



Dear Consumer,

The Coalition for Patients' Rights™ (CPR) is committed to ensuring a full range of health care choices for all patients. As such, we have developed a set of materials, called the Consumer Toolkit that will serve as an informative and critical tool for you as you look for the most appropriate health care provider for your individual needs. This Toolkit will also equip you with the materials you need to help protect and promote access to a broad spectrum of health care professionals.

The Consumer Toolkit consists of the following:

- **Meet your health care professional** – Everyone knows what a physician does, but do you know what the specialists of CPR's membership do? This reference sheet lists all CPR organizations and includes a plain-English description about what each of these providers do. Each organization's website is also included for further information.
- **Tips for finding health care providers** – Every patient should have the right to access the health care provider of their choice. This document is designed to assist in the important selection process.
- **Questions for new health care providers** – This document contains a list of questions that you should consider when searching for a new health care provider. They are designed to aid in the selection process that will ensure you receive the care that best suits your specific needs.
- **Template letter to your insurance company** – This tool will help you address financial barriers that prevent you from accessing the health care professional of your choice. Insurance companies may cover the services of one provider but fail to do so for another, despite advantages to care.
- **Template letter to state legislators** – A letter to a legislative representative is a valuable tool that provides you with a way to weigh in with lawmakers and share your concerns. This state-focused template is customizable so you can personalize your message, and also includes a general statement aimed at impacting legislation and highlighting priorities.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.patientsrightscoalition.org](http://www.patientsrightscoalition.org).

Sincerely,

The Coalition for Patients' Rights



## Meet Your Health Care Professional

Did you know that there are more than three million licensed and certified health care professionals who are not doctors of medicine (MDs) or doctors of osteopathy (DOs), who are well-prepared to provide the health care you need? Without the contributions of these professionals, many patients would not have access to important health care services and options, especially those in rural and medically underserved areas.

Take a moment to “meet” some of the health care professionals who can help you maintain your health and address problems you may have. Visit the links for further information.

**Registered Nurses** – With 3.1 million registered nurses (RNs) in the US, they represent the largest group of health care professionals. There are many RNs who are educated and licensed to provide specialized care. Through their extensive knowledge and experience, they advocate for and provide care for individuals, families and communities to maintain or restore health and wellness. RNs are essential providers within our health care system, and the services they offer are regulated at the state level. There are a number of professional membership organizations that can provide more information about the type of care provided by the RNs they represent:

| Organization Name                                  | Description   | Website  |
|--|---|--|
| American Association of Occupational Health Nurses | Nurses who provide care for patients who experience work related and environmental hazards. | <a href="http://www.aaohn.org">www.aaohn.org</a>                       |
| Association of Nurses in AIDS Care                 | Nurses who provide care for patients with HIV/AIDS.   | <a href="http://www.nursesinaidscare.org">www.nursesinaidscare.org</a> |
| Association of periOperative Registered Nurses     | Nurses who function as first assistant, scrub nurse or circulating nurse during surgery.    | <a href="http://www.aorn.org">www.aorn.org</a>                         |

**Advanced Practice Registered Nurses** – Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) include certified registered nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives and clinical nurse specialists. They have extensive knowledge and training in their fields, and complete graduate level education prior to obtaining license and certification in their field. Nurse practitioners and certified nurse-midwives help keep people healthy through preventive and primary care. Many also provide more specialized care as well, in diseases such as heart disease or cancer. Clinical nurse specialists help people manage many types of chronic mental and physical illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma. There are a number of organizations that can provide more information about APRNs:

