

Information for a chaperone selected by a patient

This fact sheet is to provide you with information regarding your role and responsibilities as an individual selected by a patient to act as a chaperone for a registered health practitioner¹ with chaperone conditions.

Background

Everyone has the right to access safe and appropriate health services in Queensland. The Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) may sometimes impose conditions on a health service provider to ensure the health and safety of the public is protected.

These conditions may include the requirement for a health service practitioner to engage a chaperone when they have contact with patients.

What is a chaperone?

A chaperone is a person who is required to be *physically present and directly observe all contact* between a registered health practitioner and all patients or certain patient groups.

For the purposes of the chaperone requirement, the words *contact* and *patient* have particular meanings.

Contact is not confined to merely consultation with a patient, but includes and is not limited to an interview, examination or assessment of a patient and prescribing for, advising, treating or otherwise seeing or communicating with a patient, whether this is in-person or via a communication device.

Patient is defined as any individual awaiting, requiring or receiving the professional services of a practitioner with chaperone conditions or a registered health practitioner within the same place of practice of a practitioner with chaperone conditions. In some circumstances, the conditions will expand this definition to include any spouse, partner, parent, family member, friend, guardian or carer of the individual.

When is a chaperone required?

Where a chaperone is required, the practitioner or an appropriate staff member must inform the patient of this requirement prior to any contact occurring.

If applicable, the patient will be offered the choice of selecting an individual of their choice to act as the chaperone, using a chaperone approved by the Health Ombudsman or offered contact with another registered health practitioner.

Where a patient requiring a chaperone is under the age of 18, a parent or guardian must be present and informed of the need for a chaperone.

¹ A *registered health practitioner* is defined under schedule 1 of the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013* and section 5 of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Queensland)* (the National Law)



Can I act as a chaperone selected by the patient?

To be eligible to act as the patient's chosen chaperone, you must:

1. be at least 18 years of age
2. be physically able and willing to directly observe any and all contact between the practitioner and the patient
3. read this fact sheet prior to any contact occurring and agree to act in the role and undertake the responsibilities outlined.

A chaperone chosen by a patient may be a parent, partner, spouse, family member, friend, guardian or carer of the patient.

What must you do as a chaperone?

Before agreeing to act as a chaperone, you should ensure that you are aware of who is defined as a *patient* requiring a chaperone.

As an individual selected by the patient to act as a chaperone, you must be *physically present and directly observe all contact* between the practitioner and the patient. If the patient is unwilling or reluctant to have a chaperone present during contact with the practitioner, that contact should not go ahead. Where possible, the practitioner should offer the patient an appointment with another practitioner.

If you or the patient have any concerns about the interactions with the practitioner, you or the patient should end the contact and report your concerns to the monitoring officer.²

At the end of the contact between the practitioner and the patient, you are required to:

- ensure that your full name, address and telephone number and the type of relationship you have with the patient is entered into a chaperone log provided by the practitioner
- sign and date the chaperone log to confirm that
 - you are at least 18 years of age
 - you received and read this information sheet prior to any contact occurring between the practitioner and the patient, and after reading this information sheet you agreed to act as the patient's selected chaperone
 - you were present throughout and directly observed the entire contact between the practitioner and the patient
 - you acknowledge that the OHO may contact you regarding your role as a chaperone and you agree to cooperate with any enquiries made of you by the OHO for the purpose of monitoring the practitioner's compliance with the requirement for a chaperone.

² The OHO monitoring officer is responsible for monitoring practitioner compliance with conditions imposed on them by the Health Ombudsman



If you are a registered health practitioner, you should be aware that your obligations for mandatory reporting under the National Law are still applicable when you are acting as a chaperone selected by the patient.

What if you, or the patient, have questions or concerns?

You may contact the monitoring officer by phone on 3158 1329 to discuss any questions or concerns that you have in relation to the practitioner's chaperone conditions, the role and responsibilities of a chaperone, the practitioner's conduct during contact with a patient, the practitioner's compliance with the chaperone conditions or if you feel personally vulnerable, intimidated or threatened while acting as a chaperone.