



Ostomy Advocacy

Lincoln Ostomy Association shed light on a service many were unaware of during the Sept. 7 meeting in Lincoln where a patient advocate, Julie Cowin, from BryanHealth explained her services to the group.

“It is easy to become overwhelmed with the complexity of the medical setting, especially when you or a loved one is facing a serious health concern,” Cowin said. “A pa-

tient advocate / liaison serves as a key point of contact in healthcare settings, facilitating communication between patients and providers, and addressing concerns that patients may have during and after receiving care. It is a privilege to serve the community in this capacity.”

Most ostomates are keenly aware of the challenges that come with a hospital stay. Advocates often deal with financial puzzles, unprofessional staff and even personal property loss.

The role has become increasingly common and vital in hospi-

tals, with advocates acting as liaisons, problem-solvers, and trusted resources for patients and their families.

For instance, a 2013 survey found that 68% of patients who were assigned a patient advocate described their experience as positive.

While the title and specific roles can vary, the common thread is a commitment to ensuring patients receive the best care and experience.

Hospital-employed patient advocates operate within the framework of institutional policies, ethical guidelines, and existing patient rights laws like HIPAA. These structures provide a layer of protection, ensuring advocates prioritize the patient’s best interest.





Message from LOA President Amy Fairchild

Momentum! I'm excited to share that we're gaining real traction toward some of our goals—especially in reaching more people with ostomies in Lincoln and the surrounding communities. Soon, we'll announce some additional leadership help and meeting improvements.

LOA has always appreciated the participation from our ostomy supply partners, WOCNs, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Southeast Community College. Recently, SCC welcomed myself and Rhonda R. Souchek,

RN BSN CWOCN, to a nursing class (pictured above) to discuss life with ostomies. We've hosted nursing students at our meetings before with great success, so bringing that conversation straight into the classroom felt like a meaningful next step.

The LOA group recently agreed to a quarterly meeting schedule to maximize speaker opportunities and to increase visitor participation. We also shifted our start time to 2 p.m. to better fit around personal schedules and Sunday church activities.

A big thank-you to all our visiting members and to our loyal Sparrow readers. Watch for meeting and other announcements on our website at <https://ostomynebraska.com/lincoln/>. And don't miss our next gathering on Dec. 7 where we'll have time for connection, learning, and even free samples and supplies (thank you, John S.!).

Enjoy this edition featuring some incredible patient advocates and let us know if you have ideas for future articles and guest speakers!

LOA Leverage

- We meet. Learn. Support.**
- We educate nursing students on ostomy.**
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Patient advocacy available at most medical ops

Lincoln Ostomy Association, recognizes how complex and overwhelming the health care system can feel—especially for those adjusting to life after ostomy surgery. Between hospital stays, insurance forms, and emotional recovery, it's easy for patients and families to feel lost. That's where patient advocates make all the difference.

Patient advocates are the steady voices helping individuals navigate their care with confidence and dignity. Whether in Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, Columbus, York, or Beatrice, hospitals and major medical organizations across Nebraska now include a patients' rights section and contact information for advocates—professionals dedicated to supporting patients at every stage of their journey.

For ostomy patients, advocates help bridge the gap between medical teams and everyday life. They assist with scheduling follow-up appointments, finding second opinions, and ensuring patients understand their treatment options. When questions about insurance coverage or medical bills arise, advocates step in to explain charges, review claims, and connect

patients with financial or legal assistance. For many, this guidance means the difference between confusion and clarity.

But their work extends far beyond paperwork. Advocates listen—really listen—to patients' fears, frustrations, and hopes. They help families communicate with doctors and nurses, ensure discharge instructions are clear, and make sure no concern goes unheard. For someone recovering from ostomy surgery, that personal support can restore confidence and independence. Advocates also connect patients with community resources like support groups, where they can share experiences and gain encouragement from others living with an ostomy.

