



When You Need Assistance With Healthcare

Contact:

Joanna Smith, Principal, Healthcare Liaison

510-704-8476

Joanna@healthcareliaison.com

PR Feature Wire, February 14, 2006

Navigating The Healthcare Maze: There's Help For Individuals And Employers

Anyone who's ever faced a healthcare crisis while trying to balance family and job responsibilities knows that making vital treatment decisions can be overwhelming.

Which is where patient advocates enter the picture, says Joanna Smith, founder of Healthcare Liaison, which helps people navigate the maze that is today's healthcare system.

"The stress of dealing with a medical problem, managing family responsibilities, and trying to focus at work, can just be too much for most people. They need someone they can turn to and trust to guide them," says Smith, who worked 25 years as a Bay Area hospital discharge planner, social worker and administrator.

Smith focuses on providing in-person consulting – rather than by telephone – to show individuals the best ways to use their health benefits and available community resources.

"Medical systems are complex, and the range of treatment choices is often bewildering," she says.

According to Smith, patient advocacy services can be beneficial to employers too, helping individuals to maintain their job productivity and expedite their return to the workforce.

Everyone needs to "re-group" when faced with a healthcare challenge, Smith says. She offers these tips:

- Take a deep breath before you do anything—including going to the Internet in search of answers. Make sure you go to reliable, impartial sources.
- Bring a family member or friend with you to future medical appointments and have them take notes. What you miss hearing, they'll remember.
- Make sure you know the potential risks and benefits of any step you're considering. Everything in healthcare has a possible "plus" and "minus".

- If you're overwhelmed by a decision to be made, break it down into smaller decisions. For example, the question of whether you want to try an experimental drug becomes "I'll try it for x number of weeks and then decide if I want to continue."
- Get a second opinion. Insurance companies are usually willing to pay the cost of another doctor's viewpoint before you make a major healthcare decision.
- Make sure you feel comfortable with your healthcare provider. If not, talk with friends, co-workers and other medical professionals about referrals.

Contact information:

Joanna Smith, LCSW, MPH
Principal and Founder
Healthcare Liaison
3030 Ashby Avenue, Suite 105
510-704-8476 (cell)
E-mail: Joanna@healthcareliaison.com
Website: www.healthcareliaison.com