

From Harm to Healing

Partnering with patients and families who have experienced harm in the healthcare system can provide important opportunities to deliver safer care.

This practice has been endorsed by the National Patients' Association of Canada & the Alberta Health Services Patient & Family Advisory Group



Involving patients and families who have experienced harm in our system can help us:

- Identify possibilities for safety and quality improvements by encouraging patients to share their experiences.
- Understand how we can mitigate the impact of harm on the lives of patients.
- Deepen our understanding and improve our collaborative capacity to provide safer care.
- Live our values of transparency, accountability, learning, safety, respect, engagement and performance in action.

Unique considerations for partnering after a harmful event...

Emotional Considerations

- ❖ Give permission to patients, their families and health care staff to step away with dignity if they need a break.
- ❖ Utilize a service recovery model like HEART: Hear, Empathize, Apologize, Resolve and Thank.

Process Considerations

- ❖ Consider if there is a plan in place for engaging all patients, family or community members involved.
For more information on engaging patients and families, visit <http://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/patientengagement.asp>
- ❖ Ensure that open discussion about the events that took place between patients and/or family members and the healthcare organization have been had.
For more information on Disclosure of Harm Policies and Procedures, visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/3916.asp>

Are we ready to partner for healing from a harmful event?

Patients, families, health care providers & leaders may all need support after a harmful event.

Remembering that *everyone has part of the right answer* will help both healing & improvement to occur.

Fit, Timing & Motivation

In collaborative relationships, partners often begin by assessing each other's personal qualities.

Think about:

- Has enough time passed since resolution with the patient, family or staff member for them to be involved in this type of work?
- Does readiness to start this work require further forgiveness? What would help?
- Are there signs that staff and leaders genuinely want to listen and include patients' perspectives?
- Arranging to meet with each person in advance to understand & plan how to address potential fears or barriers to participation.

Plan for Emotion

It is important to plan to engage both the heart and mind in this journey.

Think about:

- Sharing power. Emotions can serve as signal points in building new understandings.
- Will re-telling traumatic details lead to secondary harm for some people? Are there other ways to tell aspects of the story?
- Will certain skills or human resources be required to respectfully address the effect that some conversations may have for patient & family, or for staff & leaders?
- Determining fit for collaborative quality improvement initiatives may be an ongoing process for all involved.

The Promise

Being clear about the promises that have been made in advance and keeping them.

Think about:

- How the program or service is demonstrating commitment and progress to patients.
- Have the senior leaders stated their endorsement and support?
- Communication should demonstrate support system wide, and potentially to the public, where possible.
- Informally checking in with patients and staff to see if initiatives are working and helpful.
- Measure and provide feedback on the results. (For more information and resources call Patient Engagement at 1-877-735-1102.)

This Practical Wisdom Adapted From:

Deming, W. E. (2000). *Out of the crisis*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Micalizzi, D. A., & Bismark, M. M. (2012). The heart of health care: Parents' perspectives on patient safety. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 59(6), 1233-1246. doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2012.08.004

Trew, M., Nettleton, S., & Flemons, W. (2012). Harm to healing - partnering with patients who have been harmed. *Canadian Patient Safety Institute*, Retrieved from http://www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca/English/research/commissionedResearch/HarmtoHealing/Documents/Harm_to_Healing.pdf.