

Client Advocacy Tips for Caregivers - Maureen Grant

Get yourself organized. Keep a binder or folder with all relevant information regarding the situation. Contacts, doctors, dates of appointments and who was seen or spoken to. Once you have gotten through the maze to a real person make sure you note their name and number for future reference. It's a great way to managing the situation and gives you a better sense of control.

Have your questions ready and written down before meetings and phone calls. In the moment we often forget important things and don't always have the chance to ask later. Do you need information on medications, procedures, services, diet, transportation, equipment? Who, what, where, when, and why - are helpful questions to keep in mind.

Ask for copies of reports, assessments, lab work, service plans, and test results. Often we are asked by other professionals for information so it is helpful to have this for future discussions.....Who was that doctor that you saw 3 months ago?

Keep track of the names of all the people and their contact info from the Doctors to the Home Support workers and or volunteers. Use their names when you speak with them and make sure they know who you are and the client's name. "Hello Mary, it's Mabel Marvel - I was wondering if you could tell me how my father Jason Marvel has been doing today". This provides context as well as a personal touch and reinforces that we are dealing with individuals, not just numbers.

Plan Ahead for Future Needs and Have Your Affairs In Order. Make sure that you have your overall affairs in order. Do you have a Power of Attorney? A Health Care Representation Agreement? Have you discussed Advanced Care Planning – do you know what decisions your loved one would make? Is the Will up to date? Do you know where important papers are? Have the discussions now. This makes good sense when you are advocating for the best possible outcome for your loved one.

Be Persistent in the Nicest Way Possible. Keep calm and carry on! Keep asking until someone helps you. Be polite and courteous. Keep the discussion professional. Respectful communication goes a long way. Move it forward to a higher level if it's a decision that cannot be made on the front line.

The Basic Principles in a Respectful Working Relationship

Focus on the situation, issue or behaviour, not the person.

Maintain the self-confidence and self-esteem of others.

Maintain constructive relationships.

Take initiative to make things better.

Lead by example

Think beyond the moment.