

# Speak Up™ Against Discrimination

It is undeniable that racism can harm patients' health. This directly opposes The Joint Commission's mission and vision to help accredited and certified organizations provide safe, high-quality health care for all people. The Joint Commission has standards to guide its organizations and help ensure that all people receive care that is free from discrimination.

The Joint Commission has no tolerance for bias or discrimination in its organizations. But we also know that institutional, systemic racism and bias still exist in health care. Differences in the quality of care received by patients or barriers and impediments to care can be due to:

- Access to care or lack of resources, such as Internet or transportation
- Age
- Education level
- Gender identity or expression
- Geographic location
- Language
- Physical or mental ability
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or culture
- Sexual orientation
- Social and/or economic status

## Your rights as a patient

As a patient, you have a right to:

- Timely and appropriate care that is free from discrimination.
- Be treated with courtesy and respect.
- An interpreter, who can help you effectively communicate with your care providers in your preferred language.



## What you can do



If you feel you are being discriminated against and are experiencing substandard care, speak up! You can do so by:

- First, finding out about the hospital or health care organization's policy for reporting complaints. If possible, try to work with the organization.
- Talking to the organization's patient advocacy department (sometimes also called the patient liaison office or the patient advocacy team).
- Filing a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or with your state's health department.
  - o Learn more about filing a complaint at: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/filing-a-complaint/index.html>.
  - o File a complaint at: <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/smartscreen/main.jsf>.
- Contacting the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division.
  - o By phone: 202-514-3847
  - o By phone device for the deaf (TTY): 202-514-0716

If your issue remains unaddressed and the organization is accredited or certified by The Joint Commission, you can speak up by reporting the patient safety concern to us

- o Online at: <https://apps.jointcommission.org/QMSInternet/IncidentEntry.aspx>
- o By mail:
  - Office of Quality and Patient Safety
  - The Joint Commission
  - One Renaissance Boulevard
  - Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois 60181

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. If you feel you are experiencing racist or discriminatory actions, speak up. By doing so, you may be helping future patients.

The goal of Speak Up™ is to help patients and their advocates become active in their care.

Speak Up™ materials are intended for the public and have been put into a simplified (i.e., easy-to-read) format to reach a wider audience. They are not meant to be comprehensive statements of standards interpretation or other accreditation requirements, nor are they intended to represent evidence-based clinical practices or clinical practice guidelines. Thus, care should be exercised in using the content of Speak Up™ materials. Speak Up™ materials are available to all health care organizations; their use does not indicate that an organization is accredited by The Joint Commission.