



MANITOBA INSTITUTE
FOR PATIENT SAFETY



apology
matters

**Unity among Manitoba's Health Regulatory Colleges on Patients' Rights to Disclosure
and The Humanity That Comes with Apologizing**

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) and the Manitoba Alliance of Health Regulatory Colleges (the Alliance) have launched an information sheet to create more awareness of Manitoba's Apology Legislation and promote apology as the right and humane thing to do when the actions of caregivers bring unintended harm to patients and families.

Based upon its 10 years of patient-safety related experience, The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety knows that patients and families need the truth when harm happens as a result of their healthcare experience.

"Saying sorry shows humanity, not guilt. We believe the spirit of Manitoba's Apology Act is to give practitioners confidence to do the right thing and apologize," said Laurie Thompson, executive director of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety. "To have the Alliance of health regulatory bodies agree on common language about the importance of apology is of enormous significance to building transparency and trust between health professionals and patients. Regulatory colleges are standing behind their registrants who feel the need to apologize when things don't go as planned."

At the same time, health professionals can feel enormous guilt, shame, remorse, depression, and devastation for being the unwitting instrument that has seriously harmed another. MIPS and the Alliance believe that most health professionals want to do the right thing but they, and the systems they work in, fear that apologizing to patients and families will void their malpractice or liability insurance, trigger legal action, or could be seen as an admission of guilt in court.

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“In coming together to form the Alliance, we began discussing various common issues and concerns facing health regulators,” said Adam Chrobak, the Chair of the Manitoba Alliance of Health Regulatory Colleges. “We realized how little awareness there was of Manitoba’s Apology Act among the regulatory bodies and our registrants. We are very proud that we are now taking a united stance on encouraging more open dialogue with patients by supporting our registrants to do the right thing and apologize if our actions have unintentionally harmed a patient and family.”

The Apology Act Information Sheet released by MIPS and the Alliance contains information on:

- Why an apology is important for family and patients
- Why an apology can be healing for the health professionals involved
- Suggestions on how to apologize
- What is covered by Manitoba’s Apology Act
- A reminder that an apology is not an admission of guilt in the eyes of Manitoba’s provincial courts

“Patients and their families rightly expect to be told when something has happened that has harmed them or had the potential to harm them,” said Marg MacDonald, the chairperson of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety’s Patient Advisory Committee. “From personal experience, I know that informing patients and families fully and with honesty is vitally important and the right thing to do.”

The Apology Act Information Sheet is available at all of the regulatory body offices, shared with all their 25,000 registrants in the province, and distributed throughout Manitoba’s health system. Practitioners needing help apologizing are encouraged to check the policies of the organization they work for and to be in touch with their respective regulatory body for advice and guidance.