

# Working with Your Child's Health Care Team: DURING AN OFFICE VISIT

**As your child's most consistent caregiver,** you know their 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.

**Maintaining collaborative relationships with your child's health care team will help your child receive the best care.** 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.



## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH CARE TEAM

- Communication is a shared responsibility and should always be honest and respectful.
- Share your thoughts or concerns. If you are unsure about a term, treatment, or need more details, don't hesitate to ask questions.
- Listen carefully during the conversation. Writing down what the provider says can help you remember.
- Repeat back what you heard to clarify the information discussed and to make sure you are both in agreement.
- Ask questions like:
  - What other actions or considerations are needed?
  - What will we learn from this test/procedure and how will we use that information?
  - Should other doctors be consulted in this matter?

## YOU'RE PART OF THE TEAM

- You may feel hesitant when talking with health care providers because of their medical credentials. They may seem busy and you may feel they don't have the time to answer your questions. **Please remember that you are a leading member of your child's health care team.**
- Providers have specialized expertise that you need, but you and your child also have special expertise and experience. Your child's provider can learn from you and your child. Providers should listen and respect the knowledge you bring to the team.

**BE PREPARED  
AND  
ORGANIZED**

[See "Preparing  
for a Clinic  
Visit" tip sheet](#)

- Bring along important documents and information about your child's health. For example, relevant health records from other providers, medication lists, and notes from your child's daily life.
- Bring a list of questions. Be prepared to have a discussion about what your child has been experiencing and get all of your family's questions addressed. Take notes.
- Understand that health records may not be shared between providers who are in different health systems. You may need to share or coordinate sharing of information between providers.
- Ask for visit notes to be sent to your child's primary care provider and/or specialists. You may be asked to sign a Release of Information (ROI).

**ASK FOR A  
WRITTEN  
CARE PLAN**

- A care plan can help you and the provider be proactive about planning care and it can be a tool that helps you share important information with other health care providers such as specialists, primary care, etc.
- A care plan could list your child's diagnoses and conditions, along with other providers involved in your child's care and medications. It could also list goals for care, family goals, a plan for upcoming tests or treatments and follow up care, and information about your child's unique needs.
- Some parts of a care plan may be good to share with others who are involved in your child's care. For example, family members, school staff, childcare providers, therapists, etc. Be thoughtful, though, about not sharing more than is necessary to protect your child's privacy.

**AN  
EMERGENCY  
CARE PLAN  
MIGHT BE  
HELPFUL**

- An emergency care plan is designed to be a short one-page form that you can use to quickly provide the most important information about your child that might be needed in an emergency.
- The Emergency Care Form was developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the College of Emergency Physicians and is available to complete and download: <https://www.acep.org/by-medical-focus/pediatrics/medical-forms/emergency-information-form-for-children-with-special-health-care-needs>

**THERE MAY  
BE TIMES  
YOU  
DISAGREE**

- It is normal to disagree sometimes with your child's providers. Differing opinions can help get creative juices flowing and move you towards the best treatment options for your child.
- If you are able, set a calming tone by breathing deeply, listening attentively and choosing your words carefully.
- Look for opportunities to compromise; for example, could you agree to try something being recommended for 2 weeks and then get back together to talk about how it is working?