

Photographer Tips and Tricks

Establishing a Strong Local Team

Please note: This article was written based on feedback from our Volunteers and Area Coordinators on how to create and support a successful team of NILMDTS photographers. If you are not an Area Coordinator please use these tips to help administer calls from hospitals and to help the entire team of photographers in your area.

By: Joni Clark, MAC Member, Area Coordinator



Whether you are in a high volume area, or only get a few calls a year, it is important to keep in touch with the volunteers in your area, and for them to feel a part of the group.

Here are a few easy things to do to help the members of the group feel welcome and needed:

When you place a call to your team of Photographers for help with a session:

- Ask if they are in the middle of doing something with family, or business.
- Tell them it's OK if they can't go.
- Find out how many sessions they are backlogged on.
- Rotate the photographers taking calls if you can, some are more available than others.
- Offer to find another photographer who will meet them at the hospital to assist them.
- Shadowing is a great way to learn the ropes, meet the hospital personnel, and build relationships within the group.

Contact everyone on a semi-regular basis:

- Call or email to chat occasionally *without* asking them to go on a session.
- Send them an e-card thanking them for all they have done.
- Send them a "Just thinking of you" card.
- Keep in touch via email, ask for dates they won't be available.
- Have a group get-together, just for fun. Invite spouses and your contacts at the hospitals. Our contacts include social workers, chaplains, and nursing staff. If you don't have an Area Coordinator, look up the people who are nearest to you and make plans to meet. Most libraries have a meeting area, but a coffee shop or the park is more fun!

Every month I send an updated call list to the hospital of who is available, who is not, and I also include the information of what to do if no one can come. I send it to all contacts I have at each hospital, including chaplains, social workers, and nursing staff.

Realizing we can't always be there, and giving the hospital personnel the tools to handle the job when we can't get there has helped strengthen the program. NILMDTS has provided the "Posing Guide for Hospitals." It can be found on the website in the Photographers section under "Forms &

Documents." I have downloaded it and when we can't cover a session, I send it via email to the nurse or contact person, along with instructions of how to get the images and consent form to me, so we can still give the parents the gift of beautiful portrait work. You can also print off several copies and put them in a binder to leave at the hospital for their reference if a photographer is not available.

Building a strong group takes a little time and effort, but it will really pay off in the long run.

Note: Even if you are not an Area Coordinator, you can still engage and initiate team-building activities such as these! Don't be shy! Feel free to connect with other NILMDTS photographers in your area. It takes each and every one of you to make the team strong and cohesive. We appreciate all of you for all that you do for NILMDTS and the families you serve.