

About the HIV/AIDS Support Volunteers

"Buddies" are . . .

. . . available to provide one-on-one support on an ongoing basis. Buddies offer both a social connection and help with some practical needs. The connection can include as much as a weekly get-together and weekly phone calls. The specifics may vary, but Buddies will reach out consistently and without judgment. It's not counseling, nor is it a typical informal friendship. Buddies just care, so they call regularly, they like getting together and they offer a hand.

"Bridges" are . . .

. . . available during mostly daytime hours to provide help with transportation, errands, or occasional projects around the house for clients who call with a specific request. Requests must be made in advance as the program is not designed to provide last-minute assistance. (If weekly household help is needed, homemakers who are paid through a grant are available.)

Who can use the volunteer services?

Anyone in Hampshire County who is living with HIV or AIDS may inquire about volunteer services. Even those without noticeable physical symptoms of HIV or AIDS may benefit from accessing the confidential, objective, and flexible support from a volunteer.

How much time do volunteers usually give?

The maximum time that is expected of each volunteer is 4 hours per week. Part of the commitment involves attendance at volunteer meetings. Meetings are required because they help volunteers to maintain ease and consistency in their roles.

Who are the volunteers?

Interested community members are screened and educated by the agency in order to end up with a diverse group of available, committed, and nonjudgmental volunteers. They must be at least 20 years old and have a car. All have passed a criminal record check.

Why do people volunteer?

They enjoy it. More specifically, here's what some volunteers have said about it:

"Sharing the HIV journey with someone has taught me how important it is for the community to show that we care, so that our brothers and sisters don't travel this road unattended. My work has reminded me of the value of human relationships."

"I get so much out of doing such a small thing that I now know is not a small thing for our friends."

"I feel a part of something larger than myself, not an isolated individual trying to make a change in the world."