



Royal Victoria
Regional Health Centre



People are our
inspiration

Patient Family Advisor Handbook

Make each life better. Together.





Welcome to TEAM RVH!

As a Patient Family Advisor, you are an important member of Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre's team. You also play a vital role in the partnership between patients, families and care providers which will help us improve the patient family experience.

Patients and their families are at the centre of all we do at RVH and they have a right to expect the best possible care experience. Always. Every day. Without exception.

RVH's Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC) is the cornerstone of that patient-centred strategy. It is only when we see healthcare through the eyes of patients and their families that we can improve their experience.

Your voice will help us:

- Identify and address patient and family needs in all aspects of care
- Improve access to care
- Ensure clear, respectful communication
- Simplify processes
- Make it easier to navigate the often complicated healthcare system

Your contribution is invaluable to us. It will lead to better service, better care and better outcomes at RVH. Thank you for your commitment and we look forward to working with you.

Respectfully;

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gail Hunt'.

Gail Hunt
President & Chief Executive Officer
Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre

MY CARE

In 2013 Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) introduced a bold new strategic plan to act as our roadmap for the future. Refreshed in 2018 and 2022, it is based on a philosophy that we call **MY CARE** and it is fundamental to our patient-centred approach.

What is **MY CARE**?

RVH will ensure your **CARE** is the best, safest and centred on you. Our **MY CARE** philosophy means we will **THINK BIG** and exceed your expectations. We will treat you and your loved ones with courtesy, dignity and **RESPECT**, while being responsive to your unique circumstances and cultural needs. We will listen carefully to you and keep you informed. We will **WORK TOGETHER** to coordinate your care – inside and outside our facility -- and we will **OWN** our decisions and behaviours. Our unwavering focus on you will enable us to **Make each life better. Together.**

And that laser-like focus on our patients and their families extends to RVH's key strategic directions too. Our goals and objectives are all based on our **MY CARE** philosophy. We want patients and their families to be partners in their care throughout every step of their healthcare journey.

Focus on **MY CARE**

- RVH will be unwavering in its commitment to put patients and families first through its **MY CARE** philosophy, involving them in all aspects of their care and providing the most positive patient experience. Every encounter. No exceptions.
- Patients and families are informed and engaged in planning and decision-making, recognizing their diverse and unique needs.
- Smooth transitions for quality, timely care in the setting that best suits patients' clinical needs.

What does *MY CARE* look like?

Our *MY CARE* plan was shaped by the voices of 3,000 people in North Simcoe Muskoka. They told us they want:

Access to Services

- Timely access to the services needed to get better.

Effective Communication

- Information about my condition, treatment and prognosis, and to be involved and engaged every step of the way. Information needs to be thorough, clear, accurate and easy-to-understand.

Respect and Dignity

- Their individual needs, preferences and goals must be respected and at the centre of care.
- They should be treated as an individual whose knowledge, values, beliefs and culture is incorporated into care.

Coordinated Care

- The healthcare system is complex and difficult to navigate. Understanding of the plan for recovery when going home is important so healthcare providers should work together to ensure the journey through the system is seamless and simple.

Participation

- To be involved in planning and decisions about their care and have the support to participate meaningfully at whatever level is desired.

Measuring the Patient Family Experience

At RVH we are committed to always improving the care we provide, and we ask patients about their experience in a number of ways.

- A third-party survey is sent to the homes of many of our patients, asking a number of questions about their care, including “would you recommend RVH?”
- Patients can also complete a care experience survey on their bedside entertainment unit while they are a patient within our health centre.
- Patients receive a phone call at their homes after leaving the health centre to inquire about their experience and answer any questions they may have.
- RVH’s Patient Relations Office is available to review and respond to all concerns, complaints and compliments about the patient family care experience.

Patient Family Advisor Framework

The focus on patients and their families is at the core of the RVH Patient Family Advisor Framework. It will ensure patients and families are at the centre of everything we do.

Patient Family Advisory Council

The Patient Family Advisory Council makes recommendations on programs, policies and practices that impact the experience of patients and their families at RVH. Its members will actively promote and create new opportunities for communication and collaboration among patients, families and RVH staff/physicians. Members will review evaluation methods to help define the success of system improvements.

Program and Services

RVH's programs and services will consistently and appropriately partner with Patient Family Advisors to develop strategies and action plans that ensure RVH is able to deliver on its **MY CARE** strategy. They will share progress and action plans with the Patient Family Advisory Council and RVH's Senior Leadership Team.

What is a Patient Family Advisor?

The Patient Family Advisor represents the voice of RVH's patient and families. Patients and families have experience, insights, expertise and perspectives that are invaluable to improving care. The Patient Family Advisor Program is an opportunity for patients and families to participate as partners in planning services and systems which can positively shape the patient experience.

A Patient Family Advisor is someone who has had a recent experience (within two years) either as a patient, or the family member of a patient being cared for at the health centre. Patient and family advisors speak on behalf of patients and families at both the program and organizational levels.

Advisors partner with RVH staff and physicians to provide direct input into policies, programs and practices which affect the patient experience.

Is there a difference between an advisor and an advocate?

Yes. An *advocate* is a person who pleads a specific case or cause. An *advisor* is a person who partners with the health centre, bringing their experience of what it is like to be a patient to a decision making table. An advisor looks at the big picture. Advisors bring forward recommendations which provide important context and perspective to decision makers at RVH.

