

CHAPTER 4

GRIEVANCES IN A PATIENT CENTERED CARE ENVIRONMENT

We need to understand both Patient Centered Care (PCC) and grievances. There are many definitions of PCC. Some have been created by healthcare organizations and some by advocacy groups. The Forum of ESRD Networks Kidney Patient Advisory Committee defines PCC as:

“Patient driven healthcare delivered in a way that is focused on an individual patient's values and preferences and involves both sharing information and active shared decision making with patient, family/caregivers, and medical professionals to reach customized, individualized and realistically obtainable goals of care. This is an ongoing process, keeping in mind these goals may change over time.”

In Patient Centered Care:

- ✓ Patients and families are equal members of the treatment team who are expected to be engaged and share in decisions about their care.
- ✓ Knowing about their disease, its treatment, and options is a critical part of being able to be engaged.

In a Patient Centered Care environment:

- ✓ Information is freely offered
- ✓ Questions are encouraged
- ✓ Patients are consulted about changes and decisions



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) defines a grievance as:

“A written or oral communication from an ESRD patient, and/or an individual representing an ESRD patient, and/or another party alleging that a Medicare covered ESRD service did not meet recommended standards of safety or civility, or professionally recognized clinical standards of care”.

So if someone feels that care is not safe, that staff is not civil, or that the care did not meet requirements, they may file a grievance about their care with the ESRD Network that covers their area and/or the State Health Department. You may, of course, contact your Network any time you have a question or concern.

Most of the time, problems don't start out as a grievance. Patients may have questions or concerns, or feel they are not being treated with respect. They may feel that these concerns are not handled by the facility as quickly or as completely as they should be.

There is usually one person on staff that a patient or family member trusts and feels comfortable talking with when a problem comes up. This is the best place to start. In a true PCC environment, there should be several people like this, including at least one Facility Patient Representative (FPR). An FPR is a patient in the same center that has had some training and agrees to speak for patients with the leaders of the facility. One or more FPRs may be on the Governing Body of the facility or involved in a Patient-Family Council where patients, families and staff *work together* to create a welcoming environment. There may also be suggestion boxes that are used to collect ideas. In a PCC environment, a suggestion to improve is viewed as a successful partnership with an engaged patient.

Please refer to page 36 for a complete list of all of the 18 ESRD Network's Patient Toll Free telephone numbers. You may also visit <http://esrdncc.org/professionals/all-esrd-networks/> to find your ESRD Network.

In a PCC environment patients and families know how to address their concerns. All centers are required by Medicare to post information in common areas about how to file a grievance. This information will explain how to file a grievance at the facility, how to contact their ESRD Network and the State Health Department, and how to report unsafe practices. Many of the dialysis corporations have 800 numbers for grievances to be handled at a higher level than the facility.

If there is not a trusted person you feel you can talk to, or you are not satisfied with the way a complaint has been handled, you may contact either your ESRD Network or State Health Department to look into your complaint.

REALITY CHECK

If you contact the Network for help, THEY CAN:

- ✓ Give you names and phone numbers of people you can speak to at your clinic's corporate offices.
- ✓ Give you information about Medicare regulations and your rights under Medicare.
- ✓ Contact the clinic and conduct a confidential investigation into your grievance, which may include one or more of the following actions:
 - Request medical records
 - Interview staff members or patients and asking for details about a grievance
 - If necessary, visit a clinic in person
 - Confidential means we will not tell anyone at the facility or clinic your name, unless you give us permission to do so

If you contact the Network for help, THEY CANNOT:

- ✓ Force a clinic or doctor to accept a patient.
- ✓ Guarantee you can choose which staff members put your needles in.
- ✓ Change or get involved in anything that has to do with personnel policies and procedures.
- ✓ Get a doctor, nurse or patient care technician "fired" or transferred.

