

### Deciding to Become a Patient/Family Advisor

If you have been asked or if you are considering volunteering to be a patient advisor, *Thank You!*

In our efforts to improve quality and safety, AHS recognizes the importance of looking the services we provide through the eyes of patients and families, You have experienced our services first-hand and are, therefore, uniquely qualified to provide AHS with advice about what works and what doesn't work for you and your family. Your perspective is informed by your personal experience and yet it is not restricted by being part of Alberta Health Services. Your expertise will help us to design and provide the best health services possible.

There are many patient and family advisory roles in Alberta Health Services. The most common are: document reviewers; participants in quality improvement initiatives; participants at conferences, working meetings, focus groups, task forces; and members of advisory boards and councils. Before deciding whether or not to become an advisor or to accept a particular advisor role, it is important to understand the role and its possible effect on you and your family. Your own or a family member's illness or other commitments may limit your participation. **Some factors to consider are:**

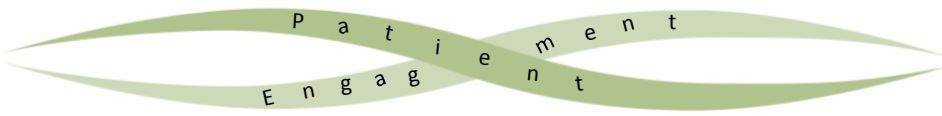
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| • Your readiness (see tool)   | • Role expectations/Responsibilities   | • Time lines, time commitment   | • Goal of the engagement                        |
| • How your input/feedback will be communicated to the decision-maker and used | • Financial costs and if and how you will be reimbursed; e.g., parking, transportation, child care | • Onboarding process to become a volunteer through AHS Volunteer Services, if necessary | • Convenience; e.g., meeting times and location |

Once you have considered the role and effect on you and your family, it may be helpful to **ask yourself the following questions:**

Will my involvement make a difference for me or a member of my family?	Yes	No
Will my participation make a difference for other people I know?	Yes	No
Will my participation have an impact on the way services are being planned and delivered for AHS patients and families?	Yes	No
Is this worth my time?	Yes	No

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.

Adapted from: Thomas, J. & Jeppson, E.S. (1997), *Words of Advice: A guidebook for families serving as advisors*. Bethesda, MD: Institute for Family Centered Care.



### Attitudes and strengths to consider if you are considering volunteering to be a patient/family advisor

Patient/family advisors play a unique role in helping AHS to improve the quality and safety of health services. When considering whether or not to become an advisor, It may help you to think about the following **attitudes and strengths** you bring to the role:

#### Able to recognize my strengths

Do I believe that the patient/family perspective is as important as providers?	Yes	No
Do I believe that I bring a valuable perspective to the relationship with providers?	Yes	No

#### Able to support others

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

#### Able to work with others

Am I willing to get involved with other people for a common goal?	Yes	No
Can I handle confidential information without sharing it with others?	Yes	No
Can I listen as well as contribute?	Yes	No
Can I work without expecting praise and recognition?	Yes	No
Can I give to others without expecting something back?	Yes	No

#### Able to work collaboratively

Do I treat each provider as an individual and avoid letting past negative experiences or negative attitudes affect me?	Yes	No
Am I able to work in partnership even when I disagree?	Yes	No
When I have a positive relationship/experience, do I express my support for that person/agency?	Yes	No
Do I have realistic expectations for myself and others?	Yes	No

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