

## Family/Caregiver Frequently Asked Questions

While we've tried to answer a range of questions that families have when someone they care about is admitted to hospital, each unit and care team may have specific responses to your questions based on the treatment needs and goals of the person to whom they are providing care. Please check with a member of the healthcare team to answer any specific questions you might have regarding your family member's inpatient stay and treatment.

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The following questions and answers apply to patient care **hospital-wide**:

### Do I have any rights in providing support and care for my family member?

We always encourage family and friends to be available to encourage and support their family member in their recovery from illness and recognize the important role families have in individuals' lives. We know that positive family involvement can improve recovery outcomes well beyond a hospital admission. Involvement of friends and family is always guided by the person receiving care and/or their clinical needs at a given time.

If your family member has provided consent to share information, you will be able to speak freely with the healthcare team within any constraints identified by your family member. If your family member has not provided consent to disclose, you may always provide information to the care team as 'collateral information', or information that can help the care team in better understanding your family members' condition. Having consent to share information does not give you the right, however, to make decisions regarding treatment, treatment compliance or other issues related to the autonomy of your family member.

## My family member (patient) won't give consent to share information with me while in hospital. Is there anything that can be done?

The health care team will periodically ask your family member if their decision to withhold consent has changed. You can also ask your family member if they might consider having you more involved so that you might be able to better support them. If there is not consent forthcoming, periodic updates of your observations or concerns (either verbally or in writing) can be provided to the healthcare team. You can also request a family meeting with your family member's consent, so that you are better apprised of the treatment and prognosis.

## When my family member is admitted to SJHH what information should I have about my rights and responsibilities?

We know that family members have special knowledge and expertise when it comes to the care and support of a family member. With the patients' permission, members of the healthcare team will involve family in the plan of care. They will also give you information and support your needs and your role in your family member's healthcare journey. Good communication and relationship building with the patient and his/her family can be an important factor in a successful recovery.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Be positive, patient, and encouraging.
- Learn about the illness, treatment options and services available. This helps you take an active part in your family member's healthcare journey. Ask about available resources and supports to help you do this.
- Share information about your family member's history with a member of the healthcare team.
- Help develop the plan of care when asked.
- Take an active role in planning your family member's discharge when asked.
- Look after yourself and stay healthy.

Please also see our website to view our Patient Declaration of Values: Rights and Responsibilities

## What should I do if I'm concerned about my own safety or that of someone else when I come to the hospital as a visitor?

In an urgent situation, please speak to the closest staff member. All staff members are trained to respond to emergency situations. If your concern is less urgent, please ask to speak to the unit or clinic manager where your concern is. If your safety concern is about the environment or building, please report your concern to a staff member who can direct your concern to the appropriate person(s).

## I want to share a compliment/complaint/concern with someone at St. Joseph's Healthcare – how do I do that?

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, there is a simple process you can follow. Compliments can be shared with any member of the health care team, as well as with our Patient Relations Department (details are below).

If you have a staff complaint or concern, begin by contacting the staff member. If you remain concerned or the concern is regarding an environmental or care issue please feel free to contact the following in this order: the charge nurse on the unit where your family member is receiving care; the unit manager; the Patient Relations Department.

The Patient Relations Department will:

- Listen to your comments and feedback in a supportive and respectful way.
- Follow-up with the appropriate manager(s) to inform them of your complaint or compliment.
- Answer your questions about the way we operate at any of our hospital campuses.
- In collaboration with our managers, assist you in resolving any dissatisfaction you may have with the manner in which you were treated.
- In collaboration with our patients, family and staff, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton has developed a Patient Declaration of Values. Please see our website to view our Patient Declaration of Values: Rights and Responsibilities Document.

 **905-522-1155 ext. 33838**

## When are visiting hours, and what can I bring when visiting?

Visitors are welcome at any time on all Inpatient Units at each campus location. Ask your family member when the best time to visit is, as they will likely have a schedule of activities, group work and therapies. Please check with a member of your family member's treatment team or at the Unit's Care Desk prior to the visit to learn about what is allowed or restricted before you visit. For further information on our visiting policies, please visit our website at:

## Are families informed/consulted with respect to discharge?

Families who are involved in their loved-one's care should be given information regarding discharge. You may also ask to attend a discharge planning meeting so that you are involved in the process.

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## The following questions and answers apply to inpatient units of the **Mental Health and Addiction Program**:

### What programs or services are offered at St. Joseph's Mental Health and Addiction Program?

Our website has a comprehensive list complete with descriptions of all services provided by the Mental Health and Addiction Program. To access this information, please visit <http://www.stjoes.ca> . From the front page, select:

- *I am looking for program information*
- *I am looking for information about mental health and addiction programs*

You can also visit our Family Resource Centre in person or call our Family Liaison, Peer Worker at ext. 35599.

### As a family member, is there anyone I can talk to for support?

You may contact our Mental Health and Addiction Program's Family Liaison, Peer Support Provider at ext. 35599, to obtain one to one personal support, system navigation, illness education, assistance to facilitate meaningful participation in your family members' recovery, and access to community resources. Your family members care team might also be able to provide you with support. Contact the unit manager or other staff where your family member is receiving services.

