



Full Version 2. Choose Your Patient Advocate

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In Manitoba, you have the right to get help from a trusted friend or family member when you receive healthcare services. A helper is called a patient advocate. Choose your advocate before you need one.

What is a patient advocate?

A patient advocate is someone you trust to help you through the healthcare process. A patient advocate can be a spouse, adult child, brother/sister, or a willing friend.

Why do you need a patient advocate?

A patient advocate is most helpful if you:

- Do not have the energy, or are too ill, to speak for yourself
- Need someone to ask questions and take notes at visits or during tests
- Are afraid to speak up to those who have medical training
- Need support for emotional, cultural or other reasons
- Speak a different language and English is an additional language

How do you choose your patient advocate?

Choose a person:

- You trust
- You can talk with openly and honestly
- You know is confident and polite
- You know will support you and your healthcare wishes

What can your patient advocate do?

With your consent this person can:

- Speak up about your concerns to healthcare staff
- Arrange medical appointments
- Attend medical appointments, tests and treatments with you
- Be present when a doctor or provider speaks with you
- Take notes
- Review your healthcare provider's handwritten information to be sure you can read and understand it
- Ask questions about your healthcare and test results
- Access your personal health information
- Track your medications
- Be a second set of eyes and ears during your patient journey
- Get information on your behalf to support your healthcare decisions
- Communicate your needs and requests
- Point out errors or harmful situations that may affect your safety
- Be the link between you, your healthcare team and your family

What are some tips for working with your patient advocate?

- Make a list of what you want your advocate to do for you
- Talk with your advocate to see if she or he is willing to do these tasks
- Fill in the MIPS “My Patient Advocate Agreement” Go to safetoask.ca/s.a.f.e.-toolkit/patient_advocate_agreement
- Choose a second advocate if you wish to divide up the tasks
- Have your advocates meet and decide what you want each of them to do
- Give your advocate a copy of the completed advocate agreement
- Give your advocate the names and phone numbers of your healthcare providers, hospital, pharmacy and others to call in an emergency
- Give a phone or e-mail list to your advocate to keep family and friends up-to-date

What do you do once you choose a patient advocate?

- Tell your family and friends what your advocate will be doing for you
- Have family members, friends and healthcare providers meet your advocate
- Make the advocate your ‘main contact’ to avoid confusion or misunderstandings. One main contact for providers saves time. See *Know Your Health Plan*.

Are there advocate services in healthcare facilities?

Social workers, nurses and chaplains sometimes act as advocates. Larger hospitals have patient representatives who can ‘cut’ through the red tape in their facilities. They also give advice to patients when concerns arise.

- Ask if a staff advocate or patient representative is available
- If yes, meet with this person to see how she or he can help
- Write this person’s name and phone number in your notes
- Here are more tips on finding advocate services
mips.ca/assets/tips-for-finding-patient-advocate-in-manitoba

What if you are asked to be a patient advocate for someone?

Ask yourself:

- Will I have the time and energy to help this patient?
- Will I be able to speak up if problems occur?
- Will I act in the best interests of the patient?
- Will I support the patient’s healthcare wishes?
- Is a second advocate needed?

What access does your patient advocate have to your medical records?

Under the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA):

- Manitoba law requires patients, who are of sound mind, to give written consent for someone else to view their medical records (personal health information). There are exceptions. Please refer to sections 60 (1) and (2) of PHIA for more detail.
- You must tell healthcare staff who your patient advocate is and what you have given consent for this person to do on your behalf. See *Access Your Medical Records*.

To learn more, go to the Manitoba Health website www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia

How do you put your healthcare wishes in writing?

Two documents can avoid confusion for others.

- My Patient Advocate Agreement:
 - Name the person(s) who will be your advocate(s)
 - Give permission to your patient advocate by completing the agreement
 - Give a copy to your healthcare providers
 - Give a copy to your advocate(s)
- Health Care Directive:
 - Complete a Health Care Directive or Living Will (Health Care Directives Act)
 - State the amount and type of healthcare you want, if you become unable to speak for yourself
 - Give the person named the power to make your medical decisions, if you can't do this for yourself
 - Call 204-945-6565 in Winnipeg or toll-free 1-800-665-6565 for a copy of a Health Care Directive or go to <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/livingwill.html>
 - You may want your lawyer to review this document with you

What is the difference between patient advocate and healthcare proxy?

- A patient advocate is someone who talks with you, supports you, and acts on your behalf according to your instructions
- A healthcare proxy is someone who:
 - Acts for you if you are not able to make decisions and speak for yourself
 - You choose and name in your Health Care Directive (Living Will)
 - Is legally appointed
- The patient advocate and the healthcare proxy may be the same person.

Resources

Canadian Resources

- Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) websites www.safetoask.ca and www.mips.ca.
- *Health Care Directive: “The Living Will”*. <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/livingwill.html>.
- *The Personal Health Information Act (PHIA)*. www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html or call Manitoba Health at 788-6612 in Winnipeg or toll-free at 1-800-392-1207. Printed copies are available from: Statutory Publications, 200 Vaughan St., Winnipeg, MB R3C 1T5, Phone: 204-945-3101.
- Manitoba Health. www.gov.mb.ca/health/ or call 1-866-626-4862.
- *Finding Your Voice: Our Journey with Cancer through the Health Care System*. Dawn M. White. Winnipeg, MB: Friesens; 2009.
- *Navigating Canada’s Health Care: A User Guide to Getting the Care You Need*. Michael Decter and Francesca Grosso. Penguin Canada; 2008.

Websites and Videos

- *Patient / Survivor Advocacy*. Pulse America (US). www.pulseamerica.org/Advocacy.htm

Books

- *100 Questions and Answers about Communicating with your Healthcare Provider*. John A. King and Cynthia R. King. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett; 2009.
- *Family Centered Patient Advocacy: A Training Manual*. Ilene Corina and Eve Shapiro (Editors). Wantagh, NY: Pulse of New York; 2007.
<http://pulseofny.org/resources/FCPAP%2010%2029%20advocate.pdf>
- *Protect Yourself in the Hospital: Insider Tips for Avoiding Hospital Mistakes for Yourself or Someone you Love*. Thomas A. Sharon. Chicago: Contemporary Books; 2004.
- *Patient Advocacy for Health Care Quality. Strategies for Achieving Patient-Centered Care*. Jo Ann L. Earp, Elizabeth A. French, Melissa Gilkey. Jones and Bartlett; 2007.