| Organization Name   | Description  | Website  |
|---|--|--|
| American Academy of Nurse Practitioners                       | Nurse practitioners practicing in ambulatory, acute and long term care as primary and/or specialty care providers.   | <a href="http://www.aanp.org">www.aanp.org</a>       |
| American Association of Nurse Anesthetists                    | Advanced practice nurses who are anesthesia specialists that provide anesthesia/analgesia services for surgery, labor and delivery, trauma stabilization, and acute and chronic pain management.   | <a href="http://www.aana.com">www.aana.com</a>       |
| American College of Nurse Practitioners                       | An advocacy organization that ensures nurse practitioners are able to provide accessible and high quality health care.   | <a href="http://www.acnpweb.org">www.acnpweb.org</a> |
| American College of Nurse-Midwives                            | Advanced practice nurses, certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives who provide independent management of women's health care, focusing particularly on common primary care issues, family planning and gynecologic needs of women, as well as pregnancy, childbirth, the postpartum period and care of the newborn. | <a href="http://www.midwife.org">www.midwife.org</a> |
| National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists            | Clinical nurse specialists who improve patient outcomes and nursing care in a specialty area of care.  | <a href="http://www.nacns.org">www.nacns.org</a>     |
| National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health | Nurse practitioners who provide health care to women of all ages.  | <a href="http://www.npwh.org">www.npwh.org</a>       |
| National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners         | Nurse practitioners who provide pediatric primary and acute care to children 0 to 21.  | <a href="http://www.napnap.org">www.napnap.org</a>   |
| National Nursing Centers Consortium                           | An advocacy organization for nurse managed clinics.  | <a href="http://www.nncc.us">www.nncc.us</a>         |
| National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties         | Professional organization promoting nurse practitioner education.  | <a href="http://www.nonpf.com">www.nonpf.com</a>     |

For information about both RNs and APRNs, visit the websites below:

| Organization Name   | Description  | Website  |
|---|--|--|
| American Association of Colleges of Nursing                       | Organization for deans, faculty and students in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs.   | <a href="http://www.aacn.nche.edu">www.aacn.nche.edu</a>   |
| American Association of Critical-Care Nurses                      | Nurses who care for critically ill patients, often in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and patients with complex medical conditions and needs.  | <a href="http://www.aacn.org">www.aacn.org</a>             |
| American Nurses Association                                       | A full-service, professional nursing organization representing and advancing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses, and working to improve health care and access for all. | <a href="http://www.ana.org">www.ana.org</a>               |
| American Psychiatric Nurses Association                           | Nurses who care for patients with psychiatric and mental health needs.   | <a href="http://www.apna.org">www.apna.org</a>             |
| Association of Rehabilitation Nurses                              | Nurses who help those with chronic illness or physical disability to work towards productive, independent lives.   | <a href="http://www.rehabnurse.org">www.rehabnurse.org</a> |
| Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses      | Nurses who focus on women's health, reproductive health and caring for newborns.   | <a href="http://www.awhonn.org">www.awhonn.org</a>         |
| Emergency Nurses Association                                      | Nurses who offer emergency care.   | <a href="http://www.ena.org">www.ena.org</a>               |
| Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association                         | Nurses who prevent and relieve suffering, regardless of the stage of the disease.  | <a href="http://www.hpna.org">www.hpna.org</a>             |
| National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses | Organization that offers specialty certification for hospice and palliative nurse care and administration.   | <a href="http://www.nbchpn.org">www.nbchpn.org</a>         |
| National Council of State Boards of Nursing                       | Organization whose members are state nurse licensing boards.   | <a href="http://www.ncsbn.org">www.ncsbn.org</a>           |
| National League for Nursing                                       | Organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education.   | <a href="http://www.nln.org">www.nln.org</a>               |
| Oncology Nursing Society  | Nurses who provide care to patients with a diagnosis of cancer.  | <a href="http://www.ons.org">www.ons.org</a>               |

**Doctors of Chiropractic/Chiropractic Physicians** – Chiropractic is a health care profession that focuses on disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the nervous system, and the effects of these disorders on general health. Chiropractic care is used most often to treat neuromusculoskeletal complaints, including but not limited to back pain, neck pain, pain in the joints of the arms or legs, and headaches. Doctors of Chiropractic – often referred to as chiropractors or chiropractic physicians – practice a drug-free, hands-on approach to health care that includes patient examination, diagnosis and

treatment. Doctors of Chiropractic have broad diagnostic skills and are also trained to recommend therapeutic and rehabilitative exercises, as well as to provide nutritional, dietary and lifestyle counseling. For further information, visit the links below.

