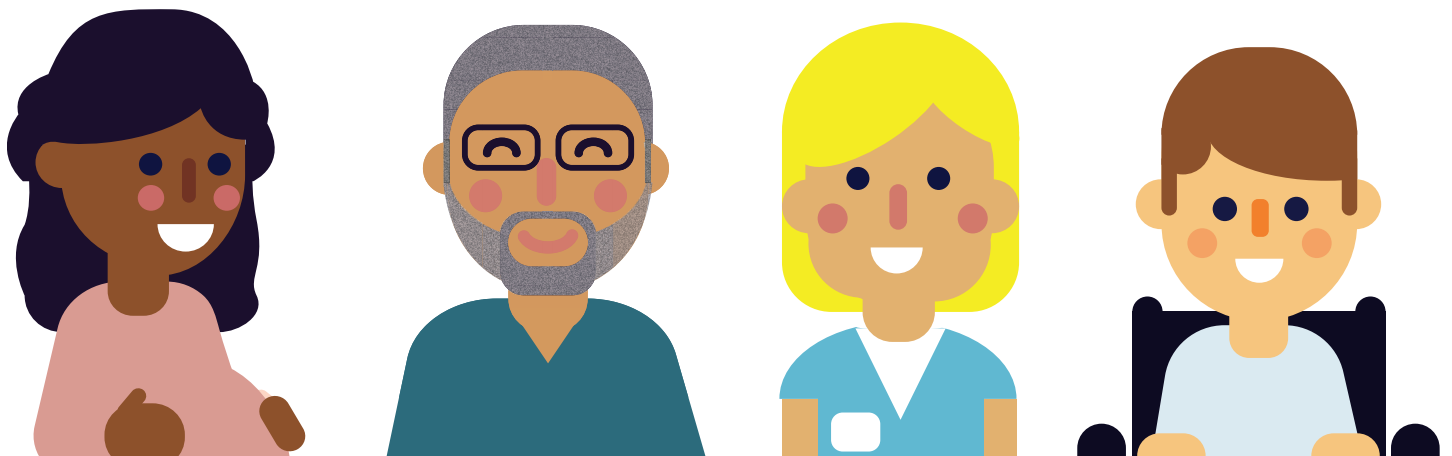


# WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

Healthcare Advisor Handbook



# WELCOME

Thank you for partnering with Southern Health-Santé Sud (SH-SS). We acknowledge the expertise and unique perspectives that advisors offer to our organization and look forward to learning from you to help lead the way to a healthier tomorrow for everyone.

## WHO ARE HEALTHCARE ADVISORS?

Healthcare Advisors are patients, family members or members of the public who volunteer as active advisory partners with the health system. They are people who want to make things better, whether they have had recent experiences as a patient or they care about the “big picture” of health services. Healthcare Advisors can add many points of view. By bringing their own experience to share, they enrich conversations with real time input in meetings with health system staff.

Congratulations on joining our team as a volunteer healthcare advisor. You are joining a group of committed patients, family members and members of the public who have been chosen to share valuable personal experience to make health services, programs and policies better.

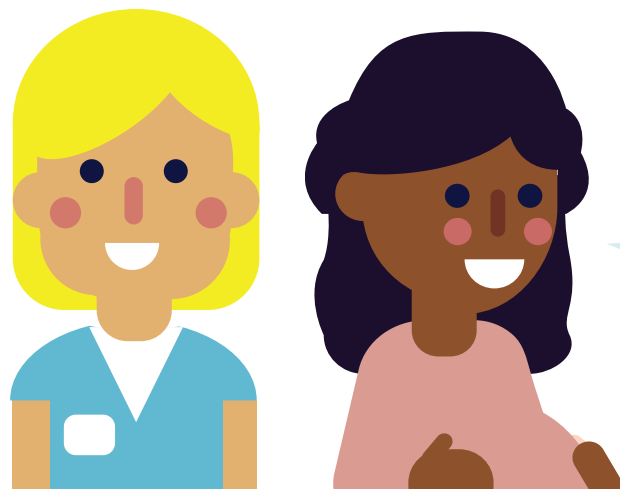
We value your opinion. We hope that you will participate freely and respectfully in the discussions that you are a part of. Your role is to bring your own unique perspective, so you do not need to speak on behalf of anyone but yourself. Hearing from you will help us to keep patients\* and families first and in the centre of all that we do.

### Who are 'Patients'?

The word 'Patient' refers to someone who receives care from a health care professional or a health organization. Some people do not identify themselves as patients, but as persons with lived experience, consumers of care or clients of health organizations. In this document, the term patient includes all of these preferences.

