

Meetings in confidence.

Engelika www.soja.se 2009



Volunteer Companion

A role for those who would like to help someone

Contacting the Patients'
Advisory Committee
(Patientnämnden)

08-690 67 00 (8.30–16.00)

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Playing a supporting role

When faced with a difficult situation, having someone to talk to is perhaps the most important support a person needs. Anyone who is placed under compulsory care under the Swedish Act on Compulsory Mental Care (LPT, 1991:1128) or the Swedish Act on Forensic Mental Care (LRV, 1991:1129) or who is isolated under the Swedish Act on Infectious Diseases (SmL, 2004:168) has the right to a volunteer companion (stödperson) throughout the period of compulsory care or isolation and for a further four weeks thereafter if the patient and the volunteer companion agree.

Volunteer Companion

As a volunteer companion (stödperson) you gain insight in mental health care and the opportunity to broaden your knowledge of people. You gain new and rewarding experiences and often become an important and appreciated person. The Patients' Advisory Committee (Patientnämnden) provides you with support and guidance.

As a volunteer companion (stödperson) you shall simply be a friend and assist the patient with personal matters. You will regularly visit the patient in the hospital ward, clinic or wherever he or she is staying, though not in his or her home. You also have the right to attend court proceedings. The position entails some reporting to the Patients' Advisory Committee (Patientnämnden). You receive a small fee and expenses for your time.

As a volunteer companion (stödperson) you do not perform the functions of healthcare personnel. Nor do you assume responsibility for the patient's personal finances or act as a legal representative.

As a volunteer companion (stödperson) you are bound by patient confidentiality.

Appointing a volunteer companion

The senior consultant is responsible for informing the patient of the right to a volunteer companion (stödperson). If the patient desires a volunteer companion, the senior consultant is required to inform the Patients' Advisory Committee (Patientnämnden). The patient can also contact the Committee directly, and it is the Committee that appoints a volunteer companion.

Who can become a volunteer companion?

Being a volunteer companion (stödperson) requires no special training, other than that provided by the Patients' Advisory Committee (Patientnämnden). Any experience you have of healthcare or social welfare can prove valuable. Being a volunteer companion is a spare time activity, not an extra source of income. It is important that volunteer companions have a keen interest in other people and are committed to the role. Since patients are not a homogenous group, volunteer companions are needed from all age groups, all social groups and different cultures.

What is the Patients' Advisory Committee?

The Patients' Advisory Committee (Patientnämnden) also processes complaints and points of view concerning all publicly financed health services. Patients and relatives are charged no fees for contacting the Committee, which is impartial and independent from the health services. The Committee strives to prevent problems by listening, suggesting solutions, informing and investigating what has happened. The Patients' Advisory Committee has no disciplinary powers and does not determine issues of a financial nature. All employees are bound by patient confidentiality.

If you are interested in volunteering, or if you have any questions, please contact the Patients' Advisory Committee.