

Conversation Starter: Patients & Families in Advocacy Tip Sheet

The home care community serves a very special purpose, providing home-based care and services to patients and families helping them to live independently, with dignity, and to enhance their quality of life. Our patients are our reason and where for many of us our passion stems from.

We can help encourage patients and families to participate in advocacy, adding their voices, hearts, and actions as fuel to the larger healthcare debate. Patients and families know first-hand the value of home care, and can be instrumental in illustrating for elected officials the real-world impact, value, and importance of home-based services.

We can help them understand how easy it is to participate and how influential they can truly be by choosing to start the conversation:

Start with having dialogues with your employees and caregivers

Patients and families often have long-standing and intimate relationships providers — especially their direct caregivers whom they trust. Caregivers can be pivotal in opening the dialogue about the importance of advocacy with patients and families. But, they need to understand how they can participate **BEFORE** they can help ask patients and families to get involved.

- Ask — why they choose to work in home care?
- Explain the importance of their role as a caregiver and advocate.
- Share with them ways to participate. (*Share Your Story flyer*)
- Encourage them to be educated & active — stay up to date on key issues and proposed legislation and regulations impacting the home care community AND to participate whenever possible — every action matters!
- Highlight how their actions will impact the work that affects them and the lives of their patients and families — make the connection personally or professionally.

Encourage caregivers to talk with their patients and families about participating in advocacy

Since caregivers already have an established relationship with their patients and families, they are naturally the best choice to help encourage them to become advocates.

- Ask — what does home care mean to them?
- Ask — why are home-based services important?
- Based on their responses, take time to explain why they are uniquely qualified to be advocates — they experience home care often on a daily basis and are experts on the subject.
- Explain how it's their right as part of the democratic process to share with their elected officials and lawmakers what matters most to them and make sure they are Registered to Vote.
- Show them how to locate their representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate if they don't already know who they are.
- Highlight how their actions can have an impact on the decisions elected officials make with regards to rules and regulations pertaining to the home health care services they as patients and families receive

Make it easy to participate, and remove barriers

People like to participate in things that are “easy.” The easier activities are perceived to be, the more likely it will be that people will choose to participate, this goes for advocacy too.

- Ask — what they believe the barriers are to participating?
- Share how easy it is to participate (Share Your Story flyer)
- Encourage them to share their personal story whether in writing/email, by phone, or in person with their elected officials. Personal stories are compelling and it can be compelling for.
- Offer to help them participate or provide support.

Recognize and Remember to Say Thank you!

Choosing to actively participate in advocacy is something worthy of recognition. Every act, no matter how seemingly small, helps to contribute towards meaningful change.

- As an employer of caregivers, recognize their efforts and extend your sincere gratitude. Simply saying thank you goes a long way. Remember to update them on the impact of their efforts. As a caregiver, thank your patients and families for their participation in advocacy.
- As a caregiver, you know how hectic the lives of patients can be. When these families choose to take time out to help support the home health care and hospice communities in an effort to protect the care and service they receive at home; they should be honored for their efforts.