At the Lincoln Ostomy Association, we often remind our members: you are not alone. Patient advocates embody that message. They stand beside patients when voices need to be heard, when questions need answers, and when rights need defending. Whether working within hospitals or as independent professionals, their commitment ensures that every Nebraskan—no matter where they receive care—has someone in their

Bryan Health

Bryan Health encourages patients to utilize their Patient Experience officer by calling 402-481-0139 or writing Bryan Patient Experience Office at 1600 S 48th St, Lincoln, NE 68506.

St Es CHI Health

Concerns can be directed to Administration at each facility via the Patient Action Line, 24 hours a day.

CHI Health Nebraska Heart
(402) 327-2700

CHI Health St. Elizabeth
(402) 219-7700

CHI Health St. Francis, Grand Island:
(308) 398-9819

CHI Health St. Mary's, Nebraska City:
(402) 873-3321

corner.

If you or someone you love is navigating a health challenge or ostomy care, we encourage you to reach out. Ask your hospital's patient rights department for advocate contact information, or connect with local support networks like ours. Together, we can make sure every patient receives the care, understanding, and respect they deserve.



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New to ostomy?

After surgery, new ostomates may fear that their social role may be changed and that others may not accept them as in the past. One of the first concerns seems to be how to tell others about your surgery, who to tell and when.

- Ostomates can **explain surgery** with a few brief statements such as, “an ostomy is a surgical procedure for the diversion of bowel (or bladder).”
- Ostomates **do not have to tell everyone** about surgery. Be selective about who and how much to tell. It may be only to friends who will be supportive through rehabilitation.
- Returning to work place may present a concern about **restroom facilities**, interaction with co-workers, and feelings of being “watched.”
- A **few co-workers may need to know** in the event of an emergency.
- **Employability and insurability** are issues for some individuals. If these issues develop, seek help from healthcare professionals and/or talk with others who have found solutions.
- **Sexuality issues are common** concerns. Linked closely to our feelings of sexuality is how we think about ourselves and our body image.

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UOAA tackles ostomy advocacy nationally

UOAA is the leading organization advocating for the 725,000 to 1,000,000 people living with an ostomy or continent diversion in the United States as well as the approximate 100,000 new patients facing ostomy surgery annually.

Advocacy work has been a strong focus in 2025:

Collaborative Advocacy Efforts

As part of UOAA's efforts to advocate for more ostomy nurses and increase ostomy education with medical professionals, it created a new campaign entitled "Back to Your Nursing Roots" partnering with WOCN.

Together, they are recruiting nurses with an ostomy certification and participants will return to their nursing school alma mater to talk with

students about becoming a certified ostomy nurse.

UOAA, with the Digestive Disease National Coalition, supports Safe Step Act, HELP Copays Act and Medical Nutrition Therapy Act and items for enhancing the workforce for access to WOC nurses and access to ostomy supplies Ostomy and Continent Diversion Patient Bill of Rights (PBOR)

Access to Ostomy Care and Supplies

UOAA advocates for proper coverage of ostomy supplies under Medicare/Medicaid and commercial plans including the collaborative efforts with the Access and Care Coalition to simplify the current Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' policy that allows beneficiaries to receive medically necessary ostomy supplies above

the usual maximum amount

What about Nebraska Medicaid?

Medicaid covers durable medical equipment (DME) through its Money Follows the Person program. **But, not in Nebraska.**

This program is meant to help Medicaid recipients currently living in a nursing home return to the home they were living in previously, or move in with a family member or friend, or into a small group home setting with no more than four unrelated individuals in the residence.

Thirty eight (38) states currently have a Money Follows the Person program. Nebraska is one of 12 states that do not.

