

Are You Thinking about Becoming a Patient or Family Advisor?

Patient & family advisors play a unique role in helping Alberta Health Services (AHS) to improve the quality and safety of health services. There are many advisor roles in AHS. The most common are members of advisory committees, boards or councils, document reviewers, participants/speakers at conferences and focus groups.

Why should I Consider Being a Patient or Family Advisor?

- A chance to improve the quality and safety of health care services for you & your family
- The opportunity to be a part of meaningful change and make a contribution
- Increase your ability to understand and share information with other patients & families about the health system & policies of health care
- The opportunity to network with staff, providers and leaders and other advisors.
- Expand your knowledge & skills about patient and family centred care and your health care system

Why Does AHS want you to be a Patient or Family Advisor?

- To improve the quality and safety of health care
- Increase the knowledge and skills of leaders and staff about the importance of the experience of patients & families
- Increase our ability to do our jobs better when planning services
- Give a fresh perspective on problems and create innovative solutions

What can Patient and Family Advisors Do?

- Participate on long term committees or short term working groups
- Attend focus groups or offer their patient experience story
- Speak at conferences and health care events
- Give feedback about facilities and communications planning
- Be members of councils and review teams
- Help educate others by talking about their health care experiences as they relate to improving patient and family centred care
- Become a patient and community engagement researcher

Examples of ways AHS currently partners with patients and families:

- Cancer care patient councils
- Ethics Committees
- Emergency room advisors
- Site based Citizens' Advisory teams
- Steering Committees
- Supportive family volunteer programs
- Child and Youth Advisory Councils
- Strategic Clinical Networks

Determine if the Advisory Role is a Good Fit for You!

Ask these questions to help you determine whether the potential advisory role will be *meaningful for you* and *what you would be committing to*.

About The Project

- Why include patient & family advisors on this project?
- What are the goals of this project?
- How will my input and feedback be communicated to others and utilized by the decision-maker(s)?
- How will information about the project be shared with me (eg: by email, fax or telephone)?
- How long will I be engaged in this project?
- How many other patients and/or family members will be involved?
- How much time will I be committing to this project monthly?
- Will I be reimbursed for my travel, parking, child care costs? What other costs might I incur and will I be reimbursed for them?
- Where will the meetings be? What time will meetings be at?

About The Role

- What skills, background, experiences, or perspectives would you like the advisor to have? What are your goals in engaging me specifically?
- What will my role be? What will my responsibilities be?

About Support for the Position

- Who will be my key contact person at AHS for this engagement project?
- Who will I go to with questions and for support?
- Who else is involved in the project?
- How will you prepare other project members for the inclusion of patient & family presence and voice?
- How often and when will we re-examine my commitment to adjust my participation according to my needs and also yours? *If you decide to take on an advisory role, be sure to re-examine your commitment from time to time and adjust your participation to meet your personal and family needs.*
- What is your policy for patient & family advisors when they need to take a leave from advising due to personal circumstances or illness?
- Will I need to register with **Volunteer Resources**? If so, what does that involve and who is my contact?

If you are interested in becoming an advisor, check out The Patient Experience web pages at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/patientengagement.asp> or call Patient Engagement at 1-877-735-1102 or email at Patient.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca

What Does it Take to be a Patient & Family Advisor?

When considering whether or not to become an advisor, it may help you to think about the following **attitudes** and **strengths** that you bring to the role:

Patient.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca

Ask Yourself...

Personal Strengths

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| <i>Do I believe</i> that the patient& family perspective is as important as providers? | Yes | No |
| <i>Do I believe</i> that I bring a valuable perspective to the relationship with providers? | Yes | No |

Supporting Others

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|---|-----|----|
| <i>Am I willing</i> to share my experience as a patient or family member? | Yes | No |
| <i>Am I nonjudgmental and accepting</i> of others? | Yes | No |
| <i>Am I coping</i> well with my own feelings and emotional issues? | Yes | No |
| <i>Can I recognize</i> the needs and feelings of others? | Yes | No |

Working with Others

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| <i>Am I willing</i> to get involved with other people for a common goal? | Yes | No |
| <i>Can I handle</i> confidential information without sharing it with others? | Yes | No |
| <i>Can I listen</i> as well as contribute? | Yes | No |
| <i>Can I work</i> without expecting praise and recognition? | Yes | No |
| <i>Can I challenge</i> my assumptions? | Yes | No |

Working Collaboratively

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|---|-----|----|
| <i>Do I treat</i> each provider as an individual and avoid letting past negative experiences or negative attitudes affect me? | Yes | No |
| <i>Am I able</i> to deal with conflict and disappointment constructively? | Yes | No |
| <i>When I have</i> experience to share do speak up? | Yes | No |
| <i>Do I have</i> realistic expectations for myself and others? | Yes | No |

A Few Other Considerations...

- I understand the project and I am interested in it.
- I understand and am comfortable with what is expected of me
- I am able to make the expected time commitment
- The time and location work for me
- I have a process in place to send and receive necessary information
- I believe my input will make a difference
- I am comfortable that I will get the support I need to be successful
- I am comfortable with how I will be reimbursed for my out of pocket costs
- My involvement will make a difference to me, my family and the people I know
- My participation will have an impact on the way services are planned & delivered for AHS patients & families
- This is worth my time

*The most successful advisors are able to say **yes** to most of these questions!*