

Advocating for Your Personal and Cultural Needs in Health Care

When it comes to receiving health care, you have a right to treatment that respects your background and preferences. This includes your culture, values, language and lived experiences. Speaking up can help you get care that feels safe and effective.

How to Advocate for Yourself in a Health Care Setting

Advocacy means sharing what you need. Being active in your care can improve understanding and trust.

- Prepare for doctor visits. Write down questions, symptoms and goals.
- Share what matters to you. This may include culture, faith, family roles or past care.
- Ask for clear answers. It's okay to ask, "Can you explain that in a different way?"

What Culturally Responsive Care Looks Like

Health care can and should respect your background and values. Respectful care can improve health outcomes and satisfaction. Look for:

- Providers who listen without judgment.
- Care plans that match your beliefs and preferences.
- Language needs that are supported, including interpreters.

Speak Up if you Feel Dismissed or Misunderstood

If something does not feel right, say so. You deserve to be heard and taken seriously.

- Use "I" statements, such as "I feel misunderstood."
- Ask for time to state your concern.
- Request a second opinion if needed.

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In health care, you have a right to respectful care without discrimination, an interpreter without cost, and to file a complaint if needed.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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How to Request a Provider Who Shares Your Background or Values

You can ask for a provider who feels like a better fit for you. Having a good fit can support better engagement in care (National Institute of Mental Health).

- Contact your health plan or provider office.
- Ask about providers with shared culture, language or experience.
- Ask about telehealth options if local choices are limited.

How to Use Your Patient Rights and Protections

You have rights in health care settings. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services explains patient rights and how to speak up. These include:

- The right to respectful care without discrimination.
- The right to an interpreter at no cost if you need one.
- The right to file a complaint or grievance.

Helpful Reminders

- You do not have to share more than you are comfortable sharing.
- It is OK to bring a trusted person to appointments.
- Your voice matters in your mental health care.

#MinorityMentalHealthMatters #NotaCharacterFlaw

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issue, help is out there. Contact the Mental Health America 24/7 Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741-741).

Reviewed by medical director, MD and senior counsel, JD.