### Healthcare Advisors...

- help create a system that is patient-and family-centred
- are treated with respect and their opinions valued
- make contributions that will influence the decisions that improve the health system
- speak from their own experience and bring many perspectives



## WHY DOES ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

We believe that hearing the voice of patients, families and the public is an important way to improve the health system.

Patient and public engagement leads to:

- Improved quality and safety of patient care and service delivery
- Increased trust between patients, advisors and staff through improved communication
- Better public understanding of the health system
- Tailored programs with input from users that could avoid costly mistakes.
- Improved patient-and family-centred culture in the health system

Collaborating with patients, families and members of the public helps to make sure that our services are patient-and family-centred.

## HOW CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

There are many ways that you can collaborate to improve the health system. What is the best fit for you?

- Work on a committee alongside health system staff and other stakeholders
- Join a council or a committee with other volunteers
- Volunteer to review material from home
- Participate in surveys or focus groups
- Share a personal story of your health care experience so that staff can learn from your experience (ask for more information and for the story-telling tips)
- Provide feedback by reviewing specific policies, processes, or patient education materials
- Participate on quality improvement projects like a LEAN project team to improve different aspects of the health system

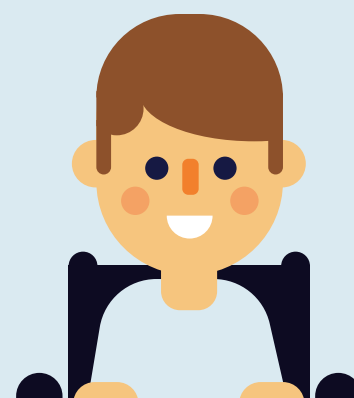
### What Matters to You?

We are encouraging providers to have “What Matters to You?” conversations each and every day with the people they support or care for. Because patients are the true experts of their own needs and experiences, asking, listening and responding to what matters to them is a key feature of person or people-centered care, and can help with patient engagement at the bedside or point of care.

*Adapted from A Guide to Patient Engagement – Patient Voices Network*

### Healthcare Advisor in Action

Healthcare Advisors walked through the existing processes for receiving, managing and reporting health care complaints. We gained valuable insights that improved both policy and practice. We are more confident that managing complaints is done in a way that ensures good communication, is timely and fair.



## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM SH-SS?

Southern Health-Santé Sud (SH-SS) will:

- Aim to match the engagement opportunity to your interests and skills.
- Provide the orientation that you need to be able to participate fully.
- Assign a staff person that can answer your questions or address your concerns.
- Respect your privacy and ask that you share only what is comfortable for you.
- Try to address any barriers to participation that you experience.
- Off-set out-of-pocket expenses such as transportation, that you incur to partner with us. Please speak to your staff contact for more information.

## WHAT WILL SH-SS EXPECT FROM YOU?

You will:

- Call ahead if you will be unable to attend a meeting. We will give you information about whom to contact.
- Read any materials that you receive in advance so that you are prepared to join the discussion.
- Respect the collaborative process and understand that final decisions about care delivery and process improvements are the responsibility of the health care administrators.
- Respect confidentiality. You must always keep private any personal information shared by others. In addition, you will be asked to keep confidential topics discussed at committee meetings or documents shared.

### Healthcare Advisors in Action

Persons with lived experience in our local seniors communities were asked to join a Services to Seniors Grant Review Committee. These advisors were part of the team that reviewed applications, studied community profiles and health needs and provided recommendations for grant distribution. Advisors provided a valuable perspective that went much beyond that of operational functions.



# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

- Bring an open mind. All parties are working towards a system that is the best it can be.
- Listen to learn and understand. One person speaks at a time without interruption.
- Avoid using the advisor's role to try to resolve complaints or concerns about yours or your loved one's care experience. Every health organization has a complaints process, with staff ready to help you.
- Ask questions! Questions will help staff to think about the situation from another point of view.
- Respect meeting start and end times.
- Let staff know if they are using language, acronyms or words you don't know. Ask for clarification.
- Take care of yourself. Do what you need to stay focused and involved: stand and stretch or take breaks when you need them.
- Humour is welcome. Remember to enjoy yourself!

## Healthcare Advisors...

- provide the voice of patients, families and the public as an important way to improve the health system
- are provided with supports to enhance participation. A staff member is assigned to provide an orientation to the role
- may have some out of pocket expenses (child care, parking, transportation) off-set to help them participate
- are active participants at all levels of the health care system, working alongside practitioners, leaders, researchers and policy makers towards a better health care system.

