

TIPS to Make Sure the Caregiver Act Helps You

The law went into effect July 1, 2016. After this date, all patients and their family caregivers should benefit from the supports provided by the Wyoming Caregiver Act. To make sure you are receiving this help, here are a few steps you can take:

While in the hospital

- ♥ Talk with hospital staff caring for you or your loved one. This would likely be your nurse or a hospital social worker who are in the best positions to understand and help.
- ♥ You may also ask about and reach out to the department dedicated to addressing patient concerns, like Patient Relations, Patient Advocate, Guest Relations, Ombudsman or Customer Service.
- ♥ If you are a patient, ask for the opportunity to designate a caregiver in your medical record.
- ♥ If you are a family caregiver, be proactive in asking to set up a time to receive instruction from hospital staff about any aftercare you will perform at home, and ask for a demonstration if you believe this would be helpful.

After the hospital stay if there is still an issue

- ♥ Contact Wyoming Healthcare Licensing and Surveys (HLS) if you believe you did not get all of the support provided by the Wyoming Caregiver Act.
- ♥ HLS licenses and certifies Wyoming hospitals and is charged with investigating complaints about them.
- ♥ Send HLS a written complaint. Be as specific as possible about your concern, and keep a copy of the documents you send.
 - ✓ By Mail: Healthcare Licensing and Surveys
6101 Yellowstone Rd., Suite 186C
11 State House Station
Cheyenne, WY 82002
 - ✓ By Fax: 1-307-777-7127
 - ✓ By Phone: 1-307-777-7123 (ask to speak to a health surveyor)
 - ✓ To download a complaint form visit:
health.wyo.gov/aging/hls/complaints-against-healthcare-facilities/
- ♥ Trained staff reviews the complaint and decides how it should be investigated.
- ♥ An investigation could take several months to complete.
- ♥ If there is an investigation and it finds that there was a violation, HLS issues a report outlining the problems and the hospital responds with a plan saying how they will make corrections.
- ♥ You should hear from HLS about how they responded to your complaint. Contact them if you don't hear from them after a reasonable amount of time.

What is the Wyoming Caregiver Act?

Over 66,000 Wyoming residents care for older parents, spouses and loved ones, helping them to live independently in their own homes. These family caregivers have a huge responsibility and now the state of Wyoming has taken action to help them when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

In 2016, Wyoming passed a new law called the Wyoming Caregiver Act. This law requires hospitals to:

1. Provide your loved one with the opportunity to designate a family caregiver
2. Inform you when your loved one is to be discharged to another facility or back home
3. Give you an explanation and in-person instruction of the medical tasks – such as medication management, injections, wound care, and transfers – you will need to perform at home

For free wallet cards with information about the Caregiver Act, call AARP's Resource Center at 1-877-333-5885 or aarp.org/wy

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Quality Care in Wyoming Hospitals

Thousands of people become patients in one of Wyoming's hospitals every year and receive excellent care. Under the law, quality care in a Wyoming hospital includes:

- ♥ Receiving care in a safe setting
- ♥ Making informed decisions regarding your care
- ♥ Being able to file a grievance or complaint and receive a response or resolution

The Wyoming Caregiver Act is one of many ways that hospitals can ensure quality care in Wyoming. If you have additional concerns about the quality of care you or a loved one receives in a Wyoming hospital, the following are resources to help.

The hospital

- ♥ As with the Wyoming Caregiver Act, talking with the hospital staff caring for you or your loved one is usually the best place to start.
- ♥ In very serious situations when a patient is quickly becoming sicker, hospitals often have a special team called a rapid response team or medical emergency team as well as a specific helpline (sometimes called "Condition H") that patients can call for emergency assistance. This number should be posted on the wall, on the patient's telephone, or in the patient handbook.
- ♥ If your concern is still not resolved, under the law you can file a complaint or grievance with the hospital.
 - The hospital must give you contact information for filing a grievance. It also must review, investigate and resolve the grievance in a reasonable amount of time—generally 7 days.
 - The hospital should respond in writing, in language you can understand. The letter should tell you the steps taken on your behalf to investigate the grievance, the results and a contact person.
 - You or the hospital may also want to meet in person to talk about what happened.

Other organizations outside the hospital

If your concern about quality is still not resolved by the hospital, or you want to prevent a similar event from happening to another patient, you may file a complaint with Wyoming Healthcare Licensing and Surveys, the Joint Commission, or other organizations.

- ♥ **The Joint Commission:** The Joint Commission is a nonprofit organization that evaluates, accredits, and sets standards as well as patient safety goals related to quality of care for health care organizations in Wyoming and across the country. File a complaint:
 - ✓ By Mail: Office of Quality and Patient Safety: The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Blvd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
 - ✓ By Fax: 1-630-792-5636
 - ✓ By Email: patientsafetyreport@jointcommission.org
 - ✓ Online: apps.jointcommission.org/QMSInternet/IncidentEntry.aspx
- ♥ **Medicare:** If Medicare (federal health insurance program for people over age 65 or people under 65 with disabilities) pays for your or your loved one's care, you may submit a complaint to the Quality Improvement Organization in Wyoming which is called KEPRO:
 - ✓ Online Complaint Form: www.cms.gov/Medicare/CMS-Forms/CMS-Forms/downloads/cms10287.pdf
 - ✓ By Phone: 1-844-830-9504
- ♥ **Health insurance plan or HMO:** If your or your loved one's care is covered by an insurance plan or HMO, you may file a complaint about the care provided in a hospital affiliated with the health plan.
 - ✓ By Phone: Call the customer service number on the back of your insurance card.
 - ✓ Online: Check your plan's website for the section related to complaints, appeals or grievances for an online complaint form.

Disclaimer

This tip sheet is intended to inform consumers about rights and resources and should not be construed as legal advice. When considering any action regarding the information contained herein, you should always consult your legal professional.