| Organization Name                           | Description   | Website  |
|---|---|--|
| American Academy of Chiropractic Physicians | Providers who diagnose, treat and prevent musculoskeletal system disorders. | <a href="http://www.aacp.net">www.aacp.net</a>         |
| American Chiropractic Association           | Providers who diagnose, treat and prevent musculoskeletal system disorders. | <a href="http://www.acatoday.org">www.acatoday.org</a> |

**Naturopathic Doctors** – With an emphasis on a holistic approach to patient care, naturopathic doctors use diet, exercise, lifestyle changes and natural therapies to enhance the body's ability to heal and fight disease. These health care professionals treat the whole person through modern medical science and traditional natural medical approaches. Visit the link below to learn more.

| Organization Name                               | Description   | Website  |
|---|---|--|
| American Association of Naturopathic Physicians | Providers who treat the whole person through modern medical science and traditional natural medical approaches. | <a href="http://www.naturopathic.org">www.naturopathic.org</a> |

**Psychologists** – Practicing psychologists are experts in behavioral health with the professional training and clinical skills to help people learn to cope more effectively with life issues and mental health problems. Psychologists receive an average of seven years of extensive education and training, hold doctoral degrees (either a PhD, PsyD or EdD), and are licensed to provide a number of services, including evaluations and psychotherapy. Psychologists are also trained to administer and interpret tests and assessments that can help diagnose a condition or tell more about the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Psychologists recognize that the mind and body are linked and many work in primary care settings often serving as members of multidisciplinary treatment teams to address the psychological aspects of physical illnesses and injuries, and taking the lead when a patient has a primary mental health or substance abuse diagnosis. Learn more through the website below.

| Organization Name                  | Description  | Website   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| American Psychological Association | Experts in behavioral health with the professional training and clinical skills to help people learn to cope more effectively with life issues and mental health problems. | <a href="http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/about-psychologists.aspx">http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/about-psychologists.aspx</a> |

**Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists** – Patients with hearing or balance problems should consider consulting with an audiologist, a health care professional who identifies, diagnoses, treats and monitors hearing disorders. This includes the prevention of hearing loss and the rehabilitation of persons with hearing and balance disorders. Audiologists complete a post-graduate doctoral degree in audiology, and fulfill certification requirements at the national and state-level.

Working with the full range of human communication and its disorders, speech-language pathologists are highly skilled professionals who evaluate, diagnose and treat speech, language, and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants through the elderly in a variety of settings including the client’s home, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, skilled nursing facilities, schools and early childhood centers.

For more information or to find a speech-language pathologist who can make a difference in your life, contact ASHA through the link below.

| Organization Name                            | Description   | Website  |
|--|---|--|
| American Speech-Language-Hearing Association | Providers who identify, diagnose, treat and monitor speech, language and hearing disorders. | <a href="http://www.asha.org">www.asha.org</a> |

**Physical Therapists** – Physical therapists can help improve or restore mobility and function in people of all ages, including newborns, children, and elderly individuals. They provide care for people in a variety of settings -- including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, schools, sports and fitness facilities, work settings, and nursing homes. Physical therapist can help people with arthritis, back pain, knee pain, osteoporosis, overuse injuries, shoulder pain, stroke, sprains, strains, fractures, and more. Patients who are looking for a possible alternative to surgery and/or pain medication should consider seeking the advice of a physical therapist. For more information about physical therapists, go to [www.moveforwardpt.com](http://www.moveforwardpt.com). For information on the American Physical Therapy Association, visit the link below.

| Organization Name                     | Description   | Website  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| American Physical Therapy Association | Providers who diagnose and treat problems with movement and function. | <a href="http://www.apta.org">www.apta.org</a> |

