

# Patient Confidentiality

With a chronic illness like schizophrenia, information is critical. When "patient confidentiality" is used to keep important information from family members, it can be frustrating. There may be times when a patient refuses to give permission for information to be shared with their family. There may be other times when the professional feels that family involvement would be harmful for the patient.

Not all information shared between a patient and a health care provider has to be kept confidential. In fact, patients can agree to let information be shared with the family by filling out a Form 14. If this is an option, speak to your doctor about arranging for this form to be signed. If a patient is unable to give permission, a professional can decide that sharing information is valuable.

Families can also take steps to be sure that information is shared with them:

- > Be proactive. When your relative is well or competent, contact a lawyer together to sign a "power of attorney for personal care." This is a legal document that allows another person to make important decisions on someone's behalf, such as decisions about health care.
- > Talk to different members of the treatment team and get their perspective.
- > Talk to professionals about what information you need to provide proper care and support.

If your loved one has been ill for a number of years, and has been hospitalized several times, they may meet the criteria for a Community Treatment Order (CTO). This means they can live in the community, provided they follow their treatment plan and take their medication. More information about Community Treatment Orders is available from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care ([www.gov.on.ca/health/index.html](http://www.gov.on.ca/health/index.html)).

## Where can I get more information?

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is here to help. We're a family-based organization that understands what it's like to live with schizophrenia. Our objectives are to:

- > Provide family support and education
- > Promote public awareness and understanding
- > Advocate for better legislation and services for people with schizophrenia
- > Promote research into the causes, treatment and cure of schizophrenia

## "to alleviate the suffering caused by schizophrenia"



more info:

For further information, please contact us at:

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Website: [www.schizophrenia.on.ca](http://www.schizophrenia.on.ca)

*This information should not be used as a substitute for the advice of a professional. Consult a physician or a lawyer to discuss your individual facts and circumstances.*



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THE SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ONTARIO  
SOCIÉTÉ ONTARIENNE DE LA SCHIZOPHRÉNIE  
UNE SOURCE D'ESPOIR, DE SOUTIEN ET D'ENTRAIDE.

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# Schizophrenia Facts for Families



## You and the treatment team



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## You and the treatment team

People with a chronic illness like schizophrenia are in contact with many different health care professionals, from psychiatrists to occupational therapists.

When families are part of the treatment, the chances for success are much better.

## How can I help?

You know and understand your family member. You can contribute to treatment and recovery by being involved in a positive way. That means building good relationships with the professionals who provide care and services.

Learn the names of the people involved in their care and treatment and ask how you can be involved.

Understand that professionals often have to deal with difficult patients, unrealistic expectations, funding shortages, and laws that affect what they can do. When someone really makes a difference, write a letter to show your appreciation.

## What is my role in the treatment team

If your relative has a treatment team, you should ask to be a part of it. It's important that both of you be involved in decisions involving care and treatment. As a member of the treatment team, you should:

- > Ask for regular meetings. How often they are held will vary, depending on the stage of the illness.
- > Help keep meetings short and focused. Be on time for appointments and come prepared with your list of questions, concerns, and observations.
- > Get involved in developing and reviewing the treatment plan. The plan should include goals, actions, and progress.
- > Be familiar with your loved one's medications
- > If they are receiving treatment in the hospital, be involved in decisions around discharge.

## What is my role in care and treatment?

One of the most important things you can do is be informed. If you need information, ask questions. If you don't understand something, ask for more explanation.

- > Learn as much as you can about how the health care system works. Follow hospital routines.
- > Keep detailed, accurate records (including dates) of everything that involves their care and treatment. Keep letters and other correspondence organized in files.
- > Try to be constructive and helpful.
- > Talk about your family member as a person, not just as someone with an illness.
- > If they have been found incompetent to make treatment decisions, you may be asked to be a Substitute Decision Maker. Contact the Ministry of the Attorney General for more information.

## What can I expect from health care professionals?

Health care professionals should:

- > Develop a relationship with the patient.
- > Involve other professionals when needed.
- > Provide services that are culturally sensitive.
- > Provide information that is straightforward and easy to understand, in a person's first language whenever possible. Technical terms should be clarified.
- > Provide you with information about schizophrenia and what support is available to you as a caregiver.
- > Stay up-to-date on the latest developments in medication and research.

Try not to be intimidated by doctors or other health care professionals. Most health care providers are caring and understanding. Focus on why you are there: to get the best care for your loved one.

## What if I have a problem with a health care professional?

You may have a concern about the care or treatment that cannot seem to be resolved, no matter what you do. Don't give up.

- > Write a letter about your concern and send it to the person involved, the hospital's chief of staff or CEO (chief executive officer), or another official.
- > Contact the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. They have a way for the public to express concerns about a doctor. (1-800-268-7096, ext. 615 or [www.cpso.on.ca](http://www.cpso.on.ca))
- > Keep records of all letters and correspondence.

