

ACS CARES™: A Navigation Support Program



Dear Student:

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is proud to announce our newest cancer navigation support program, ACS CARES™ (Community Access to Resources, Education, and Support). This program is a multi-channel approach that leverages digital, telephonic, and in-person support to provide direct, individualized, non-clinical assistance to improve the cancer experience. The in-person support component, led by ACS CARES Clinic Volunteers, is being piloted at eleven health systems across the country, with an additional six sites in 2025. Our goal is to recruit college/graduate students at these pilot sites to provide people with cancer and caregivers non-clinical navigation support throughout the cancer journey.

This packet contains information for your consideration as you decide whether to apply to be an ACS CARES Clinic Volunteer. Please carefully review this information. Should you have questions or need additional information send an email to ACSCARES@cancer.org.

Application submissions are on a rolling timeline with final candidate selections to be made in July 2025.

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Thank you for your consideration and for the impact you're making for those affected by cancer!

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ACS CARES Clinic Volunteers



Program Overview

For nearly 30 years, ACS has viewed patient navigation as a critical strategy in reducing health disparities across the cancer continuum, with demonstrated effectiveness at removing barriers and increasing access to care through the provision of coordinated, patient-centered support.

With over 1.9M people diagnosed with cancer annually, the goal of the American Cancer Society Navigation Support Program is to provide people with cancer and caregivers direct, individualized, in-person non-clinical navigation assistance that delivers timely information to reduce distress, resources to mitigate barriers to care, and emotional support to improve the cancer experience.

ACS is looking to recruit college/graduate students to become ACS CARES Clinic Volunteers at nearby participating health systems to provide people with cancer and caregivers non-clinical navigation support throughout the cancer journey. ACS will provide the Clinic Volunteers with support (including continuing education and technical assistance), and data collection tools to maximize project outcomes.

ACS CARES Clinic Volunteer Role

ACS CARES Clinic Volunteers are college/graduate students who are ACS-trained to provide people with cancer and caregivers direct, individualized, non-clinical navigation assistance throughout the cancer journey. These volunteers will be placed at health systems and will:

- Meet with patients and/or caregivers while they are waiting for their appointment or during chemotherapy infusions
- Utilize the validated NCCN-based ACS social determinants of health needs assessment and distress screening tool to identify and document concerns and barriers to care in a secure platform.
- Assist patients and/or caregivers draft questions to discuss with their provider
- Take notes for patients during clinic appointments
- Conduct follow-up calls to assist patients and/or caregivers in accessing ACS and health care system information and resources
- Does NOT include accessing or documenting in the health care system EMR

Volunteer Benefits

- Time spent will count towards clinical hours
- Course credit may be available (to be determined on a case-by-case basis)
- Receive specialized navigation support training, including patient privacy, how to function in the health care setting, and coordinating with professional navigators
- Have dedicated ACS staff members to field questions and provide support

Volunteer Requirements

- One year commitment is required (academic school year)
- Must be available for one 4-hour shift per week
- Additional time commitment should be allotted for volunteer meetings and continued training/education
- Ages 18 and up
- Actively enrolled as a student at the partnering college/university
- Comfortable using technology
- Access to a computer with reliable internet access
- Pass background check
- Complete application, interview, and required ACS training plus fulfill continued learning requirements throughout volunteer term
- Must comply with hospital-based training and health requirements (i.e., on-site training, vaccination requirements, etc.)

Training

ACS CARES Clinic Volunteers will work directly with patients, caregivers, and providers, and thus are in close contact with patient health information. Extensive training will be provided to ensure you feel comfortable and prepared to perform this role. The self-paced training curriculum is to be completed virtually over the summer prior to beginning in the clinic. There will also be one full day of in-person training which will likely occur during syllabus week. Continuing education will be provided during division meetings throughout the semester.

How to Apply

1. Visit the [ACS Volunteer Community page](#) and select one of the four pilot sites you are interested in applying for.
2. You will be prompted to complete a Volunteer Community profile.
3. After creating your profile, you will be able to access the application.
4. Submit your application as soon as possible.
5. Qualified applicants will be invited to participate in virtual interviews.

Please note: The application evaluation and interview process is on a rolling timeline.

Leadership Positions

Leadership opportunities are available for experienced volunteers. These positions will work closely with ACS CARES staff to recruit, select, and manage new clinic volunteers, and facilitate communication with health care providers to expand the ACS CARES program to new clinic locations. Applications for these leadership positions will open in the spring of 2026.

Questions? Email ACSCARES@cancer.org.

ACS CARES Timeline



2024–2025 Recruitment Timeline



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About ACS CARES

Who can use ACS CARES?

Due to the location of our partner services (e.g., transportation, lodging, etc.), the digital app, available in both English and Spanish, is designed for patients and caregivers and community volunteers living in the U.S. or its territories. The ACS CARES app is available on Google Play and the App Store.

Patients and caregivers receiving care at partnering health care systems will have access to in-person, Clinic Volunteers.

How does a patient or caregiver take part in ACS CARES if they don't have a smartphone or access to the app? Can they access the information through a web browser?

In addition to being able to speak with trained ACS team members over the phone through our National Cancer Information Center (NCIC), ACS CARES Clinic Volunteers embedded in oncology clinics will be able to support individuals without digital access or who prefer not to use apps. The app is also designed such that a caregiver or other support individual who feels more comfortable or has digital access can use the app on behalf of the patient or primary caregiver. The app will be extended to a web-based version in a later phase.

How is ACS CARES™ different than navigation support offered by health care systems and providers?

ACS CARES provides non-clinical navigation support by addressing patients' social needs and barriers to care (transportation, lodging, food security, emotional health, financial health, dependent support, and more). This program complements the clinical navigation support that health care systems provide, allowing nurse navigators to leverage their oncology expertise and focus on clinical needs.