



HEALTH CAREER OPTIONS GUIDE

for internationally educated health professionals

Health Advocate

This profession is also known as:

- Patient Advocates
- Health Navigators
- Client Care Coordinators
- Care Managers
- Elder Care Professionals
- Disability Advisors
- Health Insurance Advisors etc.



What is a health advocate?

This is a relatively new career in Canada and it is unregulated. Private professional health advocates work directly for patients, their families and caregivers to ensure they receive health care specific to their needs. Some advocates focus on one particular disease or approach to care i.e. one might work only with cancer patients while another advocate might focus on complementary and alternative treatments.

What are the main duties of a health advocate?

A health advocate may offer a wide variety of services depending on individual experience and preparation. A health advocate may:

- accompany patients to medical appointments or stay by the bedside in the hospital
- help clients learn more about their medical condition and treatment options
- help families/patients make difficult medical decisions
- review prescriptions and medications to be sure there are no conflicts
- teach pain management techniques
- help develop end-of-life planning and paperwork like living wills, DNRs or other advance directives

What personal characteristics or desired traits should I have for this profession?

As a health advocate, you need:

- Genuine caring/empathy/interest in client's issues
- Adaptability to changing needs from clients.
- Strong negotiation skills needed to interact with a health system

Where do health advocates work?

As entrepreneurs, Health Advocates work from their own homes, client's homes, and visit clients in health care facilities etc.

What are the typical work conditions?

Most health advocates work from home offices as well as in health care facilities.

Days of the week and hours of work will vary depending on case load and the needs of clients.

What qualifications do I need for this work?

There are no established requirements/credentials for this career in Canada.

- Completion of a university, college or other approved registered nursing program would be beneficial.
- Courses in management studies or a degree, diploma or certificate in business management or administration would be helpful.
- Registration as a registered nurse by a provincial or territorial regulatory body may or may not be required.
- 3-5 yrs. clinical experience in the health care system is an asset.



What communication skills do I need?

Excellent interpersonal skills are needed to develop strong rapport with clients.

What wage can I expect to be paid?

This profession does not have a national occupation code so there is no compiled data for the wages collected. Some health advocates charge an hourly rate. Others may offer a daily, weekly or monthly rate. Often, the advocate and client agree on a wage before work begins.

Are there opportunities for advancement?

Individual efforts will determine the success of this type of business.

Learn more about health advocates by viewing these sites:

- The Alliance of Professional Health Advocates is an American group that offers business support to assist advocates to start and grow their practices.
<http://www.aphadvocates.org/>

At present, there is no national occupation code (NOC) for this profession.

Reference

- Outline from CSMLS webpage, Accessed 3/25/2016
<http://altcareers.csmls.org/careers/assayer/>
- Alliance of Professional Health Advocates
<http://www.aphadvocates.org/>