



## Office of Developmental Primary Care

*Improving health outcomes for people with developmental disabilities*

# Preparing for Hospital Team Meetings: A Checklist for Self-Advocates and Their Caregivers

Team meetings are excellent ways to enhance communication, clarify information about illness and/or prognosis, discuss goals of care, and/or address other patient, family or team concerns as they arise. Below are checklists designed to support the participation of patients and their caregivers so that these meetings can be as successful and positive as is possible.

### Before the meeting:

- Write down any questions or priorities you may have.
- Identify who needs to be present from your circle of support. Include them in the scheduling.
- Be mindful that many medical decisions and care plans can impact the services and supports you receive, such as funding, housing, transportation, and other accommodations. Be prepared to ask questions about logistics and to bring up potential challenges to implementing the plan.
- Consider sharing photographs of yourself that reflect your everyday life, including doing what you love and/or being with loved ones. This can remind the entire team of who you are outside of the hospital setting and what your goals may be.
- If needed, identify a supporter and someone who can take notes. Consider a formal Supported Decision-Making agreement so that you, your supporter, and the rest of the team are clear about roles and responsibilities. Sample agreements are available from the ACLU Supported Decision-Making Resource Library: <https://www.aclu.org/other/supported-decision-making-resource-library>.
- Decide if you, or one of your supporters, would like to speak, present a written document, or present first at the meeting.
- Remember that you have the right to ask questions. If you are not able to, or are uncomfortable, asking questions, identify a member of your team to do so on your behalf.
- Consider having a pre-meeting with the meeting coordinator (this may be a hospital Social Worker, your supporter, or a nurse case manager). The meeting coordinator can help you:
  - Decide your priorities and give you time to think and prepare.
  - Bring up difficult topics.
  - Manage conflicts between members of your support team.
  - Ensure that people you need on your team are invited. This may include people from palliative care, chaplaincy, case management, hospice, home care, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, or others. This will help make sure experts are present who can address all your needs in your health care plan.
  - Address any access needs that you or any of your supporters may have. This may include communication supports, such as an interpreter, equipment or information in plain language or other alternative formats.
  - Make sure the meeting space is accessible to you and team members have places to sit. If you are more comfortable, you or your supporters may be able to attend by speakerphone or video conferencing. This may be especially helpful for supporters who cannot come in person.
  - Prompt team members to direct their comments directly to you.

### **During the meeting:**

- If something is not clear, you can ask that it be repeated or rephrased.
- Should you start to feel tired or overwhelmed, ask to take a short break.
- If the meeting is moving too rapidly, ask people to slow down.
- Remember that you do not have to make any final decisions at the meeting. Take time to process the information and speak with your supporters. You can let people know your decisions after the meeting ends.

### **After the meeting:**

- Talk with the meeting coordinator. Share your understanding of the meeting, including next steps. Let them know if you need more information on anything that was discussed. If you have questions after the meeting, you can ask the coordinator or your supporter to help you get answers
- Hospital meetings can be stressful for you or your supporters. You can share these feelings with the meeting coordinator. They can help you cope and find helpful resources for you.