### Are there any family support groups for specific illnesses?

The Mental Health and Addiction Program offers various family groups designed to provide education to family members on illness, medications and treatments. These are open only to family members whose loved ones are patients of the specific program. For example, there is education available for Schizophrenia, Mood Disorders, Concurrent Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, and Borderline Personality Disorder.

A facilitated Family Peer Support Group is offered through Patient and Family Collaborative Support Services. Contact the Family Liaison Peer Worker at ext. 35599 for more information.

Family mutual support groups can be found in the community. The Family Resource Centre can provide you with their names and locations. For individual support and other resources, contact the Family Liaison Peer Worker at ext.35599.

### Where do I go to make sure my family member has a wellness plan and a crisis plan?

Wellness plans and crisis plans are tools for wellness and recovery that are created by your family member. There can be a variety of different types which are developed either independently or with the help of a therapist, participation in a group program or with a Peer Support worker. Ask your family member if they have developed these tools. Showing interest in their recovery can help your family member to feel supported and comfortable discussing their illness. If your family member has provided the care team with consent to disclose, you can also speak with them about these plans.

## How long can I expect my family member will spend in hospital? Who will make that decision?

Mental illness and recovery differs for every individual. There are no specific rules that would determine length of stay in the hospital, even amongst persons with the same illness. The guiding factors for length of stay depend upon a sufficient reduction of symptoms that would indicate that discharge will be safe and likelihood for continued recovery is high. All patients are provided with a follow-up plan for care while they continue to recover. Some might be referred to an outpatient clinic, while others could be referred to their family doctor or other community mental health providers. Decision for discharge is made by your family members' care team with the final discharge decision being made by the attending psychiatrist.

## Are there other families experiencing the same struggles as us that we can connect with on a one-to-one basis?

The Family Liaison – Peer Support worker can work with you to find a family member going through the same struggles who might be willing to meet with you. You might also meet other family members in education groups offered through the Mental Health and Addiction Program or at a community based support group. For more information, visit the Family Resource Centre or speak with your family members' care team.

## I know someone who refuses to seek help and is in need. What can I do?

It is important to try and work with your family member to ensure they receive proper care. The best way to support someone can vary from situation to situation, and there are many resources to assist you in this process including hospital-based crisis services, mobile crisis services and emergency services. If your family member is in crisis, contact the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) at 905-972-8338 for further guidance and support. If you or your family member is in immediate risk, please call 911.

## My family member is receiving care with another care team at another facility. Can I request a transfer to St. Joseph's Healthcare?

Yes. If a patient would like to receive services at SJHH, they or their family can work with their current treatment team to submit an appropriate referral. The referral must come from a primary attending physician. Services at SJHH cover Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant and Burlington.

If you live outside of this area, we encourage you to call the Patient Flow Manager at 905-522-1155 ext. 32297 to discuss your need.

## I, or someone I care for, was turned away from the hospital emergency room without a psychiatric assessment. What can I do?

If you remain concerned about your family member, please make an appointment with your family doctor or return to the emergency room. It is important that emergency room staff are clear about your concerns. You can also ask your doctor, specialist or nurse practitioner for a referral to our Rapid Assessment Clinic where your family member can receive a psychiatric consult. Contact the Intake Assistant at 905-522-1155 Ext 33954.

## Someone I care for needs mental health care and is under 16 years old. Where can I go for help?

McMaster Childrens Hospital, Child and Youth Mental Health Program Provides outpatient, inpatient, day hospital and emergency mental health services for children, youth and families dealing with mental health concerns. Contact Child and Youth Support, Central Referral Office: 905-521-2100 ext. 74382.

Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST), Child and Youth Support: Crisis line and a mobile crisis team of child and youth crisis workers connected to a variety of mental health and social service agencies are able to help those who have a serious mental illness and are in a crisis situation



**COAST Crisis Line: Mon-Sun 24 hours 905-972-8338**

## How long does it typically take to recover from a mental illness?

Mental illness is like any other illness that might require lifelong support and treatment and there is no typical timeframe for recovery, as each individual's journey to wellness differs. Recovery can be accelerated by accessing treatment and supports as soon as a mental illness is identified. With a combination of pharmacological and psychosocial treatment, between 70 and 90 per cent of individuals will experience an improved quality of life and significant reduction or abatement of symptoms. It's important to recognise that quality of life is subjective, varies between individuals, and that satisfaction and personal achievement is determined by your family member.

## Does my family member have access to a telephone or computer as an inpatient?

Yes. Telephones are available on all inpatient units. Public use computers are available in the Mental Health and Wellness Resource Centre in the Galleria area and on some units. Many patients bring their own personal computing devices with the permission of their care team.

## How can I get more involved and have an impact in the Mental Health and Addiction Program?

Families are encouraged to take an active role in their experience at the hospital and can speak with the treatment team throughout the recovery process.

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton has a Family Advisory Council which assists the hospital in providing and improving family experience. The Family Advisory Council is comprised of family members who have lived experience with supporting a family member in the Mental Health and Addiction Program. There are often other volunteer opportunities to sit on various committees as family representatives, take part in family education groups or volunteer in the Family Resource Centre. For more information regarding volunteering, please visit: