

SAMPLE LETTER TO A NEW PHYSICIAN

Note: An OOTS member developed this letter and kindly gave permission to post it here as an example for others to use (thanks P!). You may copy and edit it based on your own needs/situation. You may also want to download the Blue Knot Foundation's [Fact Sheet for GPs: Understanding Complex Trauma](#) and send that as well.

Dr. _____,

I'm writing because I am a soon-to-be patient of yours, and there are a few things that I think it would be beneficial for you to know prior to our first appointment on (date).

I am a survivor of childhood physical and emotional abuse, physical and emotional neglect, and sexual abuse. My medical records will not reflect these things specifically as this is the first time I have communicated them to a medical professional. I've recently entered a new season of safety in my life, with limited or eliminated contact with my abusers, and I am seeking to find a physician who will partner with me in my future health care and help me to address the lingering effects of abuse on my health which have been partially or fully unaddressed.

Because of my history, meeting new doctors and undergoing physical exams can be extremely anxiety provoking for me. My counselor has helped me to assess what I may need in order to feel safe in medical environments and during medical procedures/exams. I thought it would be best to share some of that prior to seeing you.

One thing that is extremely helpful to me is if the first appointment with a new provider can be a consult in which there will be only discussion and no exam. I believe that this is what we have scheduled on (date), and I just wanted to confirm that need.

During the appointment, I will likely be anxious, and will have trouble processing the information we discuss. It is a struggle for me to express what I am thinking and feeling, and whether or not I am feeling safe. It's likely that I will become dissociative during/following a physical exam or during/following discussion of health topics related to the abuse. This dissociative state may or may not be apparent to an observer. For these reasons, if possible, I would like to request to be scheduled for slightly longer appointments than usual, so that I can have time to get grounded, process information, and ask questions.

For a variety of reasons (including history of head trauma, neglect, iron-deficiency, and Complex-PTSD) I will be unable to remember in detail what we've discussed following our appointment. I will take notes during the appointment and may record our conversations; but, if possible, I would like to request to be supplied with a copy of your records from each appointment.

Out of the Storm

I have trouble initiating dialogue, which is why I thought it was important to send this letter prior to our first appointment. I am very willing to talk about the content of this letter, but I will do much better if I am asked questions, rather than having to start the conversation. Especially in our first appointment, it will be helpful if you will initiate conversation.

Additional accommodations I would like to request include:

- Being in a position during exams where I can have eye contact with someone at all times.
- Being reassured that I can ask questions about any part of my care.
- Having an explanation of procedures. Including knowing that I will be touched, how and where I will be touched, and if I should expect discomfort.
- Assurance that staff want to know what they can do to make me more comfortable, and that they will not be angry or upset if I request something to be done differently.
- Patient reassurance of safety should I exhibit signs of a panic attack, startle when touched, or experience pain during an exam.
- If it is necessary for a male medical professional to be involved in my care, I request that a female medical professional also be present.

I am hopeful about working with you for my ongoing care, and I truly appreciate the time you are taking to read this letter. Please include this letter in my medical records for future reference.

If you have any concerns or would like to touch base about anything prior to our first appointment, please leave a message on my cell and I will return your call promptly: _____.

Sincere thanks,