Consumer Handout | Canberra Health Services

Information for Carers

This handout has information, guidance and support for you as a carer on how you can be involved in hospital care of the person you support. Canberra Health Services (CHS) recognises and acknowledges your rights and choices and values your commitment to providing care.

As a carer you have recognised rights, and choices within CHS. Our team values and acknowledges the essential role carers play in supporting consumers and contributing to their care.

Looking after yourself

We recognise that caring for someone while they are unwell in hospital can be stressful and may affect your own health and wellbeing. This can also be difficult when you have competing priorities. It is important to ask for help or support if you need it. CHS can provide you with support. Please ask to speak with a social worker or a member of our team about what support services are available to you.

You can also find resources to support you through Carers ACT at https://www.carersact.org.au, scan the QR code below or by calling 6296 9900.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, distressed, or need someone to talk to while you are at a hospital, you can ask to speak with a member of Spiritual Support Services. They provide listening, emotional and spiritual support to consumers carers and their families.

You can also ask to speak with an Aboriginal Liaison Officer who can provide cultural support.

How can I be involved?

There are a number of ways you can be involved as a carer. While our clinical team are responsible for caring for the patient, you may wish to provide support as well.

It is important that you have the ’s consent to support their decision making and to be involved in their care.

While in hospital the person you are caring for will be seen by many different health professionals. These include doctors, and nurses, and may also include physiotherapists, dietitians, Aboriginal Liaison Officers and social workers.

You are welcome to speak with our clinical team about how you would like to be involved in supporting the person you care for. For example, assisting at mealtimes.

White boards

Beside each bed, there is a white board with the patient's name, the doctor and nurse on duty, and important information. You are welcome to use this board to share what matters most to the person you care for, or to leave any questions or additional information for our team.

Bedside handover

Bedside handover of care happens three times a day. The handover involves staff from one shift handing over care and responsibility of the patient to the next shift. Check with staff on the ward to see when the bedside handovers happen and let them know you would like to be included.

As a carer you know the person you are caring for and their needs. Being part of the bedside handover can be very helpful for our team and for the person you care for. It could also help you understand what is going on and allows you to ask any questions you may have.

We understand that sometimes you may have competing responsibilities and may not always be available to participate in bedside handover sessions. Please talk to us if you would like to be involved in other ways.

Helping to make decisions

It is important for consumers and carers to feel informed and confident when making decisions about care and treatment. We encourage you to ask questions and talk openly with the care team. As a carer, you can work together with the CHS team to support informed decision-making. You can do this by:

- Asking questions about the condition, treatments, and care options available
- Learning more by speaking with the care team and seeking information to help you understand
- Keeping a list of medicines, including what they are for and how they are taken
- Talking with the doctor or care team about available options, including what is involved in any tests or procedures
- Supporting shared decision-making, ensuring the person's goals, preferences, and values are heard and respected.

Questions to ask about a treatment, procedure or therapy

- Why do you think this is right for the person I am caring for?
- Is this new? Is this uncommon? Is there research that says this is right for them?
- How many times have you done this?

- What has happened in the past when you have done this?
- How quickly does this need to happen?
- How long will it take them to get better afterwards?
- Are there things about their life we will need to change?
- What can they do to get ready?
- Will it cost them anything?
- What if the person needs time to talk with family, friends or another person about this before they decide?
- What can we expect if the person I am caring for decides they do not want the treatment?

Make sure you feel comfortable with what you have discussed with our clinical team on exactly what happens during an operation or procedure.

What if I have an urgent medical concern?

If you notice that something is 'not quite right' like a change in how the person you care for feels, looks or behaves or if you are worried you can do the following:

1. Press the call bell and tell the nurse or midwife why you are worried.
2. If you are still worried, ask to speak with the nurse or midwife in charge.

If, after taking these steps, you feel you need urgent assistance, call the 'Call And Respond Early (CARE) for Patient Safety program' and a senior nurse will assess the persons condition and assist as required. You can contact the **CARE team at Canberra Hospital and University of Canberra Hospital on 02 5124 3337 or North Canberra Hospital on 02 5103 6717**

Discharge

It is important that you are part of the discharge from hospital process for the person you are caring for. This will give you information about the care needed at home, any new medicines and follow up appointments. Talk to the clinical team about when the discharge will happen and how you can be involved. You can also ask the doctor or other health professionals to explain the treatment plan for home before the person you care for leaves hospital.

Acknowledgement of Country

Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this region.

Accessibility: call 02 5124 0000 **Interpreter:** call 131 450 canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/accessibility

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra 2026 | canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au