



onguard

A regular newsletter for guardians in NSW

February 2010

ISSN NUMBER 1836-5485

Contents

Welcome to the first edition of *onguard* for 2010.

In this edition we focus on discharge planning and things for you to consider as guardians.

We hope you find it valuable!

We would love your feedback or ideas for future editions!

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Focus on discharge planning

Going to hospital

A trip to the hospital for a person under guardianship can be an intimidating event. The focus may be on the person's medical treatment with little thought to what happens when a person leaves hospital. Your role as a guardian in the discharge process may not be clearly understood by hospital staff.

Whether discharge from hospital is to home, a rehabilitation facility or aged care facility the way this transition is handled is critical to the health and well-being of the person under guardianship. Effective discharge planning can decrease the chances that a person is readmitted to the hospital, can help identify care issues and needs and enable appropriate care plans to be developed.

What is discharge planning?

Discharge planning is the process of deciding what a person needs for a smooth move from one level of care to another. It is the link between hospitals, community-based services, organisations, families and carers. Although discharge planning is a significant part of a person's overall care plan frequently there is a lack of consistency in both the process and quality of discharge planning across the healthcare system.

What is in a discharge plan?

Basic elements of a discharge plan include:

- assessment of a persons needs by qualified professional
- discussion with the person, their legal guardian and family
- plan for transition to home or other facility
- referrals to community support services
- details for follow up appointments or tests

Worried about pets when going to hospital? **POOPS** (Pets of Older People) offers a free service for pet care, respite and permanent care when needed. Contact poops@rspcansw.org.au or phone: 02 9770 7555.



Who co-ordinates discharge?

Every hospital is different but there does need to be a nominated staff member such as a ward clerk, ward nurse, or the Nursing Unit Manager who co-ordinates discharge plans. Where there are multiple issues a discharge planner or coordinator or case manager should be involved. Their role is to ensure that health professionals are contacted, appropriate referrals made, that medications, support services, transport, and follow-up is in place.

Your role in discharge planning

As a guardian you play an important role in discharge planning. The person, their family, carer or legal guardian must be at the centre of care and are partners in care. Guardians can expect to be involved at every stage of the discharge planning process. Ideally, discharge planning should start before admission with those who are involved in the care or support of the person to ensure the best care is provided after hospitalisation. This gives everyone the opportunity to plan and predict the things that might be needed after the person's hospital stay.

Clear communication

There needs to be clear communication between you and hospital staff to start discharge planning. Advise hospital staff of your appointment as guardian and provide them with a copy of the guardianship order. You may need to explain what your role is and discuss expectations. Discharge plans involve various aspects of a person's life including medical treatment, healthcare, accommodation, and services. Guardians can stand in the person's place and make the decisions which the person is unable to make. You can agree or disagree with various aspects of the discharge plan.

Decision maker not carer

Your role as guardian is as a substitute decision maker, not a carer (although you may be both). Remember you are not responsible for finding accommodation or organising services but as a family member or friend you may be asked to assist in finding accommodation.

If you have a complaint about discharge speak to the hospital Patient Representative or contact the Health Care Complaints Commission on 1800 043 159 or www.hccc.nsw.gov.au

Ask for a case conference

You can request to be consulted about discharge plans or you can request a case conference. A case conference is a meeting between key people involved in the care of the person under guardianship. Case conferences can assist with clear communication. They have a multidisciplinary focus involving staff from hospital and community as well as the patient, guardian, carer and family or friend. Complex issues relating to discharge can be discussed. As guardian you can also request a discharge plan and ask for it in writing.



For more information read NSW Health policy directive on **Discharge Planning: Responsive Standards** this can be obtained from NSW Health website www.health.nsw.gov.au

Substitute Consent

The Public Guardian has updated this booklet on Part 5 of the Guardianship Act. This section of the Act is about what the law says when a person cannot make their own decisions about medical and dental treatment. It outlines who can make decisions and the sorts of decisions that can be made. This is a useful guide for guardians and healthcare professionals where there is a need to seek and make substitute medical and dental decisions. This booklet can be downloaded from our website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/opg or you can contact PGSU for a copy.