

# INFORMATION GUIDE

## Voluntary Patients

### What does it mean to be a voluntary patient?

It means that someone has voluntarily decided to admit themselves into a hospital and has agreed to be under the hospital's evaluation, assessment, and treatment.

### Can a voluntary patient leave the hospital?

As a voluntary patient, you are entitled to leave the hospital or be discharged from the hospital if you choose. Hospital staff may also ask you to sign a document that you are being discharged Against Medical Advice (AMA).

However, your doctor may change your status to involuntary to prevent you from leaving the hospital. They can do this if you meet the criteria for involuntary patient status under the *Mental Health Act* (MHA) (for example, if they believe you are likely to seriously hurt yourself or others).

For more information, see the PPAO Information Guide ["Involuntary Patients"](#)

Your doctor may also issue an Application for Psychiatric Assessment (Form 1) if they feel that you meet criteria for continued assessment under the MHA. Form 1 allows the hospital to detain you for a maximum of 72 hours.

For more information, see the PPAO Information Guide ["Application for Psychiatric Assessment \(Form 1\)"](#)

## **What are my options if the hospital is preventing me from leaving and I am a voluntary patient?**

This is a complex issue, and it is recommended that you talk to a lawyer.

You can also speak to:

- Your doctor
- Hospital Patient Relations
- [Patient Ombudsman](#)

If you wish to make a complaint about a doctor or nurse, you may choose to contact the [College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario](#), or the [College of Nurses of Ontario](#).

## **Questions?**

For questions and information about the Consent and Capacity Board hearings, visit their [website](#).

If you have a question about your specific legal situation, contact a lawyer.

For questions about this Information guide, visit [Ontario.ca/PPAO](https://ontario.ca/PPAO) or contact Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office at 1-800-578-2343. This Info guide provides information only and does not contain legal advice. If at any time requirements in legislation conflict with information in this sheet, the legislative requirements prevail.