For details, the Nebraska Medicaid office is (402) 473-7000



Ostomy resources in Lincoln and surrounding

LINCOLN OSTOMY ASSOCIATION

- > <https://ostomynebraska.com/lincoln/>
- > Sparrow news
- > Education & Networking

SUPPLIES

- Triumph Health Supplies
- > <https://triumphhomehealth.com/>
- > Local ostomy supplies

CHI Health St. Elizabeth

- Home Medical Equipment
- > <https://stander.com/store/chi-health-st-elizabeth-home-medical-equipment/>
- > Local ostomy supplies

MEDICAL FACILITIES

- Bryan Health Wound & Ostomy
- > <https://www.bryanhealth.com/services/specialty-clinic/wound-clinic/>
- > Ostomy nurses & clinic

Beatrice Community Hospital

- > <https://beatricecommunityhospital.com/woundostomy-services>
- > Ostomy nurses & clinic

CHI Health St. Elizabeth Ostomy Outpatient Clinic

- > <https://www.chihealth.com/services/wound-care>
- > Ostomy nurses & clinic

Columbus Community Hospital

- > <https://www.columbusosp.org/>
- > Ostomy nurses & clinic

York General Specialty Clinic

- > <https://www.yorkgeneral.org/york-general-hospital/specialty-clinic/>
- > Wound & ostomy clinic

MEDICAL OFFICES

- Gastroenterology Specialties PC
- > <https://www.gidocs.net/>
- > Gastroenterology

Nebraska Surgery Center

- > <https://www.nebraskasurgery.com/>
- > Surgery
- General Surgery Associates
- > <https://www.gsalincoln.com/>
- > Stomach/Gastric surgery

OSTOMY NURSES

Beatrice Community Hospital
Makayla Wiese, APRN, COWCN

Bryan Medical Center 402-481-2018
Cindy Skinner RN, BSN, CWOCN

CHI Health St. Elizabeth
Rhonda R. Soucek, RN BSN CWOCN
Deb Bussey, RN BSN, CWOCN
Nicole Carmine, RN BSN, CWOCN
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General Surgery Associates
Amanda Paprocki, RN, BSN, CWOCN

Science reveals church brings positive health

Living with an ostomy can feel isolating, but research suggests that one of the most powerful sources of support might be waiting in your local faith community. A groundbreaking study by Robin Dunbar, published in *Evolution and Human Behavior* reveals fascinating insights about how church attendance strengthens our social bonds and overall wellbeing—findings that underscore the vital role faith communities play in our lives.

Dunbar's research examined 300 participants to understand how participation in community gatherings affects our social networks and sense of belonging. The results were striking: people who attended church weekly reported having approximately 40 people in their sympathy group—those they could genuinely rely on for emotional support—compared to a norm of only 15 people among the general population. **This represents a 167% increase in available support.**

Church attendance doesn't just increase the number of people in our lives—it fundamentally transforms the quality of our relationships. The study found regular churchgoers **felt deeply bonded** to their congregation members, with frequency of attendance showing a direct correlation to increased emotional closeness with co-worshippers. The more consistently someone attended services, the stronger their sense of belonging to the congregation.

The research identified a critical threshold: when church attendance became weekly and consistent, something profound happened. Those who attended religious services at least weekly **listed around 20 individuals in their support clique—three times the societal norm of 5-7 people.** This dramatic increase suggests that the weekly rhythm of worship creates an extended support system rivaling that of immediate family.

Dunbar's findings suggest that church communities provide more than spiritual nourishment. They offer tangible, measurable benefits: a reliable network of people who share your values, understand your challenges, and stand ready to provide emotional and practical support. The data shows that this effect

isn't passive belief—it's active participation. Regular attendance at services was the strongest predictor of having larger support networks and greater engagement with the wider community.

For those of us managing an ostomy, this research validates something profound: faith communities matter. They provide the consistent, face-to-face interaction that builds real belonging. Whether you're navigating physical challenges, emotional struggles, or simply seeking genuine connection, your church community offers a ready-made network of people who care and are genuinely invested in your wellbeing.

If you've been searching for deeper



community and stronger support networks, the research is clear: regular participation in your faith community isn't just spiritually meaningful—it's **genuinely transformative for your health and wellbeing.**

Dunbar, R. I. M. (2020). The role of religion in human evolution and human social bonds. **Evolution and Human Behavior**, 41(4), 259-269.

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The advertisement features a man named Gabriel in a kitchen, smiling and holding a CeraPlus One-Piece Soft Convex Pouching System. The background shows a kitchen counter with various dishes and a red pot. The Hollister logo is prominently displayed in the center. A small red shield icon with a white checkmark is in the bottom right corner.



