

Partnering with Your Child's Health Care Team: PREPARING FOR A CLINIC VISIT

As your child's most consistent caregiver, you know your child/youth with special health care needs in ways that no one else does. You having an active role as an equal member of your child's health care team is essential.

Developing partnerships with your child's health care team will help your child receive the best healthcare. Start with clear communication between you and providers. Be sure to share your cultural preferences so that they do not become barriers to access and service.



SEARCH FOR
PROVIDERS
AND CLINICS
THAT MEET
YOUR NEEDS

- Many insurance plans require that your child have a Primary Care Provider. This provider is responsible for partnering with you to oversee all of your child's care. A Primary Care Provider provides well care, referrals to specialists, and coordination of care and services. This approach is called a "medical home."
- Find providers that meet your family and child's needs. Ask other families for recommendations. Check out a provider's knowledge and experience; insurance companies, clinic and hospital websites often post a provider's background, expertise and interests online.
- Ask if your provider has a Care Coordinator that can help you and the provider coordinate your child's care, communicate with specialists if needed, and connect you with other needed services.
- You can ask for an appointment to interview a provider to decide if she or he and the clinic are a good fit for you, your child and family.
- If the provider isn't a good fit for you, it's okay to change providers and find someone who you feel more comfortable working with.

SEEK
INFORMATION

- Bring a written list of questions. Keep in mind that the provider may not have time to answer all your questions at one visit, but you can leave your list and ask for a way to follow up to get the rest of your questions answered at another time.
- There are many sources of information about diagnoses, medicines, and treatments. Ask your child's providers for written materials or web-sites that might be helpful. Check out national and local organizations on your child's diagnosis.
- Talk with other parents: contact **Family Voices of MN Connected program**: 612-440-1609 | 866-334-8444 or email at connected@familyvoicesmn.org.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

- Your instincts and intimate knowledge of your child are critical to his/her medical care. Share what you know and what you observe with health care providers. Call when you see a problem. Providers rely on the information you give.
- Never be reluctant to ask questions about how your child is doing, how a medicine is working, or what to expect during a treatment.
- Call your child's doctor or clinic nurse before an appointment if you have specific concerns, so they are aware ahead of time. Nurses are great mediators and can be very helpful both to the family and the doctor.

TELL THE PROVIDER ABOUT YOUR CHILD AND FAMILY'S SPECIAL NEEDS

- Talk with your child's provider about scheduling longer appointment times for discussing all your child's needs and developing a plan of care for your child.
- If your child gets sick easily, ask to wait for your appointment in a separate area or if you and your child can wait in an exam room.
- Keep a dated log in a notebook, computer or phone about what is going on with your child, especially if there are new issues you are concerned about. A log will help you clearly explain your observations, when the issues have occurred and the details about the issues.

BRING A FAMILY MEMBER OR TRUSTED FRIEND TO APPOINTMENTS

- Try to have more than one parent, family member or trusted friend participate in key appointments. Talk together about your understanding of the purpose of the visit and questions you have.
- You may want to ask the other person to take notes. Two people will likely remember different information from the appointment and they can talk over what they heard after the appointment.

PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE VISIT

- Tell your child what to expect, who you will be seeing and why along with what tests may be done.
- If your child is able: encourage the child to think of at least one question to ask the doctor while at the visit. Encouraging your child to be an active member of the team early on will help him/her learn skills to become a self-advocate.

A family-centered **MEDICAL HOME** is not a building, house, hospital, or home healthcare service, but rather an approach to providing comprehensive primary care. In a family-centered medical home the pediatric care team works in partnership with a child and a child's family to assure that all of the medical and non-medical needs of the patient are met.

Through this partnership the pediatric care team can help the family/patient access, coordinate, and understand specialty care, educational services, out-of-home care, family support, and other public and private community services that are important for the overall health of the child and family. For more information contact Family Voices of MN or go to: <http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/>.

Family Voices of Minnesota—www.familyvoicesmn.org—612-440-1609—2223 5th St, Unit 10933, St. Paul, MN 55110

This handout was developed in part under a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) grant #84MC00005 Family-to-Family Health Information Center. The contents should not be construed as the position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS, or the federal government. It is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to constitute legal advice.