**Occupational Therapists** – Occupational therapy helps people of all ages live life to its fullest by promoting health, by preventing problems and providing guidance for a healthy, productive life despite limitations caused by illness, injury, disability or other conditions. By looking at the whole picture—a client's psychological, physical, emotional and social make-up--by modifying environments, and by developing individual strategies, OT enables people to achieve their goals, focus on what matters most to them, and maintain or rebuild their independence. These health care professionals must pass a national examination and are often regulated at the state level. You can learn more information through the following link.

| Organization Name                         | Description  | Website  |
|---|--|--|
| American Occupational Therapy Association | Providers that enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote health, prevent—or live better with—injury, illness or disability by utilizing science-driven, evidence-based therapy strategies. | <a href="http://www.aota.org">www.aota.org</a> |

**Marriage and Family Therapists** – Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are one of the five core mental health disciplines recognized by the Health Resources and Services Administration. MFTs are licensed to diagnose and/or treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of family systems, and do so primarily with individuals, but also serve couples and family units. They are required to obtain a minimum of a master's degree (with over 30% holding doctorates), plus must have at least two years of post-graduate clinical supervised experience. Unique to the profession, MFTs are the *only* mental health professionals required to receive specific training in family therapy and family systems. You can learn more through the link below.

| Organization Name                                    | Description   | Website  |
|--|---|--|
| American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy | Providers who diagnose and/or treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of family systems, and do so primarily with individuals, but also serve couples and family units. | <a href="http://www.aamft.org">www.aamft.org</a> |

**Acupuncturists and Doctors of Oriental Medicine** – Doctors of oriental medicine practice acupuncture and herbal medicine, and provide full primary care. Acupuncturists relieve pain, promote healing and improve well-being through stimulation of specific points on the body. These health care professionals are focused on overall health and wellness, and you can learn more through the below website.

| Organization Name                                       | Description  | Website  |
|---|--|--|
| American Association of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine | Providers who practice acupuncture and herbal medicine, and provide full primary care. | <a href="http://www.aaaonline.org">www.aaaonline.org</a> |

**Doctors of Podiatric Medicine** – Doctors of podiatric medicine graduate from accredited U.S. podiatric medical schools. Members of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) have completed surgical residency programs of up to four years, and all Fellows of the College are certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery, the surgical board of foot and ankle surgeons recognized by the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards. Many have additional fellowship training in various aspects of foot, ankle, and lower extremity surgery. All ACFAS members are dedicated to surgical excellence in the treatment of foot, ankle, and lower extremity disorders. Learn more through the website below.

| Organization Name                           | Description   | Website  |
|---|---|--|
| American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons | Professionals educated in the art and science of foot, ankle, and related lower extremity surgery. They seek to advance and improve the standards of education and surgical skill for podiatric surgeons. | <a href="http://www.acfas.org">www.acfas.org</a> |

**Additional Resources** – Visit the following links for further information about health care professional education and safe and accessible care.

| Organization Name                                   | Description  | Website  |
|---|--|--|
| Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions | Organization committed to critical issues affecting allied health education. | <a href="http://www.asahp.org">www.asahp.org</a> |
| Integrated Health Policy Consortium                 | Organization that works to ensure access to safe and integrated health care. | <a href="http://www.ihpc.info">www.ihpc.info</a> |

## Finding and Selecting Your Health Care Providers

Every patient has the right to access the health care providers who best meet their needs. Here are some things to consider when looking for a health care provider:

