

# RIGHTS OF PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

## POLICY®

### DOCUMENT SUMMARY/KEY POINTS

- Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN) endorses the [Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights](#), second edition and the [Rights of Children and Young People in Healthcare Services in Australia](#). These charters provide a framework to help empower children and young people, and their families and carers to understand what they can expect from us, and the staff caring for them.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Ministry of Health (MoH) Information Bulletin [Healthcare Rights \[IB2023\\_032\]](#), with link to the Mental Health Act 2007.
- All staff at SCHN are responsible for supporting patients to enact these rights.

### CHANGE SUMMARY

- The title of the policy has changed from 'Rights and Responsibilities' to 'Rights of Patient and Families'. 'Responsibilities' have been excluded from the policy but includes SCHN responsibilities at the end of the document.
- Amendments made to reflect SCHN approach with updated hyperlinks and policies.

### READ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- All SCHN Staff should be aware of this document.

<b>Approved by:</b>	SCHN Policy, Procedure and Guideline Committee	
<b>Date Effective:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2023	<b>Review Period:</b> 5 years
<b>Team Leader:</b>	Network Manager - Consumer Experience	<b>Area/Dept:</b> Clinical Governance Unit

Understanding the rights of children and young people (our patients), their families and carers is vital to delivering a world-leading health service for our patients. At SCHN, we support the rights of everyone – patients, their families and staff. These rights are explained below.

## Access

Health care services are available to everyone regardless of gender, marital status, disability, culture, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age or income. Patient and families have a right to access health services on the basis of a medical assessment and the urgency of their need for treatment.<sup>1</sup> Patients and families have the right to tell us if they have special needs or need an interpreter.

## Safety

Patients and families are entitled to safe, high quality health care.<sup>1</sup> Health staff can improve the safety and quality of care provided by partnering with our consumers. More information on partnering with consumers can be found on the NSQHSS [website](#).

## Respect

Patients, families and visitors have a right to be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect while receiving our services, regardless of gender, marital status, disability, culture, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age or income.<sup>1</sup> SCHN in turn ask patients and families to show respect towards our staff, volunteers, other consumers and visitors.

## Partnership

Patients and families are encouraged to be partners in their care and treatment in ways they understand.<sup>1</sup> Staff are encouraged to enable patients and families to ask questions, be open and honest and let staff know if they need further explanation. SCHN asks patients and families to give staff as much information as possible about their health, including any allergies, medical conditions, or disabilities. SCHN encourages patients to be involved in (age appropriate) decision making relating to their healthcare and include the people they want involved in planning and decision making.

## Information

SCHN supports patients and families to receive clear information about the patient's health condition and be informed about the possible benefits and risks of tests and treatments, so informed consent may be given. Patients and families also have the right to:

- Receive information about services, waiting times and costs<sup>1</sup>
- Be given assistance, when they need it, to help them to understand and use health information.<sup>1</sup>

- Access their health information.<sup>1</sup>
- Be told if something has gone wrong during their health care, be told how it happened, how it may affect them and what is being done to make care safe.<sup>1</sup>

## Interpreter Services

It's important that all patients and families understand their healthcare journey, regardless of what language they speak.<sup>1</sup> Patients and families can access an interpreter free of charge. Interpreter services, including Australian Sign Language (Auslan), can be provided in person or by phone and are available seven days a week. Patients and families can ask staff to arrange an interpreter for them. Translated copies of the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights are also available at the NSQHSS [website](#).

## Privacy

Patients' information will be kept in a confidential and secure manner.<sup>1</sup> Patients and their families are entitled to request access to health information that is held in NSW Health services. Patients and families may be asked to apply for access in writing and provide identification. They may be charged a fee. SCHN may share patient's health information with other health care workers who are involved in their care. This ensures care coordination and gives children and young people the best possible care.

## Feedback

SCHN provides feedback mechanisms for all patients, families and visitors as their experience is important to us. SCHN can make quality improvements from complaints and prevent other families having unsafe or poor experiences.

Patients and families can have their say by:

1. Talking to their child's nurse, doctor or staff member they trust or the Nursing Unit Manager who is in charge of the ward, or the Head of the Department
2. Completing a Patient Experience survey
3. Using the suggestion boxes located on each ward
4. [Using the webform for Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick](#)
5. [Using the webform for The Children's Hospital at Westmead](#)
6. Raising their concerns with the Patient Friend at either hospital.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick</li></ul>	<a href="mailto:SCHN-SCH-PatientFriend@health.nsw.gov.au">SCHN-SCH-PatientFriend@health.nsw.gov.au</a>	(02) 9382 0680
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Children's Hospital at Westmead</li></ul>	<a href="mailto:SCHN-CHW-PatientFriend@health.nsw.gov.au">SCHN-CHW-PatientFriend@health.nsw.gov.au</a>	(02) 9845 3535

7. Contacting the Research Governance Office [SCHN-Governance@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SCHN-Governance@health.nsw.gov.au) for feedback related to research

8. Contacting the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC).  
The HCCC is an independent body that deals with complaints about health services, providers and health workers. The HCCC can be contacted at:  
  
Health Care Complaints Commission  
Locked Mail Bag 18  
Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012  
Telephone: 1800 043159 or 9219 7444  
TTY: 9219 5444 Fax: 9281 4585  
Email: [hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au)
9. Contacting the NSW Ombudsman.  
The NSW Ombudsman is an independent and impartial watchdog. It can assist with complaints about service providers.  
Telephone: 9286 1000

## Guidelines for staff interacting with patients and carers.

SCHN acknowledges that staff often form meaningful and close relationships with the patients and families they are working with related to their professional role. However, the [Code of Conduct](#) requires that staff must maintain professional boundaries at all times. This includes not providing patients and families with any personal details including phone numbers, mobile numbers, email addresses or connecting via social media and social networking sites.

## Our hospitals are a safe place for everyone

To help us all partner together in caring for children SCHN expects that everyone will act respectfully. This includes:

- Treat others with care, consideration, courtesy and respect
- Be sensitive to the needs of others
- Behave in a manner that is not (and would not be viewed by others as) aggressive or offensive
- Take care of personal property and respect hospital property.

### ***To ensure the safety of SCHN patients, families, visitors and staff we ask everyone to:***

- Refrain from physical or verbal abuse of patients, families, visitors or staff. Physical and verbally abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. If necessary, hospital security will be called, and you may be asked to leave the unit or hospital if this affects others or care of patients.
- Staff and visitors wear footwear in the Hospitals at all times.
- Respect the Hospital's policies on smoking and alcohol use.

## References

1. Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/partnering-consumers/australian-charter-healthcare-rights/australian-charter-healthcare-rights-second-edition>

## Additional information

- **Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights:**  
<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/partnering-consumers/australian-charter-healthcare-rights/australian-charter-healthcare-rights-second-edition>
- **Rights of Children and Young People in Healthcare:**  
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/programs/Pages/rights-child-young-people.aspx>
- **NSW Health Information Bulletin – Healthcare Rights:**  
[https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/Pages/doc.aspx?dn=IB2023\\_032](https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/Pages/doc.aspx?dn=IB2023_032)
- **SCHN Partnering with Consumers**  
<http://webapps.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/epolicy/policy/5306>
- **SCHN Consumer Feedback Management Procedure:**  
<http://webapps.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/epolicy/policy/5348>
- **SCHN Partnership in Care Policy:**  
<http://webapps.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/epolicy/policy/4996>
- **Safety and Wellbeing of Patients in SCHN Facilities:**  
<http://webapps.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/epolicy/policy/6062>

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