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du cancer

CLIENT ADVOCATE

**Solving issues for
people living with
cancer**



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Client Advocate

- **A service for people living with cancer who need extraordinary intervention to resolve issues relating to services**



Client advocate overview

- **Includes navigation support within and beyond the health system**
- **Seeks resolution to issues at the lowest possible level**
- **Makes use of existing mechanisms**
- **Identifies broader issues in the course of operation that may require systemic change**



Operating principles

- **Guided by Canadian Cancer Society values: quality, caring, integrity, respect, responsiveness, accountability and teamwork.**
- **The Society supports the publicly funded health system, and client advocacy is provided within the context and parameters of that system.**
- **Problem resolution at the lowest possible level through facilitation and cooperation, professional collaboration with the client and third parties, and joint problem solving.**



Operating principles (continued)

- **Clients are treated with consideration, dignity, empathy and compassion.**
- **Except as permitted by each client, information provided by and about that client is treated as confidential.**
- **Clients' wishes with respect to personal privacy are respected.**



Operating principles (continued)

- **All parties involved in resolving client complaints/issues are treated with respect.**
- **Cases are assessed and evaluated in a timely manner, and clients are advised as to whether they can be assisted and, if so, the nature and means of that assistance.**
- **Cases are accepted or rejected on their merits, not on the basis of the client's age, gender, race or ethnicity, or on the type, stage or prognosis of the cancer.**



Legal framework - HIPA

The *Health Information Protection Act* gives individuals:

- the right to access their information related to physical and mental health, to health services that have been provided, to tests/examinations of body parts or bodily substances, to general information collected in the course of service provision or incidentally to the provision of health services, and to registration information.
- The right to “...designate in writing another person to exercise on behalf of the individual any of the individual’s rights or powers with respect to personal health information”

The Health Information Protection Act, S.S. 1999, c.H-0.021



Client Advocate staff backgrounds

- **Backgrounds in nursing, teaching, and cancer information and research**
- **Knowledge of the processes in the health field, government regulations, appeal mechanisms, conflict resolution training and excellent interpersonal and oral/written communication skills.**



How does it fit with current services?

- **Client advocate refers to quality of care coordinators as appropriate**
- **Client advocate is jurisdictionally independent – can bridge health organizations and government**
- **Scope includes referral to services in the public (provincial and federal), and private sectors**
- **Client advocate is funded entirely by donations – no perception of conflict**



Client Advocacy: it's not 'navigation'

	Navigator	Client Advocate
Scope	Limited to single agency or health system	Unlimited (treatment system, insurance companies, employers, governments at all levels, drug companies, non-profit organizations, family members)
Role	Advisor	Active agent
Independence	Reports to organization that could be origin of problem	Reports to Canadian Cancer Society
Funding/salary	Taxes/government/health agency	Donations (will not accept designated funding from government, insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies)
Object	Problem resolution and risk mitigation for health agency	Problem resolution
Ability to escalate	Limited by organizational boundaries	Limited by client's appetite and likelihood of success
Focus	Additional duties (e.g., organizational communications, media relations)	Full time



Client Advocate levels of engagement

- **Level 1**
 - Simple assistance for basic needs: e.g., general information, food bank, connections with financial assistance organizations, applications for employment or disability insurance
- **Level 2**
 - Requires understanding of system: e.g., checking on appointments or changed appointments, connection with palliative care, searching for lost records, waiting lists, linking organizations or professions
- **Level 3**
 - Involves more active representation: e.g., appealing claims denials from EI or WCB, insurance claims, drug coverage, treatment outside of province
- **Level 4**
 - Advocacy by the Society as a whole: e.g., high-level representation, media attention, legal action on behalf of client



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One step further...

- **pick up and delivery of food, medication, nutritional supplements and dressing needs**
- **arranging for caregivers to accompany and support clients to out of province treatment**
- **support through legal process**
- **attending appointments**



Trends in Cases

- **The Client Advocate reports to the Society's Director of Cancer Control who analyzes for trends that can be presented to government**



Benefits to clients

- **Independent assistance with a wide variety of issues**
- **Cross-organizational assistance**
- **Issue resolution without resorting to public, media or political channels**
- **Links to support and information services**
- **External assistance without concern about 'burning bridges' with health care providers**



Benefits to health organizations

- **Client advocate is a professional colleague**
- **Client advocate is backed by a credible organization focused on continuous improvement**
- **Non-sensational aggregate reporting on activity**
- **Early issue resolution at lowest possible level – avoids public, media or political channels**



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Activity

Position has now expanded to two positions

Together we have assisted hundreds of clients in Saskatchewan and across Canada

A review of the Client Advocate position has just been completed

Strengthening of Database capabilities for reporting purposes



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- **Do all the good you can and make as little fuss about it as possible.**

• -Mark Twain