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## Hospital Safety: Where Can You Report Your Concerns?



Posted by [Catherine D. Bertram](#), Partner

As a [former Director of Risk Management](#) at a local hospital, I know the importance of input about patient safety from patients and their families. It is a critical step in making our hospitals, and in turn our communities, safer places to work and live. Having said that, being in the hospital or having a family member in the hospital is a stress filled time. When [something goes wrong](#) it is hard to know where to turn for help. The first thing on your mind, of course, is the safety and well-being of your loved one and that is where your focus should be. However, after the immediate situation is resolved you may feel the need to get assurances that this will never happen again to your family or anyone else.

If you, or your family member, has experienced what you believe is an unsafe condition or an unsafe practice in a local hospital you can do something about that right away. In addition to reporting your concerns to the Patient Advocate at the hospital, as well as hospital administration when necessary, you can also make your voice heard at independent agencies. There are two entities that you can report your concerns to. One is right here in DC, the Department of Health. The D.C. Department of Health has oversight and licensing authority over all the of the hospitals in D.C. You can click [here](#) to file a complaint about a DC Hospital or you can call DC's hot line 202-442-5833. D.C. has teams of nurses and other professionals who regularly inspect the hospitals and investigate patient concerns and adverse outcomes.

In addition, there is a national organization that accredits hospitals called the [Joint Commission](#). They also regularly audit local hospitals and have a specific procedure for investigation of patient concerns. You can click [here](#) and go to their website and follow the procedure after you click "file a complaint", or you can call their office of quality monitoring, 630-792-5636, or call their toll free number, 800-994-6610, on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., central time. Please note that the Joint Commission does not address individual billing issues, payment disputes, labor relations issues or individual clinical management of patients.

*About the author:*

*[Catherine Bertram](#) is board certified in civil trials. Ms. Bertram has 20 years of trial experience and is unique in that she was formerly the Director of Risk Management for Georgetown University Hospital so she brings a wealth of knowledge to her practice including how hospitals should be run and what doctors and nurses can do to protect patients. She is a partner with the firm and devotes [her practice](#) to the representation of patients and families of loved ones who have been injured or lost due to medical errors. Ms. Bertram lectures regularly to lawyers and health care providers, nationally and locally, regarding patient safety, medical negligence and other related issues. She has also recently published a chapter in a medical textbook. She can be reached by email at [cbertram@reganfirm.com](mailto:cbertram@reganfirm.com) or by phone 202-822-1875 in her office in Washington, D.C.*