For heart patients and families, the month of February designated as American Heart Month may be the most important health-related event of the year. Do something special for someone who has made a difference in your life during this month of heart celebrations. Regardless of how you celebrate, have a happy heart month.

From inquiries received, this month might also be the most widely used time for Accredited Visitors Accreditation and particularly the Annual Reaccreditation Sessions. Thanks to each Accredited Visitor for becoming involved because you are Mended Hearts' most important resource for inspiring hope in heart patients. The visiting programs of Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts provide an organized way to provide quality support and encouragement to heart patients and their families by visits from trained volunteers who are members of the Mended Hearts organization. Organized is the key word and is why the annual reaccreditation is needed. All of our hospitals undergo a yearly Joint Commission Review, so it's fair to say that this is the Mended Hearts version of a similar joint commission review.

Therefore, every Mended Hearts Accredited Visitor must be reaccredited each year. The Visiting Chairman should strive to make the sessions informative. Obtaining a speaker from outside the chapter often stimulates the Accredited Visitors' interest and thus attendance. When you start the process, regardless of the format, it is always a good idea to start with an ice breaker.

As an example, have each participant state their name, their heart history and whatever else they would like to share. Let participants know that this is the last time they will give this level of detail on their own history. During visits, it is important to focus more on the patient and keep it brief when relating the Accredited Visitor's own heart history. Remind accredited Visitors that it is helpful when sharing about their own experience to say "In my case..." to avoid the appearance of giving medical advice.

Two formats may be used to complete the reaccreditation process, especially if a visitor is unable to attend the session. The first is to have the Accredited Visitor complete the online training session entitled "Diversity Awareness" and/or the "Email Support" section. The disadvantage of this method is that the benefits of team building with other visitors is missing.
The second format that the Visiting Chairman might want to use may be any combination of a format that offers ideas for reaccrediting sessions. The importance of using this format is getting all the Accredited Visitors together to exchange ideas. This helps in team building because in some cases where chapters have many Accredited Visitors, they may have few opportunities to see each other and work as a team. Remember, these are merely suggestions shared by other Visiting Chairs. Chapter Visiting Chairs may opt to have an hour session prior to the chapter meeting and invite an interventional cardiologist to speak to the entire chapter for their regular program. An interventional cardiologist is an excellent choice because he/she can share information on some of the more recent methods of diagnosing and treating cardiovascular disease such as the TAVR procedure or the mitral valve clip.

Rap Session Format - delegate a topic of interest for group discussion

♥ Talking to the caregiver
♥ Visiting in the surgery waiting room
♥ Ways to get the patient or caregiver to talk (practice open ended questions)

Ways to get the Mended Hearts name out in the hospital

The items in red must be presented.

Visiting Protocol
Rules of Conduct
The Mended Hearts, Inc. Adapted Universal Precautions
Privacy Considerations and HIPAA

When the process is finished, the Visiting Chair will collect the confidential statements from each visitor and issue new Accredited Visitor cards. Accredited Visitor cards, name tags and business cards are found on the website under Officer Portal and Visitor Training Resources.

The Visiting Chair will also ensure that the reaccreditation date for each visitor has been updated in the member profile. As a reminder, it is the responsibility of each chapter's designee to update this information. Log on to officer portal, select member records, click member name and scroll down to accreditation and add necessary information.

Unauthorized Visiting?
Only fully trained Accredited Visitors may represent Mended Hearts and only with proper authorization. Unauthorized visiting, whatever the circumstances, is a serious matter and must never be permitted. It requires immediate action on the part of a chapter, and steps must be taken to prevent it.

Visiting vs Visitation?
Just as a reminder, visiting is what Mended Hearts Accredited Visitors do with heart patients and families in the hospital, by telephone or by internet.

Visitation is the custom of visiting the mourning family of a deceased person. In all situations involving visits to heart patients, Mended Hearts members should use the words visit or visiting.

What information can be taken from the hospital?
Visitors must fill out the chapter visiting form. The only information to be taken from the hospital is the name of the patient, address, phone and email address **after obtaining the patient's permission**.

Heartfelt Regards,

Dr. Fredonia B. Williams  
National Visiting Chair  
Southern Assistant Regional Director

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**Future Questions/Topics**

**We want to hear from you!**  
Other challenging questions for this newsletter may be emailed to fredoniabw@att.net.

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