Ostomy apps

Hey LOA! There's some cool phone tools to track supplies, set reminders, get tips and more.

MyOstomyLife by Coloplast

Apple

Android



My Ostomy Journey by Convatec

Apple

Android



Ostomy 101

Apple

Android



OstoBuddy

Apple

Android



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Reference: 1. Clinical Summary: Osmose Study, Multinational Evaluation of the Peristomal Condition in New Ostomates Using Moldable Skin Barriers. Maria Teresa Szewczyk, MD, PhD; Grazyna Majewska, RN, ETN; Mary V. Cabral, MS, FNP-BC, CWOCN- AP; and Karin Hölzel-Piontek, RN: The Effects of Using a Moldable Skin Barrier on Peristomal Skin Condition in Persons with an Ostomy: Results of a Prospective, Observational, Multinational Study. Ostomy Wound Management 2014;60(12):16-26.

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Love college football?

Cornhuskers probably top your list, but there's a great player at Auburn University to root for now! Kicker Alex McPherson fought through the 2024 season with ulcerative colitis. At one point he weighed only 110 pounds. Then, he got ostomy surgery and fought through that to get back to his team. Then! He fought through competition to make the team again. Alex, ostomy and all, is now nailing 50+ yard field goals.

"It changed my life," McPherson said in April. "I wouldn't be here or playing football again without the surgery. I think it was definitely the right decision for me and my family. I'm glad I did it."



LINCOLN OSTOMY ASSOCIATION

President Amy 620-341-3811
Vice President Sally
Secretary Beverly 402-525-9271
Communications John 402-310-3496

Lincoln Ostomy Home
LOA welcomes calls from ostomates,
especially new people, with questions on
everything from, "how do I shower?" to
"what about clothes?"

Meetings (Let's meet, shall we?)
In person meetings are at a church at
8230 South St., starting at 2 p.m.
updates at ostomynebraska.com/lincoln

Contact, Advertise
Contact or visit LOA to learn more about
support group meetings, ostomy products
and educational opportunities. Sparrow is
a quarterly publication for the Lincoln Os-
tomy Association. If you'd like to advertise
or to submit an article,
email lincolnostomy@gmail.com

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When cost efficiency
costs ostomates choice

The Lincoln Ostomy Association is deeply concerned about efforts by
the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to include ostomy,
urological, and tracheostomy supplies in the next round of Medicare
competitive bidding. When CMS released details on June 30, many were
caught off-guard by this expansion, which appears to contradict the original
statute governing the program.

This proposed change threatens our community in several critical
ways. By focusing solely on price points, competitive bidding pushes suppliers
toward lower-quality, offshore products—directly conflicting with the Trump
administration's "Made in America" manufacturing initiative. More importantly,
ostomy supplies are highly individualized prosthetics, not interchangeable
medical equipment. What works for one person may be completely unsuitable
for another based on individual anatomy, skin sensitivity, and physical needs.

Representatives Neal Dunn (R-Fla.) and Greg Murphy (R-N.C.), both
urologists, have spearheaded a bipartisan letter urging CMS to halt this
expansion. The United Ostomy Associations of America and other advocacy
groups mobilized thousands of comments before the Aug. 29 deadline. Patient
advocates warn that the proposal would restrict access to a limited number
of suppliers, reducing access to quality products and jeopardizing effective
ostomy management STATE OF NEBRASKA STATUTES Section 30-3401
Legislative intent..

As one industry expert noted, cutting home-based services to save pennies
will force patients into higher levels of care, costing multitudes more—bad
policy and fiscally irresponsible. CMS is expected to issue a final rule by Oct.
31, and we remain hopeful that the overwhelming patient response will make
a difference.

Article adapted from coverage by Theresa Flaherty, Managing Editor, originally published Oct. 3, 2025

House representative for Lincoln, 2st District - Mike Flood - 402-438-1598

House representative for Western 3rd District - Adrian Smith - 308-384-3900