



## **The “Advocate” Role of the Congregational Nurse or Health Minister**

Many members and families in our congregations need active help with healthcare situations, but do not have the support or resources to find the help or even the information they need. Being an advocate for members can have a great impact.

**What is an health advocate??** The nurse or health ministries advocate facilitates, supports, or “stands up for” the needs of a congregational sister or brother. Here are some common advocacy needs:

- **Providing guidance or resources or answering questions** regarding home health care for a loved one, healthcare coverage through Medicaid, or finding access to community resources or assistance.
- **Understanding the health care system and processes** Multiple physicians and specialists, referrals, medications, treatments/tests, types of healthcare facilities, long-term care placement, etc. are often overwhelming and hard to manage.
- **Actively linking people with resources and supports** by helping make the specific arrangements, if that is needed or desired. Often people are unable to make arrangements for themselves or become overwhelmed by “the system”, especially when they are not well.
- **Going with someone to the doctor** - Providing transportation or helping them frame their questions or being with them as they share important symptoms can make all the difference.

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## **The “Advocate” Role continued**

- **Arranging for laying on of hands and prayer support** – Sometimes our members think their concerns are not “important enough” to ask for help or they may be hesitant, embarrassed, or uncertain about their beliefs.
- **Facilitating transitional living planning** – Skilled or extended care after surgery, assisted living, or long-term care or nursing home living may be needed. Seeking the best option and making this life transition is emotional and difficult for people. Someone who will listen, encourage, and actively pursue and link them with services can be a very important help.

**Providing information about durable power of attorney for healthcare and about living wills** – It is wise for all adults to let others know their wishes regarding healthcare situations and conditions, if they are incapacitated. Legal assistance may be needed. In any case, the congregational nurse or health minister can advocate for this kind of planning.

**The role of health advocate** is an important one. The congregational nurse or health minister can be someone’s support...and even their voice in many situations. In reality, each of us can be an advocate – through listening, praying, and offering tangible help.

If you have questions or would like further information about Congregational Health Ministry, please contact Community of Christ Health Ministries Association [HMA@CofChrist.org](mailto:HMA@CofChrist.org) or call 816-833-1000 X 1262 Visit our website at [www.HMACofChrist.org](http://www.HMACofChrist.org)

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