

Tips for Finding a Patient Advocate

The healthcare system is filled with caring professional people, however it can be a complex, confusing, stressful, and downright scary place for patients and their families. It is important that you take an active interest and role in your healthcare and what is going on around you. Advocate for the things that are important to you. In some cases though, you may need an advocate to support you because;

- You have trouble expressing your feelings, opinions, and expectations for your care.
- You may be afraid to speak out, expressing concerns.
- You may have difficulty understanding what is happening to you in a healthcare setting.
- You may be too ill to speak up for yourself.

These situations may put you at a possible disadvantage for getting the best care you need.

When you need additional support, you can choose anyone you want to be your patient advocate -- a spouse, a child, a sibling, or a willing friend. The only qualification they must have is an ability to speak up on behalf of your wishes, and to help you navigate the healthcare system. They cannot make their own decisions about your healthcare. A patient advocate talks with you, supports you, and acts on your behalf with your input. In selecting a patient advocate, choose;

- A person you trust, someone you can talk with openly and honestly.
- Someone who can keep your information completely confidential.
- A person you know is confident, polite and respectful of others.
- Someone you know will support you and your healthcare wishes.

The [*My Patient Advocate Agreement*](#) is a form that can help you and your advocate determine how they can best provide you the additional support that you may need.

You can find additional information on Choosing an Advocate, and advocating for yourself and others, in our [*Safe Advocacy For Everyone \(S.A.F.E.\) Toolkit*](#) at safetoask.ca.

If you do not have someone who can be an advocate for you, here are a few potential options in the Winnipeg/Manitoba area*:

**These organizations have not been evaluated nor endorsed by the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety. Some of these services may be provided at a cost.*

Health Buddies - Winnipeg

Health Buddies is a group of volunteers with available time, privilege, empathy & system knowledge who accompany people to health appointments & emergency rooms in Winnipeg.

Contact: healthbuddieswpg@gmail.com

Facebook and Instagram: [@healthbuddieswpg](#)



Aboriginal Health Services Patient Advocate

Supports the interests, needs and rights of Aboriginal patients in hospital. When you or your family member are receiving health care in the Winnipeg Health Region and feel you are not receiving the care or treatment you are entitled to, or disagree with your health-care provider.

Contact: 1-877-940-8880

Cancer Patient Representative

The mandate of the Patient Representative's role is to act as a liaison between patients, their families and CancerCare Manitoba staff. This confidential service strives to address concerns, answer inquiries and act on suggestions in a respectful, compassionate and timely manner.

The Patient Representative is available for patients, families and support people at all CancerCare Manitoba sites.

Contact: (204) 787-2065 patient_representative@cancercare.mb.ca

MacCharles Unit, 675 McDermot Ave.

Regional Health Authorities in Manitoba – Patient Safety Coordinators

These positions are situated in each region of Manitoba and may be aware of advocates in their respective region.

WRHA (includes Churchill)	Phone: 204- 926-7825 Email: ClientRelations@wrha.mb.ca
Northern RHA Phone: 1-888-340-6742 patientexperience@nrha.ca	Interlake-Eastern RHA: Phone: 1-888-488-2299
Southern Health: Phone: 1-800-742-6509	Prairie Mountain Health: Phone: 1-800-735-6569 (in Brandon) and 1-877-279-7858 (outside Brandon)

Local Listings

Most patient advocates that are operating are doing so independently, so they may advertise in their own local areas, you can try local phone listings or by searching local community forums or advertising.

AdvoConnection

A Directory of Private, Independent, Professional Patient or Health Advocates and Navigators. These advocates offer support and/or navigation through the healthcare systems you deal with to bring you the best care you can get. Their services may include (but is not limited to): Accompanying you to appointments, help understand treatment options, help make difficult decisions, help with pain management techniques, offer assistance in the event of a medical error, caregiver support, healthcare proxy, and more.

Contact: advoconnection.com



Counselors

When your life changes because of a health problem, it can be a painful, emotional and exhausting experience. Counseling is one thing you can do for yourself to help deal with the emotions and concerns that you face as a patient dealing with difficult situations. Counselors can help prepare you for what to expect and help you access other resources and supports, and help you sort out which ones are likely to be most helpful to you. Some counselors are also equipped to become your advocate and act as a liaison between you and your medical team to better manage your medical situation as a whole.