



Volunteer Information Package

It is one of the beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely help another without helping himself.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson



AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Volunteer Program Information

OUR MISSION

The ALS Society of BC is dedicated to providing direct support to ALS patients, along with their families and caregivers, to ensure the best quality of life possible while living with ALS. Through supporting research, we are committed to find the cause of, and cure of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

BACKGROUND

The ALS Society of BC was incorporated on December 17, 1981. It was founded by ALS patients, their family members and health care professionals, to meet the physical and emotional needs of people with ALS and their caregivers. Since its inception, the Society has helped many ALS patients and their families by providing information and support, including equipment.

What is ALS?

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (also known as ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease, or motor neuron disease) is a disease that gradually paralyzes people because the brain is no longer able to communicate with the muscles of the body that we are typically able to move at will. Over time, as the muscles of the body break down, someone living with ALS will lose the ability to walk, talk, eat, swallow, and eventually breathe.

ALS is not contagious. There are no effective treatments for ALS and no cure. Approximately 80 per cent of people with ALS die within two to five years of being diagnosed.

How ALS works in the body

Our brain is connected to our muscles through millions of specialized nerve cells, called motor neurons, which serve as our bodies' internal wiring and enable us to move our bodies as we choose. Motor neurons work in pairs: an upper motor neuron in the brain extends to the brainstem at the back of the neck or the spinal cord, and a lower motor neuron extends from the brainstem or spinal cord to the muscle. The brain sends a signal along these motor neurons telling a muscle to contract. This signal is an electrical impulse created by chemicals in our neurons.

In ALS, motor neurons gradually break down and die. This means that the brain can no longer communicate with the muscles of the body. As a result, the muscles become weak and eventually someone living with ALS will be unable to move them.

What are the types of ALS?

The most common form of ALS is called sporadic ALS, meaning the disease can affect anyone regardless of gender, ethnicity or age—although it most often affects people between the ages of 40 and 60.

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The other type of ALS is called familial ALS, which means it is capable of being passed from a parent to his or her child. Approximately 5 to 10% of ALS cases are familial.

Regardless of whether someone has sporadic or familial ALS, 30% of all people with the disease have a form referred to as Bulbar ALS. In the early stages of Bulbar ALS, the motor neurons in the corticobulbar area of the brainstem are the first to be affected. This means that the muscles of the head, face and neck become paralyzed before muscles in other parts of the body. [Learn more.](#)

ALS is often confused with Multiple Sclerosis and Muscular Dystrophy. [Learn about the differences.](#)

What Causes ALS?

There is no one thing that causes ALS. Rather, ALS is recognized as having multiple interacting causes that are likely based on changes in people's genes, and possibly contribution of environmental factors. A number of genes have been identified as playing a role in the development of ALS. Through research, we are learning more about ALS and the multiple factors that may trigger its development.

ALS Figures*

More than 200,000 people around the world are living with ALS.

About 3,000 Canadians are currently living with ALS.

- Each day in Canada 2-3 people die of ALS.
- The lifetime risk of developing ALS is 1 in 1,000.
- 80% of ALS sufferers die within 2-5 years.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN A VOLUNTEER

We see our volunteers as energetic, trustworthy, community-minded people, willing to contribute their time and efforts to enhance the communities in which we live, and to promote the cause of the ALS Society of BC & Yukon.

This Package highlights the volunteer positions available. Please read and discover how you can make an informed choice about where your skills can best be used. Your help will provide more hope.

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The ALS Society of BC & Yukon Believes:

- Volunteers are a vital human resource.
- Volunteers have a unique and essential contribution to make to all aspects of ALS work.
- That the profile of our volunteer force should reflect the profile of the community in order that the ALS Society of BC can benefit from a wide range of skills, experience, perspective, and have the greatest impact upon the community.
- Volunteers should be able to participate in the work of the ALS Society of BC solely on the basis of their ability to contribute. There should be no discrimination on any other basis.
- That in particular those currently affected by ALS should be enabled to contribute their knowledge and skills through volunteering.
- That volunteers and staff will flourish in an environment of:
 - Respect, listening, and openness to new ideas
 - Willingness to give and take criticism
 - Responsiveness to the changing environment

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS AVAILABLE

- Office Support Volunteer
- Support Group Facilitators (including Grievance Support Groups)
- Support Group Assistants
- Special Event Volunteers
- Fundraising Volunteers
- Public Awareness Volunteers (including ALS Display Booth & Speakers Bureau)
- Special Event Committee Member (help with the planning and execution of one of our many different fundraising/awareness events)

Our Events are generally held on weekends or in the evenings, and would be suitable for those with only the occasional day or evening, every few months to give, unless you are interested in joining one of the planning committees.

VOLUNTEER SIGN UP PROCEDURES

Please read the following volunteer sign up procedures:

1. Fill out an application form

Please fill out the attached volunteer application form and either mail, fax, or email it to the ALS Society of BC.

By Mail:

ALS Society of BC
Attention: Volunteer Coordinator
1233 – 13351 Commerce Parkway
Richmond, BC V6V 2X7

By Email: volunteer@alsbc.ca

By Fax: 604-278-4257

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Ensure that you indicate which areas are of interest to you. Also remember to include any special skills and qualifications you may have, as there may be a position for you in the future that has not been described in this package.

2. Informal Interview

After you have completed the application process, the Volunteer Coordinator will contact you for an informal interview that will take place either by phone or in person. This meeting will give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have regarding the organization or the volunteer positions.

