

A Guide for Effective Communication in Health Care

Patients

It is important for your health and well-being that you communicate clearly with your doctors and staff. Asking questions can avoid mistakes and misunderstandings and help you to get the safest and best care possible. The more you understand about your own health, the better decisions you and your health care team can make. This is known as *effective communication*.

Effective communication is when information between two or more people is shared or exchanged and each person is able to fully understand and make decisions based on that information. This is often a process that requires going back and forth with questions and answers until everyone has a clear understanding.

This Guide will help you to understand:

- What is needed for effective communication?
- What is a Communication Access Plan (CAP)? Why is it important? How should it be used?
- What are the “auxiliary aids and services” that may help you to communicate?
- What are your legal rights to effective communication?
- How to get what you need for:
 - Emergency Department visits
 - Inpatient hospital stays
 - Outpatient appointments
 - Tests and procedures

You can print information from this Guide. You can also give the Provider section of the Guide to your health care team to help them learn more about your communication needs.