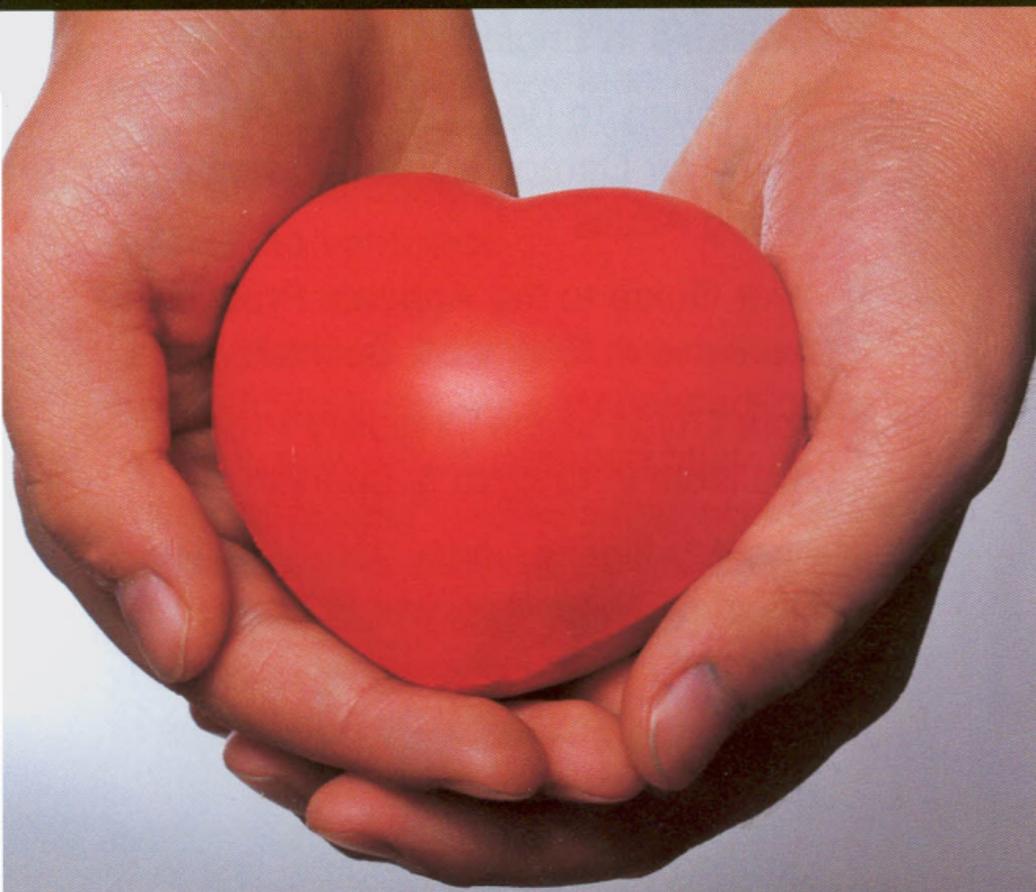


A Greater Understanding

How To Be An Advocate



PAF Patient Advocate Foundation

Solving Insurance and Healthcare Access Problems | since 1996

NPAF National Patient Advocate Foundation

The Patient's Voice | since 1996

A Greater Understanding

Patient Advocate Foundation

■ MISSION STATEMENT

Patient Advocate Foundation is a national non-profit organization that serves as an active liaison between patients and their insurers, employers and/or creditors to resolve insurance, job retention and/or debt crisis matters relative to their diagnosis using case managers, doctors and attorneys. Patient Advocate Foundation seeks to safeguard patients through effective mediation assuring access to care, maintenance of employment and preservation of their financial stability.

National Patient Advocate Foundation

■ MISSION STATEMENT

National Patient Advocate Foundation is a national non-profit organization providing the patient voice in improving access to, and reimbursement for, high-quality healthcare through regulatory and legislative reform at the state and federal levels. NPAF translates the experience of millions of patients who have been helped by our companion, Patient Advocate Foundation, which provides professional case management services to individuals facing barriers to healthcare access for chronic and disabling disease, medical debt crisis and employment-related issues at no cost.

Editors Note:

This is the twelfth in the series "A Greater Understanding" brochures developed by the Patient Advocate Foundation. The information contained herein is in response to frequently asked questions (FAQ's) by patients. This brochure is intended to provide a general yet informative response to these inquiries. Any incident, inquiry or issue may vary according to the specific facts and circumstances relating to the individual.

