

Preparing Artists

Whether artists do or don't have personal experience with healthcare, take the time to prepare to perform in the environment. There are two primary concerns in this area:

- 1) making sure that the artists understand the necessary guidelines and precautions that will protect them and the patients; and
- 2) protecting the artists from undue emotional stress, and making sure that the experience will be as emotionally and spiritually enriching for them as possible.

We recommend phone conversations and, if possible, that you schedule a mealtime when the presenter and healthcare partners can meet with the artists to talk about the program and to learn about the artist's experience related to healthcare and to talk with them about what they can expect in the hospital. If this time is not available, it is essential that artists arrive at the hospital with enough advance time for this discussion to take place. Take time to listen to their experiences and to ask what they expect from the experience. Tell them about the areas they will be going to, the patients they will see, and what those patients are going through. Also let them know about any procedures they will need to follow related to safety and infection control.

Please note: Hospitals are intense places, and people often have unexpected responses to them. Most people will be fine, but some may have unexpected responses to the environment. Hospitals can trigger conscious or even sub-conscious memories or fears that can be challenging to integrate. For this reason, it is important to watch artists and other visitors who may come along with them very closely. It is not uncommon for people to go into shock, to have a subtle "fainting" response, or to fully faint in the hospital - even when they are sure that they feel totally comfortable going into the hospital. If an artist's gaze or focus changes or if they become quiet or dazed, take them aside and if you are unsure of how they are doing, ask a nurse for help in assessing their condition.