

Comprehensive Care Standard

Identifying goals of care: Tips for clinicians

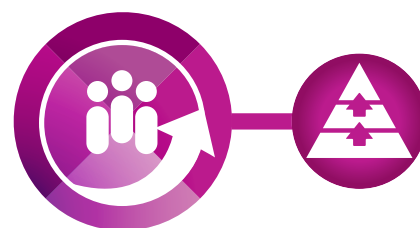
Goals of care are what a patient wants to achieve during an episode of care, within the context of their clinical situation. Goals may be clinical and personal and are determined in the context of a shared decision making process.

Identifying goals of care helps to organise and prioritise care activities and contributes to improved satisfaction, quality-of-life and self-efficacy for patients.

The purpose of identifying and agreeing to goals of care is to develop a shared understanding between patients, family, carers, other support people and the clinicians in the multidisciplinary team about the clinical expectations, personal needs and preferences of the patient and the likely steps required to attain the agreed goals. Goals of care will be appropriate to the clinical picture.

Following are some tips for clinicians when assisting patients and family, carers and other support people to identify and develop goals of care.

Tip 1: Ask patients what is important to them and set aside time for the discussion	Ask your patient about what is important to them in relation to their health care, and what they would like to achieve through treatment. Offer your patients, their families, carers and other support people the opportunity to discuss your patient's goals of care when there will be minimal interruptions, and in an appropriate place.
Tip 2: Share decision-making about goals of care	Provide patients with relevant information about available care options, and talk about the risks and benefits of those options and check your patient understands the information you have discussed.
Tip 3: Identify multiple goals of care that are positive and achievable, yet challenging	You might need to identify and agree to multiple goals of care, particularly for patients with complex healthcare needs, or life-limiting illnesses. Break up medium- or long-term goals into smaller chunks and set timeframes to help your patient feel like they are making progress. Identify goals that are challenging but achievable to avoid discouragement and frame goals as achieving a positive, rather than avoiding a negative, outcome.
Tip 4: Clarify roles and responsibilities in achieving goals of care	Ensure the patient, and everyone in the team clearly understands their role in identifying and supporting achievement of the goals of care.



Tip 5: Clearly communicate and document the agreed goals of care	Verbally communicate and document goals of care to everyone your patient wants involved in their care in a way that is easy to understand. This ensures everyone has the same information and is focused on the same goals.
Tip 6: Track progress and measure achievement against the goals of care	Track your patient's progress towards their goals by measuring progression through tasks, and achievement of milestones. Information about achievements should be shared and celebrated.
Tip 7: Recognise that identifying goals of care can be an iterative process	Revisit the goals for your patient as their care progresses, if their condition changes, or their needs and preferences alter. Goal setting is an ongoing and iterative process.
Tip 8: Integrate goals of care into existing systems and processes for care	Think about identifying goals of care for your patients as part of your day-to-day work delivering health care, including considering your patient's goals during ward rounds, handover and multidisciplinary team meetings.

Questions?



For more information, please visit:
safetyandquality.gov.au/comprehensive-care

You can also contact the Comprehensive Care project team at: mail@safetyandquality.gov.au