What is an Advocate?

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the word advocate as:

1. one that pleads the cause of another;
2. one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal, or;
3. one that supports or promotes the interests of another¹

There are many different types of advocates, including patients themselves, a friend or family member, nurses, healthcare professionals, social workers, educators, and volunteers. There are few formal degree or credentialing programs available for patient advocates but a good advocate does not necessarily need a degree. Some patient advocates have gained experience helping a loved one navigate the healthcare system. Advocates may also be referred to as patient navigators or case managers. At the heart of every great advocate is the desire to help.

What Makes a Good Advocate?

Patient advocacy requires many skills:

- desire to help
- empathy
- excellent communication skills
- time management skills
- organizational skills
- unafraid to ask questions
- ability to do research
- problem-solving skills
- creativity (thinking outside the box)
- interpersonal skills
- patience
- persistence

Advocacy may include understanding a diagnosis or illness and supporting the patient through all aspects of care. It may include research to gain an understanding of treatment options, assistance identifying clinical trials and/or alternative therapies, or locating healthcare providers. Advocacy may involve coordination of resources to include navigating the healthcare system, resolving insurance and reimbursement issues, and ensuring maintenance of employment and health insurance benefits during an illness. ²

Advocate settings:

- insurance company
- not-for-profit disease organization
- patient focused organization
- government entities
- hospital or medical facility
- for an individual patient

Key Points to Remember:

- keep a detailed log of all appointments, conversations and medications
- know insurance coverage and benefits
- review bills monthly
- take a proactive role
- be a smart health care consumer

Get Involved

What does it mean to make a difference? Making a difference could mean that your sister has access to her ob/gyn, your father receives, and is reimbursed for, a breakthrough therapy, or your neighbor has to travel to only one medical facility to receive all of his cancer treatment.

You can help make a difference in healthcare by volunteering and giving of your time to help solve those problems that span across the nation or are right in your backyard. Is it hard work to make a difference? Yes, sometimes, but it can also be very rewarding and a lot of fun! Meeting new friends, learning new ideas, mastering new skills, and gaining a sense of accomplishment are all great reasons to volunteer.

Get involved by joining the Advocates Network! Through this volunteer advocate's network, you will be informed of current state and federal initiatives that will affect the healthcare of Americans. By knowing the key points, you will be able to effectively bring your voice to legislators who sit in a position to make that difference happen.

Bibliography:

1. "advocate." Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2009. Merriam-Webster Online. April 27, 2009 <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocate>

2. So You Want to be a Patient Advocate? About.com: Patient Empowerment Web site. Available at http://patients.about.com/od/caringforotherpatients/ss/becomeadvocate_2.htm Accessed April 27, 2009

Patient Advocate Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that all Americans have access to healthcare. Case Managers are available to assist patients affected by debilitating or life threatening diseases by empowering them to be able to make informed decisions regarding their healthcare options. For further information call the Patient Advocate Foundation at 1-800-532-5274 or visit our website at www.patientadvocate.org.

Patient Advocate Foundation Publications

- Managed Care Answer Guide Available in English & Spanish
- Too Young To Be Ill...A Practical Guide for Caregivers of Children and Young Adults
- Your Guide to the Appeals Process Available in English & Spanish
- Your Guide to the Disability Process Available in English & Spanish
- First My Illness...Now Job Discrimination Available in English & Spanish
- Promoting a Healthier African American Community
- Lighting the Way: A Practical Guide to Clinical Trials
- The National Financial Resource Guide for Patients: A State-by-State Directory
- A Greater Understanding...Series A series of 12 pamphlets written to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding healthcare, available for download at www.patientadvocate.org

 **MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!**
Volunteer with our organization.

As a volunteer, you will:

- ♥ Help promote the interests of Patient Advocate Foundation by providing outreach efforts within your community.
- ♥ Be a part of a sophisticated grassroots network that builds productive legislative relationships and informs key legislators on top healthcare priorities.
- ♥ Improve the lives of patients and care givers across the United States!

To sign-up, please contact either PAF at (800) 532-5274 or NPAF at (202) 347-8009 or sign-up on our website. <http://npaf.org>

You may also complete the form on the back and mail directly to:
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Washington, DC 20005
Email: action@npaf.org
website: www.npaf.org

NPAF National Patient Advocate Foundation

The National Network for Healthcare Access | Since 1996

OR

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