- **There is a broad spectrum of health care providers**
  - Everyone knows about doctors, but millions of people get quality care from health care professionals who are not doctors of medicine (MDs) or doctors of osteopathy (DOs) like nurse practitioners, therapists, and psychologists to name a few. It's important to learn about the different types of providers available so that you can make informed decisions in selecting the care that best suits you. All licensed health care professionals complete years of education in their respective specialties and meet rigorous licensing and/or certification standards. They have long been recognized by state and federal agencies as qualified and essential contributors to the U.S. health care system and are well-prepared to provide the care you may need.
- **Check what type of insurance programs each provider accepts before your appointment**
  - One of the fundamental questions is whether a provider accepts your insurance. If not, ask about the likely charges and whether the provider has a flexible payment plan. Consider whether another type of provider could help lower your costs if insurance does not cover your care. Also consider if the out of pocket costs for using the provider of your choice will actually result in long-term savings by reducing the expenses of deductibles and co-payments.
- **A “team approach” can be the best approach**
  - Your good health can sometimes depend on health care professionals working together to meet your needs. This “team” approach means that it is crucial to find providers who are willing and able to work with one another to ensure your overall health and wellness.
- **You can request a consultation**
  - Many people don't realize they can request a consultation session *before* a provider examines them. You can sit down and really talk about the provider's philosophy of care and treatment approach. You can even write out a list of questions beforehand and bring them along so that you don't forget anything.
- **Provider availability is important**
  - Difficulty getting an appointment can mean difficulties in getting the care you need. Determine whether health care professionals are accessible to you, both in making appointments and answering questions that may come up between appointments. Does their schedule fit in with your own?
- **You deserve personalized care and attention**
  - Ask your care providers how long an appointment usually lasts to get a sense of how much time, attention and personalized care you will receive. Often, care providers like advanced practice nurses, naturopaths, nurse midwives, and others are able to spend more time with you. A longer appointment will allow you to share more information about your health needs.
- **What kind of health care consumer are you?**
  - With our health care system becoming increasingly fragile and overburdened, consider how this health care professional will help you use the right care, right tests, and right interventions to achieve your best health outcomes. Making certain the professional who helps you has the right qualifications for your needs will prevent overuse of unnecessary care. Accessing care based on its value to you will reduce excess costs and help ensure the sustainability of our health care system in the years to come.



## Questions for Your New Health Care Provider

With so many health care professionals to choose from, it's not always easy to know which one is going to best meet your health and wellness needs. There are some important things to consider as you decide and the questions below will help you think through these important issues so that you can make an informed decision. We recommend that you print this sheet out and use the questions below as you consider all the options for your health and wellness needs.

- Does the health care professional focus on treating health problems when they occur, or on helping you stay well and preventing health problems? What is your preference?
- Does the health care professional typically treat patients with your type of health concern? Specifically, what is their experience and expertise?
- When treating health issues, is this health care professional geared toward surgical, pharmaceutical, or natural/wellness approaches? Which approaches fit your needs best?
- What kind of education, training and certification does the professional have? Are their services licensed or regulated by the state?
- How does he/she work with or cooperate with other types of health care professionals if you need more than one care provider?
- Can you request a consultation before making an appointment?
- Does the health care professional have appointments available during the next few weeks? Is there a time that will fit within your schedule? Will it be easy to schedule appointments if you need to see the health care professional on a regular basis? What is the rescheduling policy?
- Who will you see at each appointment and will you be seen by the same person at each one? Is it important to you to see the same person from visit to visit so that the person caring for you understands your health situation, history and needs?
- How much time is typically allotted for each appointment? Do you feel relaxed and comfortable asking questions of this health care professional, or do you feel rushed and concerned that your questions are too unimportant to ask about?
- Does the practice accept your health insurance?
- If not, is there a flexible payment plan?
- If you don't have insurance, will seeing this health care professional help lower your overall costs?
- What do you do if you have a question about your treatment? Is there a phone number or email address you can use to directly contact the health care provider? Do they respond to request for information or to your call promptly?

Getting answers to these questions will help you ensure that you are finding the right health care professional to meet your needs. For more information, please visit [www.patientsrightscoalition.org](http://www.patientsrightscoalition.org).



## Template Letter to Your Insurance Company

A letter to your insurance company is a great way to make sure you have access to the kind of health care you want and need. You can tell your health insurance company how your covered care providers are meeting your needs, or how health care professionals who are not covered by your insurance are providing care that you want to access. By sharing this information with your health insurer, you give decision-makers within the company insights into what customers like you want and which services are most valuable.

