



Roles for Patient and Family Advisors in Changing the Concept of Families as “Visitors” to Families as Partners

As with so many other quality improvement and safety initiatives, hospitals that embark on the process of changing their “visiting” policies and practices will benefit greatly from the input of patients, families, and other care partners. Ideally, they should be involved from the beginning so their valuable perspectives can inform every step of the process from baseline assessment and data-gathering to rewriting of policies and materials to educate staff, clinicians, and other patients and families. Hospitals that have existing Patient and Family Advisory Councils or have patient and family advisors involved on committees and work groups have a “ready resource” from which to enlist participation. Other hospitals may have to recruit advisors through staff referrals and other channels. The following suggestions list a variety of roles for patient and family advisors to partner with staff in changing visiting policies and practices.

- Serve as members of and/or co-chair the task force or committee that is formed to guide the change in policy and practice or other committees related to this change in policy.
- Review and assist in revising hospital materials, especially, current visiting policy, patient/family handbooks, informational packets and brochures, website, and social media venues.
- Tour the hospital through the “eyes” of patients, families, and care partners and examine signage and aspects of the physical environment that support or hinder family presence (e.g., signage, bulletin boards, space and comfortable furnishings at the bedside, arrangement of chairs in exam rooms).
- Talk with other patients, families, and care partners in focus groups or other gatherings to gain their perspectives on the hospital’s current “visiting” policies and practices.
- Review results of patient/family satisfaction surveys and other data, looking for themes relevant to perceptions about “visiting,” family presence, and family participation in care and decision-making.
- Share personal stories with leadership and frontline staff and clinicians in educational sessions and other meetings.
- Present at or co-facilitate educational sessions for staff and clinicians about the importance of family presence and participation.
- Introduce the pocket [Guide for Families](#) and [Expanded Guide for Families](#) in various peer support activities to build on the confidence and competence of families to be present and active participants in care, care planning, and decision-making.
- Serve as members of the team responsible for evaluating and tracking progress in this change in policy and practice.

For more detailed information on the role of patient and family advisors, see these other IPFCC resources: *Essential Allies – Patient, Resident and Family Advisors: A Guide for Staff Liaisons* and *Words of Advice: A Guide for Patient, Resident, and Family Advisors*.

For more information, tools, and resources about the *Better Together: Partnering with Families* campaign, visit www.ipfcc.org/bettertogether/.