



MEDICAL ADVOCACY VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Medical Advocacy is as involved as the member and volunteer wish for it to be. Each member has unique needs and each relationship has a unique dynamic, making it impossible to predict the role that any of the volunteers will have in medical advocacy.

Medical Advocacy takes many forms, which can range from reminding a member to make a medical appointment to physically attending appointments and completing follow up with medical professionals on behalf of the member.

The most important things to remember are to work at your own pace and comfort level when it comes to providing support around the member's medical needs.

If a member is interested in having a volunteer provide some level of Medical Advocacy, there are tools available to assist the volunteers with this process.

Taking PART in appointments

A seemingly simple concept, like **PART**, can be a very useful tool to help members prepare for, take part in, and follow up after appointments.

- **Prepare.** Write an agenda for the appointment including the reason for the visit and any questions/concerns. Bring up the question/concerns at the **beginning** of the appointment and, if possible, give a written copy to the medical professional. The professional may not be able to address everything, but you can at least go over the most important concerns.
- **Ask.** Do not be afraid to ask for clarification if something the medical professional says is not clear at the moment. The member will not be able to follow the professional's recommendation properly if the instructions are not clear.
- **Repeat.** At the end of the appointment take the time to briefly paraphrase what was discussed and decided upon. This step allows the medical professional to correct any confusion before the member leaves the office.
- **Take Action.** The member should be realistic and honest about what they are and are not willing and able to do. There may need to be a modification to a recommended treatment plan in order for the member to be successful.

A TRAIL member may ask a volunteer to participate in all or none of these activities. Keep in mind that **PART** is just one tool to help members get more organized when it comes to appointments. **PART** can easily be modified to meet a member's individual needs.

Working with medications

There is a very good chance a member is taking at least one form of medication. Medical Advocacy is not about becoming an expert on medication management or tracking a member's medication. TRAIL volunteers never administer medications. It is worth asking about medications to make sure the member is feeling confident in their own ability to manage their medications.

- Keep in mind that each medication may have two effects. The first effect is the chemical reaction in the body. The second effect may be a psychological reaction, which can have powerful effects on treatments.
- Make sure the member has a clear understanding of why they are taking a medication and that it is not just because the doctor ordered it.
- Doctors depend on patients to report if and when medications are working or not working. It is of vital importance to report any side effects experienced.

Preparing for a medical appointment

TRAIL asks each member working with a Medical Advocate to furnish a notebook where medical information can be recorded. This notebook can be used to take notes prior and during the appointment. The front of the notebook is a good place to record allergies and any other pertinent information. TRAIL also has a medication form that you can use.

Some helpful tips:

1. Arrive on time, or early. Although the doctor may be running late, be sure the patient is not.
2. Give the doctor a copy of the list of concerns, issues and questions you have at the beginning of the appointment.
3. Make sure to have an accurate understanding of any follow-up needed after the appointment.

Questions and tasks to review with the member prior to the appointment:

1. What is the reason for this appointment?
2. List all of the medications and vitamins you are currently taking, along with dosages on the medication form.
3. Report any problems you've had taking your medications as prescribed, such as dosage, timing, side effects, with or without food, etc.
4. List any symptoms or changes you have noticed since your last visit. Be as specific as possible.
5. What questions or concerns do you want to discuss with the doctor or other healthcare provider at this appointment?
6. If you receive unexpected news, does the member want the Medical Advocate to ask relevant questions?