

Health Advocacy: Speaking Up for Yourself in Healthcare Settings



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WHAT IS HEALTH ADVOCACY?

Health advocacy is when you take an active role in your health care by speaking up, asking questions, and participating in decision making to ensure you receive the care you believe is best for you. Even if that means being assertive and challenging medical opinions or standing up for yourself when you feel dismissed. [1]

WHY SELF-ADVOCACY MATTERS

- You know your body best.
- It empowers you to take control of your health.
- Health Advocacy is linked to better health outcomes and lower medical costs over time.[2]
- Early documentation can protect your health and support legal or medical claims.
- Some providers may not understand the risks of environmental exposures. Your voice can make the difference for yourself and other patients.

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF WITH A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Be Prepared:

- Keep a **journal of your symptoms**.
 - Include dates, duration, severity.
- Draft a **timeline of your exposure**.
 - Where and when you were exposed?
- Note **how you were exposed**.
 - Drinking or eating, skin contact, breathing?
- Gather any past **medical records or test results**.
- **Take notes** during appointments and review your notes to make sure that you understand what was discussed during your appointment.

Ask Specific Questions

- “Could my symptoms be related to environmental exposure?”
- “Can I be referred to a specialist?”

ENROLL IN THE REDHILL REGISTRY

- **Health Monitoring:** Track short-term and long-term health outcomes related to fuel exposure.
- **Resource Provision:** Connect individuals with services and support networks.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve individuals who were exposed, health professionals and advocates, and concerned O’ahu residents in the development and direction of the Registry.
- **Research Facilitation:** Serve as a data repository to generate hypotheses and investigate links between exposure and health effects.

[Join the Registry](#)



The Red Hill Registry is accepting information from both adults and children who express interest in being enrolled.

Contact Information

Email: info@redhillregistry.org
Website: www.RedHillRegistry.org
Instagram: [@RedHillRegistry](https://www.instagram.com/RedHillRegistry)
Facebook: [Red Hill Registry](https://www.facebook.com/RedHillRegistry)



REQUESTING SPECIALTY CARE

MEDICAL SPECIALTIES	HOW CAN THEY HELP?
Primary Care	Ongoing support and referrals to specialists
Dermatology	Treat skin issues like rashes or irritation
Mental Health Services	Support for anxiety, trauma, depression, stress
Neurology	Help with memory loss, dizziness, nerve issues

TIPS FOR BEING HEARD

- **Bring a trusted friend** or family member for support.
- **Be firm and calm**, especially if you feel you are not being taken seriously.
- Ask providers to **note your concerns** in your file.
- **Seek second opinions** when needed.
- **Take notes and review** with your Provider.



Every Voice Matters. Every Story Counts.

By speaking up, you protect your well-being—and help others facing the same fight. Advocacy starts with asking questions, seeking answers, and refusing to be ignored.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A PATIENT [3]

You have the right to:

- **Involvement** in your care.
- **Clear information** about diagnoses, treatment options, and risks.
- **Access** your medical records.
- **Privacy and confidentiality.**
- **Report concerns** or complaints.
- Be treated with **dignity and respect.**
- Ask to be **referred to a specialist.** (Availability of certain specialist may vary by your insurance or location).

Reference:

[1] Martin, L. T., Schonlau, M., Haas, A., Derose, K. P., Rosenfeld, L., Buka, S. L., & Rudd, R. (2011). Patient activation and advocacy: which literacy skills matter most?. *Journal of health communication*, 16 Suppl 3(Suppl 3), 177–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2011.604705>

[2] CDC, Patient Engagement – Patient Self-Advocacy, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/health-literacy/php/research-summaries/patient-engagement.html>

[3] American Hospital Association. (n.d.). The patient care partnership: Understanding expectations, rights and responsibilities. Chicago, IL: AHA.

<https://www.aha.org/other-resources/patient-care-partnership>