



## Why Consumer Advocates Should Get Involved: Ensuring that the Medical Home is Patient-Centered

### What is a Medical Home?

A “medical home” — sometimes referred to as a “patient-centered medical home”— is a medical office or clinic where a team of health professionals work together to provide a new, expanded type of care to patients.

A medical home is not an institution or nursing home, but a medical office or clinic that offers coordinated, comprehensive primary care that is personal and focused on making sure the patient’s health care needs are met. The medical home approach has the potential to improve the quality of care patients receive and reduce costs.

### Why Should You Get Involved?

#### *Medical Homes are Being Established across the Country*

The medical home model is gaining momentum nationwide as a way to improve the quality of care and reduce costs by offering more accessible, comprehensive, and coordinated primary care:

- At least 13 state Medicaid programs are offering medical homes to enrollees;
- A number of major employers and private insurers are initiating medical home pilots; and
- The Medicare program is launching medical home demonstration projects in at least eight states in 2009.

It is likely that a medical home pilot is now or will soon be developed in your region. Given the number of medical home initiatives being implemented across the country, the need for your involvement could not be more compelling.

#### *There are No Guarantees*

While the medical home model of care holds great promise, there is no guarantee that it will be designed and implemented in a way that truly benefits patients and their families. For example, some are concerned that a medical home could become an obstacle to patients who seek care from other sources, like mental health or reproductive care providers. The medical home should help facilitate and coordinate this care, rather than serving as a gatekeeper. And any financial incentives paid to a medical home should be based on coordination of care, and not limiting care. But the best way to ensure that the medical home model works as it should is to help shape its development.

Others want to be sure that different types of health professionals who deliver primary care are also able to serve as medical homes, in addition to physician practices. This could include both additional settings, like community health clinics, as well as different types of providers, like nurse practitioners.

### Consumer Advocate Toolkit Contents:

1. Understanding the Medical Home  
⇒ *Why Advocates Should Get Involved*
3. 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](http://www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome)*

## Why Consumer Advocates Should Get Involved: Ensuring that the Medical Home is Patient-Centered

### *You Can Make a Difference for Patients and Consumers*

To realize the promise of the medical home, patient and consumer advocates must get involved as initiatives are developed at the state and local levels. Your involvement can help ensure that the central focus remains improving patients' health.

Without your advocacy, it is too easy for stakeholders to focus on enhanced reimbursements or the potential for cost savings, and not giving the highest quality care to patients. Your engagement can help assure that "patient-centered" is a defining feature of the medical home.

### **Next Steps**

To review examples of specific steps you can take to help shape the medical home locally, read the Consumer Advocate Toolkit section on "How Consumer Advocates Can Get Involved," available at [www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome](http://www.nationalpartnership.org/medicalhome). You may also contact the National Partnership for Women & Families at (202) 986-2600 or [qualitycare@nationalpartnership.org](mailto:qualitycare@nationalpartnership.org).

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### **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](http://www.nationalpartnership.org).