What do Patient Family Advisors do?

Tell their story

- Sharing stories about their experiences – positive and negative – is an important way to gather insights about each other and better understand how the patient and family experience can be improved. Some of the ways their stories are shared include speaking at public events and through feature stories in publications.

System Redesign

- Engage in the discussion to identify the need for and design of new processes
- Participate in the hiring of leadership positions
- Participate in the Accreditation process
- Recommend and participate in quality improvement initiatives

Committee Work

The list below includes some, but not all, of the committees that Patient and Family Advisors are part of:

- Program Committees / Program Specific PFACs, e.g. Cancer PFAC, Cardiac PFAC
- Accessibility Committee
- Bioethics Committee
- Quality Committee of the Board of Directors
- Infection Prevention and Control Committee
- Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Safe Medication Practice Committee
- Art Committee
- Senior Strategy Steering Committee

Review and help create education or information materials

- They contribute to the creation of supportive patient and family material such as forms, health information handouts and discharge instructions, ensuring tools are meaningful, and easy-to-understand.
- Participate in the new staff orientation.

Special projects

- PFAC members may partner with the health centre on special projects such as website redesign or being part of an interview panel for new hires.

What can Patient Family Advisors expect in their role?

- Advisors will have the opportunity to assist with hospital events and participate on hospital committees
- Advisors will receive education and orientation to their program, service and/or committee, including RVH's **MY CARE** philosophy
- Advisors can expect accessible meeting rooms and information consistent with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
- Advisors will participate in regular meetings at RVH, held at a variety of times (usually between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.) depending on the committee or working group.
- Frequency of meetings is dependent on the work of each committee and the scope of their particular project
- Abbreviations, acronyms and terms will be clearly defined/explained and advisors should ask for clarification when something is unclear
- Advisors can expect a rewarding experience and the knowledge they are making a positive difference in how healthcare is delivered at RVH

Should you become a Patient Family Advisor?

When you or your family member was at RVH, did you think there were things we could have done better? Do you have ideas about how RVH can improve the patient and family experience? The Patient Family Advisory Council provides invaluable information and perspectives that help us improve the quality and safety of care.

What qualifications are required?

People who have had a recent experience (within two years) either as a patient or the family member of a patient being cared for at RVH, are eligible to be a Patient Family Advisor, providing they are 18 years old or over. No special qualifications are required. What is most important is their experience as a patient or family member and their willingness to share their story and ideas in a constructive way.

What is the time commitment?

Patient Family Advisors must commit to serving on the council for a minimum of one year. The time commitment and meeting frequency varies depending on the specific projects or activities in which each advisor is participating, however is approximately four hours per month.

Expectations and Characteristics of Advisors

Patient Family Advisors are an important part of RVH's Volunteer Resources department.

Skills/Attributes of Advisors:

- Be comfortable speaking in a group setting and interacting and collaborating with others
- Be a good listener with intent to understand other perspectives and opinions
- Integrate personal experience constructively and towards shared goals
- Be able to see beyond their own experience and have curiosity about the experiences of others
- Be non-judgmental and open to meaningful, positive change and to differences
- Have a positive attitude towards change
- Willingly invest in shared work with other advisors and healthcare providers
- Be able to see the big picture
- Want to invest in personal growth and new experiences
- Understand and maintain the privacy of patient and organizational information
- Respect the guiding principles and all policies of the organization

Expectations of Advisors

- Partner with staff to participate in activities that are designed to ensure patients and families are at the center of all we do, and are informed and engaged in planning and decision making
- Build partnerships with healthcare professionals based on mutual respect and open communication
- Be accountable to RVH's Executive Vice President, Patient and Family Experience
- Participate in activities as required by the council and associated working groups such as quality and process improvement, program development, facility design and education projects
- Readily share their ideas and talents
- Consistently demonstrate RVH's organizational values of Work Together, Respect All, Think Big, Own It and Care

Patient Experience Advisor Application Process

- Application forms and copies of this handbook can be accessed online <http://www.rvh.on.ca/pfac/SitePages/pfac.aspx> or from the RVH Patient Family Advisor Coordinator at:
Phone: (705) 728-9090 ext. 42319
Email: patientfamilyadvisory@rvh.on.ca
- Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee
- The application process will include a short interview and two reference checks
- A satisfactory criminal reference check, including a vulnerable sector check are required
- An advisor must submit the results of a negative two-step Tuberculosis (TB) test
- The applicant will be personally notified about the outcome of their application

Getting Started – Onboarding & Orientation

Those selected as Patient Family Advisors will have all the information needed to join Team RVH. If you are selected as a Patient Family Advisor, RVH will ensure you have all the information you need to be prepared to join Team RVH. Comprehensive, customized orientation sessions will provide the new Patient Family Advisor with an opportunity to learn more about RVH and our commitment to improve the patient experience. An important element of the session will be time that is provided to the members to talk about their experiences.

Onboarding

- Review and sign the Privacy Pledge and Code of Conduct agreement
- Review the RVH Values in Action
- Obtain a security ID badge
- Review parking guidelines and obtain parking pass

Orientation

- Volunteer orientation session
- Additional Patient Family Advisory Program Orientation
- Coaching and /or mentorship to support transition to the Patient Family Advisor role
- Specific orientation will be offered for particular committees, councils or working groups
- Educational resources as required such as health center policies, briefing notes, surveys