Volunteering During the Pandemic

While we wait for things to return to normal, you can still keep finding ways to help others. Be sure you pick something you actually enjoy when you volunteer. You are trying to do this to show health professional schools that you like helping others, which will be much more convincing if you genuinely care about the activity you select and find joy in it. Also, it will make your time in college much more enjoyable if you fill your time with things that make you happy.

In-person Opportunities Nationwide

**Volunteer with the Red Cross**
Help with blood drives with your local Red Cross.
https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer.html

**Help to Feed Others**
Check to see if [Meals on Wheels](#) needs more volunteers in your community. Inquire whether other local organizations focused on supporting the elderly need volunteers; for example, [Caring Connections](#) is asking for volunteers willing to deliver groceries in NJ/PA counties to step forward. Check out your local food pantry (see [FeedAmerica.org](#) if you don't know your local options) or soup kitchen. Many are asking volunteers to come and make care packages for those in need while remaining socially distanced for each other.

**Serve at a Homeless Shelter**
Many homeless shelters rely on volunteers and continue to operate during the pandemic. Check near your home town.

**Look at Opportunities with Your Local United Way**
Many United Way websites not only list volunteer opportunities with the United Way but also with other nonprofit organizations. As an example, [United Way of Hampshire County](#) has lots of ways to volunteer as does the [United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley](#).
In-Person Opportunities in Hampshire County

If you are using campus resources and want to volunteer, you need to fill out this Risk Acknowledgement Form.

There are still some local non-profit organizations looking for in-person volunteers:

- **Amherst Survival Center**, which provides food, groceries, clothes and medical care to those in need.
- **Center for New Americans**, with offices in Amherst, Northampton, and Greenfield, needs volunteers to tutor, lead conversation groups, and assist in the classroom.
- **Cooley Dickinson Hospital** is looking for volunteers at the check-in desk and in the coffee shop. (We recommend that you volunteer at the check-in desk, so you get to see patients.)
- **Craig’s Doors** a local homeless shelter uses volunteers to help coordinate housing
- **DIAL/SELF ACT Volunteer Center** posts requests for volunteers from around Western, MA
- **The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts** needs volunteers to help get emergency food to our neighborhoods. During these unprecedented times, there is greater demand than ever for volunteers.
- **Friends of Children** looks for volunteers to help children and young people in the welfare system thrive. They not only offer a breadth of volunteer opportunities, from working directly with kids to marketing, but also tailored internships.
- **Northampton Senior Services** provides support to seniors and needs help coordinating their tech loan program as well as drivers to deliver groceries to seniors.

In-Person or Remote Opportunities, Depending on Your Role

**Be Part of Mutual Aid**

Mutual Aid networks exist across the country. Google “Mutual Aid” and your closest city’s name to see what your region is doing. (For example, Mutual Aid Worcester: https://mutualaidworcester.org/) Communities are working together to help their most vulnerable members with groceries, etc. during COVID.

**Center for Human Development**

The Center for Human Development needs support with mentoring, advocating, supporting, and organizing to provide services for residents in Amherst, Northampton, and Springfield, MA. While some of their services are suspended, others have become remote and a number have modified their traditional approach to remain available in person.

**Volunteer with the upcoming election:**

- Help to increase voter turnout with MassPIRG: https://actionnetwork.org/forms/masspirg-internship-volunteer-opportunities-7/
• Participate in voter registration efforts: www.rockthevote.org/get-involved/
• 100 Ways to Get Involved: www.lwv.org/blog/100-days-and-100-ways-get-ready-election-day
• Sign up to be a poll worker: https://www.workelections.com/

Currently Remote Opportunities that Will Eventually Resume in Person in Amherst or Nearby

**Become a mentor for a child with Big Brothers Big Sisters**
Many BBBS chapters are now doing remote mentoring for children. This is a great opportunity to connect with a child who is looking for a little additional support. It can be done remotely now and in-person in the future. [https://www.bbbs.org/](https://www.bbbs.org/)

**Boltwood Project**
Take this service learning course through UMass and link to meaningful volunteer opportunities. Currently this can be done remotely but should return to in-person when it is safer. [http://www.umass.edu/cesl/programs/boltwood-project](http://www.umass.edu/cesl/programs/boltwood-project)

**Cheer Pediatric Patients with Project Sunshine**
Volunteer (can be done remotely!) to hang out with pediatric hospital patients. [https://projectsunshine.org/volunteers/](https://projectsunshine.org/volunteers/) (We already have a sophomore trying to create a UMass chapter, but you may be able to volunteer through your home community’s chapter for now.)

**The Literacy Project**
The Literacy Project provides free basic education and high school equivalency classes to adults at 5 locations in Western Massachusetts, including the Jewish Community of Amherst, and online. Most of their classes are now remote, and they are seeking volunteers to help with online tutoring and courses.

**Service Learning at UMass**
UMass has a number of service learning programs, including the Boltwood Project (above), Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Community Scholars Program, Student Bridges, IMPACT, and more. Most of these programs are continuing to run remotely and will resume in-person in the Amherst area when it is safe to do so.

**Tutor or Mentor with the Collaborative for Educational Services**
Help to provide after school enrichment activities to children in the Pioneer Valley. You can tutor, mentor, or teach a passion (like cooking!) during their (currently) remote after school programs. When things are safer, volunteers go to sites, which are located throughout the area, including the Amherst Regional Middle School.
Partner with someone trying to learn English
The Jones Library in Amherst is looking for Conversation Partners to match with individuals in the Amherst community who are trying to learn English. This can be done remotely now and in person when the world returns to normal. [https://www.joneslibrary.org/248/ESL-Citizenship](https://www.joneslibrary.org/248/ESL-Citizenship)

Remote Opportunities

Brighten a Day
Make people smile through cards, notes, letters, devices, video messages, and conversations. [https://www.brighten-a-day.org/](https://www.brighten-a-day.org/)

Volunteer Opportunity for Spanish Speakers
The Pioneer Valley Workers Center needs Bilingual (Spanish/English) folks to become trained Hotline Responders. [Register for training (on 11/8)](https://www.brighten-a-day.org/). Hotline Responders ensure that immigrants and workers in Western Mass stay safe, informed, and empowered by connecting with resources and community support. If you have questions about the Hotline Responders or the training, get in touch with Finley at finley.janes@gmail.com

Tutor
Work with underserved and under-resourced youth

- [Upchieve](https://www.upchieve.org): Online tutoring for disadvantaged youth
- [PhysioCamp](https://www.physiocamp.org): Tutor or help with their online science camp
- [Boston Public Schools](https://www.bostonschools.org): Tutor youth remotely or inquire about other opportunities

Work on a Crisis Hotline
If you’ve received crisis hotline training, check to see if your community’s crisis hotline could use additional phone or chat volunteers. Many crisis hotlines are overloaded right now.

- [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.org) (requires 30 hours of training and currently has a waitlist to become a volunteer)
- [The TREVOR Project](https://www.trevorproject.org) - supports LGBTQ youth

Need More Opportunities?

**Do a Google Search**
Google your hometown’s name (or a nearby, larger city) and “volunteer.”

**Look at VolunteerMatch.org.**
Many nonprofit organizations post for volunteers in [this database](https://www.volunteermatch.org).
Look at Guidestar.org to see all the non-profit organizations in your area.
Look through the database of nonprofits to see which appeal to you and to find links to their websites. Then, email or call them to see if they need volunteers if it’s not obvious on their websites.