TEAM ALS BC & Yukon

As the Yukon has not ALS Society, the ALS Society of BC extends our services to people living in the Yukon. TEAM ALS BC & Yukon was launched at the Volunteer Conference held in November 2005. To increase the visibility of ALS volunteers, a logo and vest were designed. Local volunteer coordinators were asked to log hours volunteered from this point forward and when a volunteer reaches 50 hours; they were asked to notify the provincial office. Arrangements are made to present the volunteer with a TEAM ALS BC & Yukon Vest.

AND IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD THE TIME...

The ALS Society still needs you. Become a supporter; talk about ALS and our organization to your friends and associates, recruit a new volunteer or attend our special events. Likewise, your financial support can help make a world of difference by allowing our patients and their families to receive the care they need. With your support we can make a difference.

THANK YOU

The ALS Society of BC could not function without the help of many individuals, generously volunteering their time and effort. Your involvement means so much to all of us who work in the ALS community. To our patients and families in BC, it means a great deal more. We want to thank you for thinking of The ALS Society and for contributing to our community.

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The ALS Society of BC Philosophy of Volunteer Involvement is:

Built on volunteerism, the ALS Society of British Columbia & Yukon recognizes and affirms the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the organization as a vital component to achieving its mission: to help persons living with ALS and their families manage the effects of the disease and to raise funds for ALS research. The ALS Society of British Columbia & Yukon encourages the participation of all people regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status age, religious beliefs, location or health in contributing to and building their community and the ALS Society through the act of volunteering. The ALS Society is committed to supporting and nurturing volunteerism by providing guidance, resources and recognition to all volunteers in mutually beneficial relationship.

Our Commitment to Volunteerism

The ALS Society of BC & Yukon recognizes that volunteers are the backbone of our organization. We recognize that volunteers are an integral part of our team. It is the partnership between staff and volunteers that enables the Society to realize its mission:

To provide direct support to ALS patients, along with their families and caregivers, to ensure the best quality of life possible while living with ALS.

Through supporting research, we are committed to find the cause of, and cure for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

The ALS Society of BC will realize this vision through:

- A positive and enthusiastic attitude to volunteering throughout our Society, and development of a clear vision of our goal for the volunteer program.
- Understanding the role of volunteering in our Society.
- Connecting volunteers with positions that integrate their skills, and strengths with the needs of the ALS Society of BC & the Yukon.
- Consulting with volunteers and staff when planning assignments.
- Providing a variety of volunteer opportunities that offer growth and challenge for the volunteer.
- Advocating training and support of our staff and volunteers, that is both comprehensive and consistent.
- Demonstrating respect for diversity, inclusiveness, confidentiality, and trust, for all concerned.

ALS Society of BC Undertakings

The ALS Society of BC & Yukon recognizes the value for the volunteer program to be managed by a knowledgeable coordinator of Volunteers. The Society recognizes the complexities involved in working with volunteers. It therefore undertakes to ensure that all staff are required to embrace working with volunteers as a condition of their employment and where appropriate, are trained to do so.

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It also undertakes to adopt best practices in the recruitment, selection, orientation, program development, ongoing support, evaluation, and recognition of volunteers.

In addition, the Society undertakes:

- To match the skills, experience, and aspirations of volunteers to their work in the Society
- To provide appropriate support for volunteers
- To establish mechanisms to gain constructive feedback from volunteers
- To establish and maintain clear, accessible channels of communication
- To ensure that volunteers are not out-of-pocket as a result of working for the Society.

All volunteers of the ALS Society of BC acknowledge agreement with these beliefs and values, by accepting a volunteer position.

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Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement

In recognition of the important role that volunteers play throughout the organization, and to highlight the International Year of Volunteers (2001), the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement has been adopted and considered by the ALS Society of BC & Yukon as an integral part of operational practice, to be made known to every employee and volunteer, and to be made readily available to every staff member and volunteer for consistent reference and consultation.

Values for Volunteer Involvement

- Volunteer involvement is vital to a just and democratic society.
 - It fosters civic responsibility, participation and interaction
- Volunteer involvement strengthens communities.
 - It promotes change and development by identifying and responding to community needs
- Volunteer involvement mutually benefits both the volunteer and the organization.
 - It increases the capacity of organizations to accomplish their goals, and provides volunteers with opportunities to develop and contribute
- Volunteer involvement is based on relationships.
 - Volunteers are expected to act with integrity and be respectful and responsive to others with whom they interact

Guiding Principles For Volunteer Involvement

- Voluntary organizations recognize that volunteers are a vital human resource and will commit to the appropriate infrastructure to support volunteers.
 - The organization's practices insure effective volunteer involvement
 - The organization commits to providing a safe and supportive environment for volunteers
- Volunteers make a commitment and are accountable to the organization.
 - Volunteers will act with respect for beneficiaries and community
 - Volunteers will act responsibly and with integrity

Organization Standards for Volunteer Involvement

- The boards of directors and senior management acknowledge and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's purpose or mission.
- Policies and procedures are adopted by the organization to provide a framework that defines and supports the involvement of volunteers.
- A qualified person is designated to be responsible for the volunteer program.
- A clearly communicated screening process is consistently applied.
- Volunteer assignments address the purpose of the organization and involve volunteers in meaningful ways – reflecting their various abilities, needs and backgrounds.
- Volunteer recruitment and selection reaches out to diverse sources of volunteers.
- Volunteers receive an orientation to the organization, its policies and procedures, and receive training for their volunteer assignment.
- Volunteers receive appropriate levels of supervision according to their task and are given regular opportunities to receive and give feedback.
- Volunteers are welcomed and treated as valuable and integral members of the organization's human resources.
- The contributions of volunteers are regularly acknowledged with formal and informal recognition methods.