



How Consumer Advocates Can Get Involved: Steps You Can Take to Ensure the Medical Home is Patient-Centered

What Changes Are Needed to Implement the Medical Home?

To effectively advocate for a medical home that is truly patient centered, it is necessary to understand some of the changes that need to happen in the health care system. These changes require collaboration across all stakeholders, including providers, health plans, employers, patients and others. Outlined below are three of the major areas of change required, so you can choose what to advocate for as opportunities arise.

1. Providers Must Change How they Deliver Care – To become a medical home, health care providers need to put systems and processes in place to, among other things, coordinate all of a patient's care across providers and settings; give patients access to care when they need it (including after hours or on weekends); better communicate with patients and their caregivers; ensure that providers have all the information they need about patients in an electronic format at the point of care; and regularly identify ways to improve the quality of their care, including by surveying patients about their experience with the medical home.
2. Payers and Employers Must Change the Way They Pay for Care – In order for practices to provide a full range of medical home services, providers need financial assistance in the form of incentives to implement the changes described above. Insurers, government programs and employers need to change the way they pay for care to reward high quality, patient-centered care.
3. Patients Must Be More Engaged in Their Care – Patients and their caregivers should know that, especially in a medical home, they are full partners and active participants in their care. This means expecting and asking for help on how to become informed about health conditions and treatment options, coordinating care, and communicating openly with their care team about questions, concerns and treatment plans.

What Steps Can You Take To Advance Medical Homes?

The most important step you can take is joining the effort to shape how the medical home is implemented at the state and local levels. The National Partnership for Women & Families is available to provide technical assistance as needed. Information about how to get started and specific examples of actions you can take to advance patient-centered medical homes is on the next page.

Consumer Advocate Toolkit Contents:

1. Understanding the Medical Home
2. Why Advocates Should Get Involved
⇒ *How Advocates Can Get Involved*
4. Brochure for Patients and Consumers on the Medical Home

*Download the Consumer Advocate Toolkit at
www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome*

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Where Should I Start?

Start by finding out if any medical homes currently exist or are coming to your community. For a list of state-by-state medical home activities, visit the National Partnership for Women & Families website at:

www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome, contact us at (202) 986-2600 or email qualitycarenow@nationalpartnership.org.

Once you understand the level of activity in your state, there are three major things you can do as a consumer advocate to advance the patient centered aspects of the medical home:

1. **Push for adoption of the medical home concept in your state or community:**
 - ☑ Build a coalition in your community to advocate for the patient-centered medical home. With coalition partners, meet with employer groups, health care providers, and health plans to articulate your support for patient-centered care. Coalition members can also educate legislators about the potential for patient-centered medical homes to improve care and outcomes and reduce costs. The National Partnership can help you identify employer, health care provider, and health plan contacts as well as potential coalition partner organizations.
 - ☑ Encourage health plans to provide financial reimbursements to physician practices that adopt the patient-centered medical home model. You can also encourage employers to advocate for the development of medical homes when engaging in contract negotiations with health plans. See “The Patient-Centered Medical Home: A Purchaser Guide,” available at http://www.nbch.org/documents/pcpcc_guide_070908.pdf.
 - ☑ Express your support for a truly patient centered medical home to state and federal legislators, and work with them to create or shape medical home legislation. For a list of medical home legislation, see the American Academy of Family Physicians website at: <http://www.trendtrack.com/texis/app/viewrpt?event=483e340d37b>
2. **Help design and implement the medical home model in your state and community:**
 - ☑ After identifying existing or emerging medical home initiatives, work with the stakeholders directing them to advocate for the needs of consumers. Start by reviewing the *consumer principles* for how the medical home should be patient-centered at www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome. Use the principles to evaluate the design of existing initiatives and push for changes where needed.
 - ☑ Ask to serve as a consumer representative on a workgroup or planning committee for a local medical home initiative. As a consumer advocate, your input is valued by other stakeholders. By serving on a workgroup that is designing and implementing a medical home, you can articulate the needs of patients and ensure that the design of the medical home is truly patient-centered.
 - ☑ Facilitate partnerships between existing medical homes and community resources, such as senior centers, housing advocates, community-based mental health clinics and support groups. As an advocate, you are aware of the barriers that some patients face—barriers such as unstable housing situations, lack of affordable insurance, mental or physical disability, or inability to understand

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health information. Community-based resources can help medical home teams understand and address medical and non-medical barriers patients may face in getting or staying healthy.

- Engage other community advocates in design and implementation efforts so they can evaluate the medical home concept and shape it according to the needs of their constituents.

3. Help your **constituents and community partners** learn about the medical home and patient-centered care.

- Educate and engage your constituents by helping them to understand:
 - What the medical home is and how it can benefit patients and their caregivers
 - How to find a medical home
 - How to recognize patient-centered care and ask for it from a medical home team
 - How to make good health care choices as an active participant in managing their own health care
 - How to find and use information that compares the quality of care provided by local health care providers
- Use the patient brochure that is part of this toolkit available at www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome.
- Include information about the medical home concept, its advantages and the need for consumer involvement on your website and in your newsletters and other publications. The National Partnership can assist you in drafting these materials.
- Hold an educational forum for other community organizations about the potential benefits of patient-centered care and the medical home.
- Educate other community-based organizations about the medical home model and the need to get involved in shaping medical home initiatives so they will be patient-centered.

Next Steps

For more information on what consumer advocates believe the medical home should be, read the Consumer Principles on Patient- and Family-Centered Care and the Medical Home available at www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome.

For assistance getting involved in medical home efforts locally, contact the National Partnership for Women & Families at (202) 986-2600 or qualitycare@nationalpartnership.org.

About Us

Founded in 1971, the National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan consumer advocacy organization located in Washington, DC. The National Partnership is dedicated to promoting public policies and practices that improve the well-being of our nation's families. This toolkit was developed with support from the WellPoint Foundation. More at: www.nationalpartnership.org.