



Q & A

BSP

Free Clinic

Frequently Asked Questions

about volunteering at the BSP Free Clinic



The BSP Free Clinic is dedicated to providing free quality secondary (specialty) healthcare to the uninsured and medically underserved in our community. Patients are referred to the BSP Free Clinic by healthcare providers from all over south central Wisconsin.

Lack of access to primary care is only the first of many problems faced by the medically underserved. In the long run, lack of preventive and primary care can lead to more serious health complications requiring specialty care—something that is often beyond the reach of the uninsured.

Founded in 2001 as The Benevolent Specialists Project (BSP), the BSP Free Clinic has served the community for 10 years. Since opening its doors, the clinic has provided specialty care to more than 10,000 patients.

Frequently Asked Questions *about volunteering at the BSP Free Clinic*

Clinical FAQs

Am I limited to what tests, studies, or procedures I can order for patients whom I see at the BSP Free Clinic?

As a BSP Free Clinic clinician you are able to perform diagnostic workups comparable to what you can do in your own office thanks to the generosity of St. Mary's, Meriter, and UW hospitals; Turville Bay MRI Center; and Dean, UW, and Meriter clinics.

Would I have resources at the BSP Free Clinic similar in quantity and quality to that of my regular practice, or would I need to be more "clinically creative" due to less available means?

The BSP Free Clinic has examination rooms as well as nursing and receptionist support similar to that of your regular practice. Depending on the procedure, you might not have the same level of nursing support as in your own office. BSP Free Clinic physicians dictate their notes with an average turnaround time of one week.

How much time can I spend with a patient whom I might see at the BSP Free Clinic? Would I be limited to prescribed time blocks similar to my regular practice?

Your schedule is totally your own. One of the many joys of volunteering at the BSP Free Clinic is the opportunity to spend more time with your patients than you typically can within the time constraints of your regular practice.

Would patients I see at the BSP Free Clinic have access to the drugs I might want to prescribe for their condition(s)?

The cost of medications remains an enormous barrier for the uninsured poor, and finding an affordable medical regimen can sometimes challenge you as a BSP Free Clinic physician. The "\$4" programs through Wal-Mart, Target, Walgreens, etc. are very helpful. In addition, we have been successful in obtaining some of the more expensive medications on a compassionate use basis, an example being Humira®. There are other sources of free medication, such as free primary care clinics and St. Vincent de Paul.

Insurance & Licensure FAQs

As a practicing clinician, would I need other insurance beyond my present malpractice policy to see patients at the BSP Free Clinic?

Practicing clinicians with their own malpractice insurance must check with their risk managers to ensure that they are covered for volunteer work performed at the BSP Free Clinic. If this is not the case, we will facilitate obtaining such coverage at no cost to you through the State of Wisconsin. Besides physicians, eligible clinicians for such insurance include:

- physician assistants
- dentists
- dental hygienists
- registered nurses
- practical nurses
- nurse practitioners
- nurse-midwives
- optometrists
- pharmacists
- podiatrists
- physical therapists
- chiropractors

As a fully-retired physician, would I have to maintain my malpractice insurance to see patients at the BSP Free Clinic?

Absolutely not. We will facilitate your obtaining malpractice insurance at no cost to you through the State of Wisconsin for your volunteer activities at the BSP Free Clinic.

Would I face unique liability issues for caring for patients at the BSP Free Clinic?

Patients seeking help from volunteer clinicians are typically not litigious. According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice, there has been only one malpractice suit brought against a volunteer clinician in Wisconsin in the entire history of the State's providing for volunteer coverage.


The state budget bill passed in June of 2011 provides that any in-office or outpatient procedure permitted under your professional license and performed by you as a volunteer for the BSP Free Clinic is covered, so long as you have the necessary training, experience, equipment, and facilities to provide such care. Specified clinicians are:

- physicians
- physician assistants
- dentists
- dental hygienists
- registered nurses
- practical nurses
- nurse practitioners
- nurse-midwives
- optometrists
- pharmacists
- podiatrists
- physical therapists
- chiropractors

Please note the State of Wisconsin also covers BSP Free Clinic clinicians for diagnostic evaluations and prescribing medication.

As a retired physician, would I have to maintain my medical license to see patients at the BSP Free Clinic?

Yes. All BSP Free Clinic clinicians must have active licensure for the State of Wisconsin. Keep in mind, as a clinician, should your license to practice expire for more than six months, it is unlikely you can renew it without additional classroom training specified by the State of Wisconsin. Similar restrictions exist for other clinicians, e.g., physician assistants, nurses, etc.



"Thank you so much for providing such a wonderful service to the community! I recently saw a doctor about my migraine auras and your clinic was able to refer me for an MRI at no charge. I am a young person without health coverage and I feel very fortunate to have been provided with care and support. My deepest thanks."

Time Commitment FAQs

What is the minimum amount of time for which I can volunteer at the BSP Free Clinic?

There is no minimum requirement. However, we encourage a half-day per month commitment. Many retired clinicians are “snowbirds” and volunteer at the BSP Free Clinic from spring through fall. Sixty percent of our present volunteers are actively practicing. This combination enables us to have excellent coverage throughout the year.

If I am an active salaried clinician would I need to “make up” time that I volunteer at the BSP Free Clinic with my employer at my full-time position?

This has generally not been the case, but you should check with your employer.

More than thirty-four physicians (retired and practicing) volunteer their specialty services to the BSP Free Clinic. In addition, the clinic is generously staffed by dedicated volunteer nurses, medical transcriptionists, interpreters, and support personnel.

Who Can Volunteer?

Do I have to be a Dean clinician to volunteer at the BSP Free Clinic?

Absolutely not. One of the advantages of volunteering at the BSP Free Clinic is the opportunity to meet other clinicians. At present, clinicians from Dean, Meriter Medical Group, and UW Medical Foundation are volunteers, along with independent practitioners.

What specific kinds of volunteer specialists and sub-specialists does the BSP Free Clinic need?

Volunteer needs change for the clinic.

Physicians should contact our medical director:

*Thomas Hirsch, MD
Phone: (608) 245-1938
Email: thirsc3402@gmail.com*

All other volunteers should contact our clinic manager:

*Kathy Williams
Phone: (608) 827-2308
Email: Kathleen.Williams@deancare.com*

Can only physicians volunteer for the BSP Free Clinic?

Besides physician specialists, many types of clinicians volunteer at the BSP Free Clinic, including but not limited to physician assistants, nurse practitioners, podiatrists, optometrists, psychologists, and physical therapists.



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