The template below can be customized to include your own message and personal experience. Be sure to follow up your letter with a phone call, and also include your contact information so that your insurance company can follow up with you. To find out who you should send your letter to, call the member services number on your insurance card.

Dear *[Insert name]*,

As a customer of *[insert name of your insurance company]*, I am writing to urge you to support my access to a full range of health care professionals who are qualified and essential contributors to the U.S. health care system.

I strongly believe that patients are best served when they have access to a team of health care professionals who work together to ensure overall health and wellness, and that patients should be able to choose the type of provider that best suits their particular needs. There are more than three million licensed health care professionals in the U.S. who are not doctors of medicine (MDs) or osteopathy (DOs) and it's important to me that I have access to these health care professionals to maintain good health.

*[In this section, tell your insurance company about your personal story, including your individual health and wellness needs. Explain why the care is necessary and the reasons you are seeking out a specific health care professional. If applicable, include any information about how this care provider promotes your overall health, helping you reduce the need for more expensive care. Also include information on whether coverage for certain health care providers you've needed has been denied in the past.]*

Providers other than MDs or DOs are indispensable caregivers to millions of Americans, including me. I ask you to cover the costs of care that other health care professionals provide, based on patient safety, efficacy and positive outcomes. Without the contributions of these health care professionals, many patients would lack essential health care services and options, especially those in rural and medically underserved areas.

I would like *[insert name of insurance company]* to cover the valuable services of health care professionals other than MDs or DOs, particularly *[insert different types of health care providers]*, which *[can or have]* helped me improve my health. I can be reached at *[insert phone number]* or via email at *[insert email address]*. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



## Template Letter to Your State Legislator

A letter to your legislative representative is a valuable tool that provides you with a way to weigh in with lawmakers and other government officials and share your concerns. The state-focused template below should be customized so that you can personalize your message, impact legislation and highlight your priorities. Remember to be clear and brief, and tell your state legislator what you want them to do. Also include your contact information so that your legislator can contact you. You can also adapt the letter below to address state officials other than legislators, such as regulatory boards, division directors and other government officials.

Dear *[Insert name of Senator or Representative]*,

As a resident of *[insert your state]*, I urge you to support my access to quality and affordable health care, as well as to a full range of health care professionals.

I strongly believe that patients are best served when they have access to a team of health care professionals who work together to ensure overall health and wellness, and that patients should choose the type of provider that best suits their individual needs. Since there are more than three million licensed health care professionals in the U.S. who are not doctors of medicine (MDs) or osteopathy (DOs), it's important to me that I retain full access to these health care professionals.

*[In this section, tell your legislator about your personal story, including how your health has been positively impacted by a health care professional who is not a MD or DO. Include the type of health care professional you used and the services that were provided to highlight the value in receiving the right care at the right time. Also include information on whether these health care services were covered by insurance and whether you could afford them if there was not adequate coverage.]*

There is currently a divisive movement to restrict the valuable services provided by some health care professionals, which will limit patient access to safe, high quality and cost effective health care. The Scope of Practice Partnership (SOPP), a coalition of medical and osteopathic physician organizations established by the American Medical Association (AMA) and other medical groups, aims to limit other health care professionals' scopes of practice – the range of health care-related activities and services that a health care professional is educated, licensed and/or certified to provide. [OPTIONAL TEXT if appropriate: I encourage you to reject *[insert name and number of bill in your state that threatens the scope of practice of health care professionals other than MDs and DOs]* because it would restrict my access to the provider of my choice.]

Providers other than MDs or DOs are indispensable caregivers to millions of Americans, including me. My access to the best health care professional for my needs should be based on concerns about safety, efficacy and positive outcomes, not "turf wars".

Please contact me to let me know your position on protecting the role that health care professionals other than MDs or DOs have in caring for patients like me. I can be reached at *[insert phone number]* or via email at *[insert email address]*. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,