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<http://www.cancer.net/research-and-advocacy/patient-advocates/being-cancer-advocate>

## **Being a Cancer Advocate [1]**

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015



[3] Listen to the [Cancer.Net Podcast: Being a Cancer Advocate](#) [3], adapted from this content.

A person affected by cancer often wants to help make a difference. Many choose to become a cancer advocate. A cancer advocate works toward improving the lives of people with cancer. Being an advocate can be a positive and empowering experience. As an advocate you can help:

- Provide support to those living with cancer
- Raise public awareness
- Advance cancer research
- Improve the quality of cancer care
- Address legislative and regulatory issues that affect cancer care and research

There are many ways to become an advocate.

## Getting Started

Do your research. Matching your interests, skills, and abilities with advocate opportunities is important. The following are advocacy activities that you can consider:

## Supporting Others

Cancer survivors often want to help others with cancer. Survivors want to help guide current patients through the cancer experience. This is done by supporting, listening, and sharing personal stories. Support can involve speaking or visiting with someone who is newly diagnosed. You can also become involved with, and participate in, different advocate opportunities, such as [support groups](#) [4].

## Raising Awareness and Educating the Public

Awareness can be raised at local and national levels. Cancer advocates can raise awareness by:

- Educating the public about cancer
- Expressing the importance of cancer screening and early detection
- Speaking with community groups about critical issues:
  - Insurance access
  - Job discrimination
  - Disparities in care
- Communicating with local and national media about cancer-related issues

## Raising Money for Cancer Research

Cancer research can be expensive. To offset this, many groups hold fundraising activities. Advocates can plan or participate in local and national fundraisers. These activities may include:

- Donating money to a cancer group directly

- Donating money through a workplace giving program
- Volunteering for a cancer walk or run fundraising event
- Buying products from companies or organizations that set aside a portion of the money to support the cause

## **Supporting Cancer Research through Clinical Trials**

Promoting [clinical trials](#) [5] is another way to support cancer research. For example, patient advocate organizations can help increase the number of people enrolled in clinical trials by listing clinical trial search engines on their websites. The National Cancer Institute sponsors various clinical trial cooperative groups. Individual patient advocates can join these groups and help:

- Review research grants
- Assist in the development of clinical trial protocols
- Assist in the development of clinical trial informed consent forms
- Participate in community outreach and education about clinical research
- Help reduce barriers for participation in clinical research
- Recruit patients for specific clinical trials

## **Changing Public Policy**

Cancer advocates can choose to [work to support or change laws affecting people with cancer](#) [6]. This can involve:

- Sending a letter to a legislator
- Testifying at governmental hearings

- Speaking publicly about a cancer-related policy issue

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) and other cancer groups are working with Congress and federal agencies to improve the lives of people with cancer by addressing legislative and regulatory issues that affect cancer care and research. Learn more about [ASCO's cancer policy and health care priorities](#) [7].

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#### **Links**

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/research-and-advocacy/patient-advocates/being-cancer-advocate>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/22930>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25383>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24863>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24862>

[7] <http://ascoaction.asco.org/>