

Patient Bill of Rights

The American Hospital Association developed "A Patient's Bill of Rights" with the belief that it will add to more effective patient care and be supported by the hospital on behalf of the organization, its medical staff, employees, and patients.

Health care involves a partnership between patients and doctors and other health care professionals. Open communication, respect for personal and professional standards, and understanding of differences are important for the best possible patient care. Hospitals should:

- Provide a base for understanding and respecting the rights and responsibilities of patients, their families, doctors, and other caregivers;
- respect the role of patients in decision making about treatment choices and other care; and
- be aware of cultural, racial, language, religious, age, gender, and other differences as well as the needs of persons with disabilities.

Hospitals have many functions to perform, including treating injury and disease, health promotion and prevention, rehabilitation of patients, education of health professionals, patients, and the community, and research. All these activities should be conducted with concern for the values and dignity of patients.

The following information was adapted from the American Hospital Association's "A Patient's Bill of Rights". It is not a State law.

A Patient's Bill of Rights

Another person chosen by the patient can exercise these rights on the patient's behalf. A proxy decision maker can exercise these rights if the patient lacks decision-making ability, is legally incompetent, or is a minor.

- The patient has the right to considerate and respectful care.
- The patient has the right to and is encouraged to obtain from doctors and other direct caregivers appropriate, current, and understandable information about diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis. Except in emergencies when the patient lacks decision-making ability and the need for treatment is urgent, the patient is entitled to the chance to discuss and request information about the specific procedures and/or treatments, the risks involved, the possible length of recuperation, and the medically reasonable alternatives and their risks and benefits. Patients have the right to know the identity of doctors, nurses, and others involved in their care, as well as when those involved are students, patients, or other trainees. The patient also has the right to know the immediate and long-term financial implications of treatment choices, insofar as they are known.
- The patient has the right to make decisions about the plan of care before and during treatment. The patient has the right to refuse a recommended treatment or plan of care to the extent allowed by law and hospital policy and to be informed of the medical consequences of this action. In case of refusal, the patient is entitled to other appropriate care and services that the hospital provides or transfers to another hospital. The hospital should notify patients of any policy that might affect patient choice within the institution.
- The patient has the right to have an advance directive (such as a living will, health care proxy, or durable power of attorney for health care) concerning treatment or designating a surrogate decision maker with the expectation that the hospital will honor the intent of that directive to the extent permitted by law and hospital policy. Health care institutions must tell patients of their rights under state law and hospital policy to make informed medical choices, ask if the patient has an advance directive, and include that information in patient records. The patient has the

right to timely information about hospital policy that may limit its ability to implement fully a legally valid advance directive.

- The patient has the right to every consideration of privacy. Case discussion, consultation, examination, and treatment should be conducted so as to protect each patient's privacy.
- The patient has the right to expect that all communications and records related to his/her care will be treated as confidential by the hospital, except in cases such as suspected abuse and public health hazards when reporting is permitted or required by law. The patient has the right to expect that the hospital will stress the confidentiality of this information when it releases it to any other parties entitled to review information in these records.
- The patient has the right to review the records about his/her care and to have the information explained or interpreted as necessary, except when restricted by law.
- The patient has the right to expect that, within its capacity and policies, a hospital will make reasonable response to a patient's request for appropriate and medically indicated care and services. The hospital must provide evaluation, service, and/or referral as indicated by the urgency of the case. When medically appropriate and legally permitted, or when a patient has requested, a patient may be transferred to another facility. The institution to which the patient is to be transferred must first have accepted the patient for transfer. The patient must also have the benefit of complete information and explanation concerning the need for, risks, benefits, and alternatives to such a transfer.
- The patient has the right to ask and be informed of business relationships among the hospital, educational institutions, other health care providers, or payers that may influence the patient's treatment and care.
- The patient has the right to consent to or decline to take part in research studies or human experimentation affecting care and treatment or requiring direct patient involvement, and to have those studies fully explained prior to consent. A patient who declines to take part in research or experimentation is entitled to the most effective care that the hospital can otherwise provide.
- The patient has the right to expect reasonable continuity of care when appropriate and to be informed by doctors and other caregivers of available and realistic patient care options when hospital care is no longer appropriate.
- The patient has the right to be informed of hospital policies and practices that relate to patient care treatment, and responsibilities. The patient has the right to be informed of available resources for resolving disputes, grievances, and conflicts, such as ethics committees, patient representatives, or other mechanisms available in the institution. The patient has the right to be informed of the hospital's charges for services and available payment methods.

Patient Responsibilities

The partnership nature of health care requires that patients, or their families/surrogates, take part in their care. The effectiveness of care and patient satisfaction with the treatment depends, in part, on the patient fulfilling certain responsibilities. The following are patient responsibilities:

- Patients are responsible for providing information about past illnesses, hospitalizations, medications, and other matters related to health status. To participate effectively in decision making, patients are take responsible for asking for additional information or explanation about their health status or treatment when they do not fully understand information and instructions.
- Patients are also responsible for ensuring that the health care institution has a copy of their written advance directive if they have one.
- Patients are responsible for telling their doctors and other caregivers if they expect problems in following prescribed treatment.
- Patients should be aware of the hospital's duty to be reasonably efficient and fair in providing care to other patients and the community. The hospital's rules and regulations are intended to help the hospital meet this responsibility. Patients and their families are responsible for making reasonable accommodations to the needs of the hospital, other patients, medical staff, and hospital employees.
- Patients are responsible for giving necessary information for insurance claims and for working with the hospital to make payment arrangements, when necessary.
- A person's health depends on much more than health care services. Patients are responsible for recognizing the impact of their lifestyle on their personal health.

Reference: www.aha.org

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