



PLANETREE

An Invitation to Engage

Dear Patients & Families,

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about how to make healthcare better for everyone. This includes patients, families, healthcare staff, and the big organizations and agencies that organize, provide, and pay for healthcare. Research strongly suggests that we can improve peoples' health, their healthcare experience, and help healthcare staff enjoy their work more by involving patients and family members as equal partners in the process. That is, healthcare can only be improved if everyone works together. For many years, healthcare providers tried to make things better without asking patients and families what they thought or what mattered to them.

That way of doing things is changing.

The new way of doing things is called "Patient and Family Engaged Care."

Whatever you call it, the basic idea is that healthcare professionals need to partner with patients and families to ensure that your care matches your values, preferences, and goals. This means that you need to have conversations with healthcare providers about what health means to you, what you value, what you like, what your goals are for your health, and what you need from them in order to live your healthiest life.

This idea of "Patient and Family Engaged Care" has become so important that the National Academy of Medicine recently asked a group of experts, called a scientific advisory panel, to collect and summarize the research evidence that demonstrates what a positive difference this approach makes. The great thing is that the information is now gathered all in one, easy-to-find,

place. (It is called a "Framework for Patient and Family Engaged Care" and [can be found here](#).) In this document, the group defined steps that healthcare organizations need to take to make sure that they are partnering with patients and families in their care.

The purpose of this document, is to invite YOU, patients and family members, to engage in your healthcare. We have developed a list of suggestions for you to use in the 'real world' to make sure that patient and family engaged care happens every time you go to the doctor's office, hospital, nursing home, or other healthcare setting.

Being an engaged member of your healthcare team can mean different things to different people. Some people will be more comfortable being engaged than others. It may feel different than what you are used to. The good news is that research shows that patient and family engaged care leads to better relationships between you and your healthcare providers. It helps keeps patients safe. It reduces healthcare costs and keeps people from being unnecessarily readmitted to the hospital. Patient and family engaged care makes healthcare staff feel more connected to the work they do, which makes for a better experience for everyone. The best way to see the benefits of patient and family engaged care is to try it for yourself. We've created a "to-do" list of suggestions for patients and family members on the next page. Try one, or try them all. You are an expert about you and an important member of your healthcare team. We invite you to engage with us in making healthcare better for everyone.

Suggestions to Engage:

- On your next visit to your healthcare provider, ask them if they have seen the framework for patient and family engaged care. If not, direct them here: <https://nam.edu/pfec>.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there is a way for you to be involved in improving care. For example, ask if they have a patient-family advisory council.
- Ask to be part of the organization's leadership or government team. Ask if patients are included as board members, for example.
- Ask to be with your loved one at all times, if they want that. Question why there are restrictions to visiting patients. If having visitors is not beneficial to your healing process, enlist the support of your care team to set parameters for guests.
- Ask that a Care Partner or family member be present and engaged for all conversations about your health.
- Ask to be involved with your loved ones care, at all times, based on what you, and they, are most comfortable with.
- Invite a loved one to accompany you to appointments, procedures and consultations to provide support, but also an extra set of eyes and ears.
- Ask about your provider's experience with your condition.
- State your feelings. They matter just as much as your physical condition.
- Get involved in research. Ask about how your condition is being studied and how you can help.
- Let your care team know how you like to receive information.
- Ask to see and contribute to your medical record. If you don't understand what you read in your medical record, ask questions until you do.
- Tell your care provider what your health goals are – in your own terms (for instance, being able to walk up a flight of stairs, being able to play with your grandchildren without getting winded, etc.)
- Come to doctor's appointments prepared. Bring a notepad with questions, your medication list and any other pertinent personal healthcare information.
- Act like you belong. Be a teammate, not a subject.