordinator will notify the volunteer of the credentialing status and provide further information at that time. **This time-frame can take up to eight (8) to twelve (12) weeks.**

Q: I have been a credentialed Operating Room nurse for six months and have not yet been on a mission. How does the mission selection process work?

A: To be in compliance with Operation Smile’s Global Standards of Care, mission teams must have a balance of new and experienced OS volunteers. This means that, depending on the size of the program, there may be fewer positions available in each specialty for new volunteers. We welcome you to apply for any missions you’d like through MVAC, but please understand that space is limited and team compositions are chosen based on a number of variables.

Q: How much will it cost me to go on a mission as a medical volunteer?

A: There is a flat \$500 team fee required of all medical volunteers for each mission attended. This team fee covers the volunteer’s airfare, lodging, ground transportation (to/from the airport and to/from the hospital), and breakfast and lunch every day of the mission. The missions are usually 10 days long but may also require additional travel time to get to/from the mission site. The volunteer is financially responsible for any costs incurred for visas, immunizations, checked baggage, dinners during the mission, and any other incidentals like phone/internet charges at the hotel, taxis, souvenirs, etc.

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Q: How will I know what to do once I am confirmed to go on a mission?

A: Our Global Headquarters Program Coordinator will be in touch with you via telephone and email. In addition, there are several packets of information that are mailed to the volunteer that will give insight to the details surrounding the mission. There will be forms that must be read, signed and returned. Volunteers will be advised of the expectations well in advance.

Q: I am a Physician's Assistant, is this considered a medical volunteer?

A: We define medical volunteers as Anesthesiologists/Pediatric Anesthesiologists, Dentists, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, OR/RR/Pre-Post Nurses, Pediatricians, and Surgeons (Plastic, Oral Maxillofacial, and Cleft) as well as, Pediatric Cardiologists, Pediatric Intensivists and Neonatologists. We also accept Certified Child Life Specialists, Speech Pathologists and Biomed Technicians. While physician assistants play an important role in patient care in the United States, licensing requirements from other countries preclude us from having physician assistants in our programs at this time. Areas such as administration, clinics, OB, Psych and schools generally do not meet this criteria.

Q: I am a retired E.N.T. and would like to go on a mission. Do you accept retirees?

A: Operation Smile adheres to the Global Standards of Care and ensuring the safety of our volunteers and patients is of the utmost importance. Therefore we require our medical volunteers be active in their profession. We will accept retirees for up to two-years post retirement as long as the credentials are current and some form of education and applicable work (if only part-time) is continued.

Q: I am a registered nurse who used to work in the OR but have been a Bariatric Specialist for the past four (4) years, would you accept me as a medical volunteer?

A: All of the medical specialties accepted are based upon clinical experience and education. Pediatric experience is required and our nurses must be working two-years in their respective field. We accept Recovery Room (must work in PICU, PACU or NICU) as well as, Operating Room and, Pre/Post (must work in an Emergency Room, Medical/Surgical) nurses.

Q: I am a surgeon from the United States but will be moving to South Africa. Can I still volunteer and whom would I contact locally for mission information?

A: Operation Smile has Foundations and colleagues across the globe and if requested, we could inform you of the nearest local foundation's contact information. Since global credentialing is managed and supported by our Global Headquarters in Virginia Beach, Virginia USA, if you are credentialed, your status will carry over and you will be able to work with our South African team.

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Q: I am a dentist and see that a volunteer must have obturator and cleft experience to become credentialed. Do you provide education classes so that I may learn how to work on cleft patients?

A: Operation Smile has performed over 200,000 free surgeries for children and young adults born with cleft lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities. We prefer cleft and obturator experience but understand there are many valuable dental volunteers that are merely missing a small piece of experience and education. We have been actively creating an educational presentation for dentists that lack the obturator/cleft experience. This program is continuing to evolve but currently we will provide the online study materials and, if at the end of the program, you exhibit the knowledge, then you will become “provisionally” credentialed. What this means is that on your first mission, you would work under a more experienced dentist/dental team leader. The team leader evaluation will determine if full credentialing is in order.

Q: Does Operation Smile conduct behavioral studies on cleft lip/palate children who had received corrective surgery.

A: Operation Smile only performs research under strict IRB approvals and in conjunction with international foundations and offices of the ministries of health we work with. Studies related to patient’s quality of life are underway or in the design stages along with university partner institutions we are directly affiliated with.

Q: Will mission experience count toward Continuing Education requirements for medical professionals?

A: No, not at this time.

Q: I am a pediatric/anesthesia/plastic surgery resident; will I qualify for missions?

A: If you are a resident in your final year of study of plastic and reconstructive surgery, anesthesia, or pediatrics you may be eligible to apply for our Resident Leadership Program. This program allows residents to experience a mission under the supervision of a mentor. Please go to our website for more information and to download the application. http://www.operationsmile.org/get_involved/medical-volunteers/medical-students.html.

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Q: I am a student and am interested in going on a mission, how can I make this happen?

A: Students are a valuable part of many Operation Smile missions. For more information about becoming a Student Volunteer, please visit our website: http://www.operationssmile.org/get_involved/student-youth-programs/conferences-workshops.html or email YouthPrograms@operationssmile.org.

Q: I am too old for missions/ have since retired from being an Emergency Room nurse leader/ really don't have the stamina for walk-a-thons but I have great people skills and the education to speak on behalf of Operation Smile. Does Operation Smile have speaking engagements with nurses or businesses where I could speak/advocate on behalf of the organization?

A: Absolutely yes. We are always looking for advocates to represent Operation Smile and to engage audiences of both medical and non-medical professions. To learn more about our guidelines and to be interviewed for this volunteer position, please contact Donor Relations at 888-677-6453 or, email drelations@operationssmile.org. *Please remember to indicate that you are interested in joining our "Speakers Bureau" program.*

Q: I do not fit under the category of medical volunteer, student or resident but would like to go on a mission. I am willing to pay to go. Is this possible?

A: Operation Smile program organizers focus their efforts in preparing all arrangements for members actively performing clinical or clearly outlined supportive programmatic roles. Our ability to assist patients around the world depends on the efforts of many volunteers and donors here at home who raise awareness and funds for Operation Smile. If you want to help and do not fit the criteria for credentialing, please do not dismay. While we might not be able to place you on a mission team, we can use your skills in other ways. If you would like to get involved as an advocate for Operation Smile within your community, please contact Donor Relations at 888-677-6453 or drelations@operationssmile.org.