

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Patients and Families

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## How big a problem is harm from healthcare?

Harm from healthcare happens more often than many people think. Even with good care, problems can occur. To learn more, read about [Harm from Healthcare – Facts and Common Misunderstandings](#).

## As a patient, what is my role if I'm harmed?

Your voice can help the healthcare team understand what happened and how to improve. You can:

- Share your experience and what you saw
- Ask questions and raise concerns
- Tell the care team what matters most to you, and what sort of support you need

To learn more about what to do if you think you've been harmed by your healthcare, download [our guide](#).

## As a family member, what is my role if a loved one is harmed?

Your voice can help the healthcare team understand what happened and how to improve. You can:

- Share your experience and what you saw
- Support the patient
- Ask questions and raise concerns
- Tell the care team what matters most to you, and what sort of support you need

To learn more about what to do if you think a loved one has been harmed by their healthcare, download [our guide](#).

## What is "harm response"?

Harm response is what healthcare teams do after a patient is harmed by their care. It includes talking with you, supporting you, reviewing what happened, and working to prevent it from happening again.

## What should the harm response process involve?

A good response should include:

- Talking with you early and honestly
- Listening to your questions and concerns
- Providing emotional and practical support
- Reviewing what happened
- Sharing what was learned
- Taking steps to prevent similar harm
- In some cases, a mistake causes serious harm. The organization may then offer money or other support (compensation).

## What are "communication and resolution programs" (CRPs)?

Communication and resolution programs (CRPs) are a particular type of harm response. CRPs go by a variety of names, and [the language may change over time](#) (for example, to communication and reconciliation programs). No matter the name, the goal is the same: to help people heal, rebuild trust, and make care safer. They focus on:

- Talking openly with patients and families
- Providing support
- Reviewing what happened
- Taking steps to improve care

## How are CRPs different from past approaches?

In the past, some organizations avoided open conversations after harm. This is sometimes called "deny and defend": deny that there were problems with the care and defend against any legal action. CRPs are different. They focus on:

- Being open and honest
- Supporting patients and families



- Learning from what happened

### Why should I want the places I get care to have a CRP?

CRPs are designed to put patients and families first. They can help ensure that if harm happens:

- You are treated with honesty and respect
- You receive support
- You understand what happened
- The organization learns and improves

Research suggests that when these things happen, it can:

- [Reduce feelings of abandonment, betrayal, sadness, and anger](#)
- [Shorten how long emotional effects last](#)
- [Help people feel comfortable coming back for care](#)
- [Increase confidence in care and satisfaction with treatment](#)

### How do I know if the places where I get care have a harm response program, like a CRP?

It can be hard to tell which organizations have these programs. They go by many names (such as CRPs, CANDOR, CARE, or HEART) and are often not advertised. You can ask someone at your healthcare organization, such as your care team, patient relations, or a healthcare leader. For more tips, download [our guide](#).

### Are the places where I get care required to have CRPs?

In short, no, but they are encouraged:

- In the United States, Medicare asks hospitals to *report* whether they have a CRP. Healthcare facilities are not *required* to have one. This is part of the [Patient Safety Structural Measure](#).
- The [National Action Plan to Advance Patient Safety](#) recommends CRPs.
- [Leapfrog](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Global Patient Safety Action Plan](#) recommend approaches that fit with CRPs.

### What if an event did not involve a mistake, or it's unclear?

Harm can still happen even when nothing was done wrong. For example, it may be caused by side effects or known risks of treatment. No matter the cause, you still deserve:

- Clear communication
- Support
- A chance to ask questions

### What if I or a loved one need emotional support after an event?

It is normal to need support after harm. Support helps people heal. You can:

- Talk with your care team
- Ask about patient or family support services
- Reach out to family, friends, or counselors

### How can I advocate for better harm response?

Your voice can help improve care for others. You can:

- Ask your care team how they respond after harm
- Share your expectations for honesty and support
- Encourage healthcare leaders to have a CRP. You can share this link with them: <http://harmresponse.org/who-we-serve/healthcare-leaders>
- Complete our [survey](#)
- [Support the Center for Harm Response](#)

