

Patients must give authorization to disclose their health information to lay caregivers. Federal privacy laws do not allow hospitals to share health information unless the patient agrees.

Patients 18 and older have the exclusive right to decide whether to identify a lay caregiver, unless a legal arrangement is already in place. In some circumstances, the hospital may provide medical information to a support person if:

- The support person is closely involved in the patient's care.
- The patient lacks capacity to make decisions in their best interest.
- The disclosure is in the patient's best interest.



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# Caregivers' guide

What to expect when a loved one is discharged  
from Salem Health Psychiatric Medicine Center



## What is a lay caregiver?

Leaving the hospital after receiving care for mental health can be confusing. A “lay caregiver” is someone who supports a patient by helping with care after leaving the hospital. Oregon law lets patients identify their own lay caregivers.

### Before discharge

Hospital staff will assess a patient’s long-term needs and risk of suicide. They may ask the lay caregiver for input on the patient’s history to be sure they have considered as many risk factors as possible for past or potential harmful behavior.

It is important to have the lay caregiver’s input in writing so it can become part of the patient’s medical record. This allows the hospital to accept information without violating privacy standards.

Some examples of information you may wish to provide include:

- Behavioral history
- Medication history
- Treatment history
- Your loved one’s living environment

### Transition and treatment

Many patients go to outpatient treatment after discharge. Salem Health will share their post-discharge treatment plan with the patient and the lay caregiver.

Both the patient and lay caregiver should be sure they understand:

- The next level of care, how it differs from hospitalization and what to expect from outpatient treatment.
- Contact information for the non-hospital care, including the address and phone number of the site or provider.

### Follow-up care

Follow-up care is crucial to long-term stability. Salem Health will work with the lay caregiver and the patient to schedule a follow-up appointment, usually within seven days of discharge.

If your loved one comes to Salem Health for mental health care, you may be able to help by:

- Providing input about the patient’s history in writing.
- Asking if you can be a lay caregiver.
- Asking for diagnosis, medication and discharge information.
- Getting the contact information for the patient’s Salem Health provider.
- Understanding the risk of self-harm and what you can do about it.
- Seeking medical attention or community resources for your loved one.

