

The Role of a Support Person

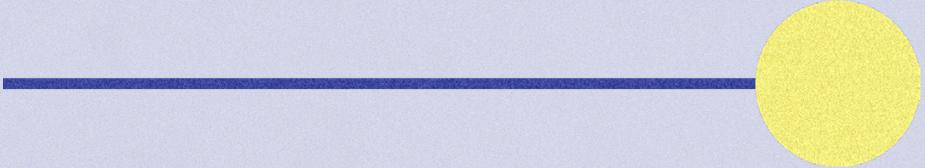


TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Office of
Learner Affairs



Navigate. Elevate. Advocate.



The Role of a Support Person

The Office of Learner Affairs recognizes that despite Temerty Medicine's best efforts, institutional processes may at times feel overwhelming and complex for learners, particularly in relation to learner mistreatment, remediation, accommodations, leaves of absence, and more. Due to systemic barriers and power differentials inherent within medical education, these institutional processes may be particularly stressful for individuals from structurally marginalized groups. As a learner within the Temerty Faculty of Medicine, you have the right to request that a support person accompany you to any institutional proceedings or meetings with faculty. While it is entirely your choice whether to have a support person accompany you, our hope is that access to a support person may further learner safety, well-being, and sense of community through a relational approach. We view an invitation to bring a support person to sensitive meetings as a standard and welcome practice.

Who is a learner?

This document applies to all registered **clinical** learners (including elective learners visiting from other schools) registered in the following Temerty Medicine programs:

- MD (all years)
- MD/PhD
- Medical Radiation Sciences
- Occupational Sciences and Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Physician Assistant
- Postgraduate Medical Education including:
 - International Medical Graduates (IMGs)
 - Externally sponsored trainees
 - Medical Physics Residents
- Speech-Language Pathology

Who is a support person?

A support person is someone who can accompany a learner to a meeting with faculty to provide emotional support, reassurance, and an opportunity to debrief afterwards. They may take notes, act as a witness to the meeting, or offer advice in moments of distress. The support person understands the need to maintain confidentiality of the process, to protect all individuals involved in the process including the learner.

What can a support person do?

A support person may:

- Offer suggestions to the learner
- Provide emotional and moral support
- Take notes during the meeting
- Help the learner prepare for meetings
- Assist the learner in understanding institutional processes
- Help the learner understand their rights, including ensuring due process unfolds
- Seek or provide clarification if the learner is uncertain
- Request a break during the meeting if helpful to the learner

A support person cannot:

- Have a direct or indirect connection to the matter under consideration
- Speak on behalf of the learner, such as answering questions on the learner's behalf
- Represent a learner at a meeting when the learner themselves is not present
- Discuss information shared during the meeting with anyone other than the learner

Who can be a support person?

A support person can be anyone the learner chooses. Ideally, they are someone who:

- Will prioritize your wellbeing, priorities, and wishes
- You can trust with private information that may arise in the meeting
- Is familiar with your circumstances and the nature of the meeting
- Will help you identify questions that you may have
- Can assist you in understanding policies and procedures
- Will remain calm

The support person should not:

- Attempt to speak on your behalf
- Take control of the meeting
- Have their own agenda or an emotional stake in the meeting other than supporting you
- Have a conflict of interest relevant to the matters being discussed

Examples of a support person may include:

- A colleague or peer
- A mentor
- An Elder
- A counsellor
- A UofT Medical Society representative
- A representative from the Professional Association of Residents of Ontario (PARO) – contact paro@paroteam.ca to request a support person/intermediary
- A family member
- A friend

For assistance in identifying a support person, learners can contact the [Learner Experience Unit](#), [Office of Inclusion and Diversity](#), and / or [Office of Indigenous Health](#).

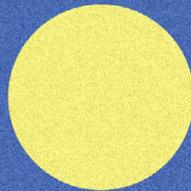
Providing advance notice about bringing a support person:

- To ensure fairness, all participants in the meeting should be made aware ahead of time that a support person will be accompanying the learner to a meeting.
- All meeting participants should clearly understand the support person's role.
- The support person's name and relationship to the learner will ideally also be shared in advance of the meeting. This will help to:
 - Avoid any potential misunderstandings
 - Identify any potential conflicts of interest
 - Ensure that the support person is accommodated in the meeting as needed, including receiving information about the time and location of the meeting and any applicable materials.
- At the start of the meeting, everyone in attendance should have the opportunity to introduce themselves and their role, including both the learner and their support person.

References:

- [Provincial Court of British Columbia](#)
- [Camosun College, British Columbia](#)
- [Government of New South Wales, Australia](#)
- [Northern Territory Government, Australia](#)

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