

Tips for Partnering with Your Child's Service Providers

Parent-provider partnerships are important to the services your child receives. Below are some basic principles for forming effective parent-provider partnerships.



PARTICIPATE

An effective parent-provider partnership requires active participation from both you and your child's service providers. Below are some ways you can participate in your child's services:

Speak up. Don't be afraid to be vocal with providers about wanting to take an active role in your child's treatment. At first, this may be uncomfortable for you, but with practice and support you can learn to engage with your provider.

Provide information. Parents know a lot about their child, but sometimes you may not have the opportunity to share your knowledge with your child's provider. As a parent, you have vital information about what has been going well for your family and where there have been struggles. It's important to let your provider know all that you can about your child's history, interest and needs. Also be clear with your provider about what your vision is for your child and family, and how you can work together.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Become informed about your rights as a parent. Most agencies list these rights in a document entitled the **Patients' Bill of Rights**. Reviewing these documents and knowing your rights may help you feel empowered to take appropriate action if you feel your rights or your child's rights are being violated. If your agency or private provider does not have a Patients' Bill of Rights posted, ask for one.



SHARE FEEDBACK

People, including providers, learn best when given timely and constructive feedback. Talk with your provider about your experiences with them. Be honest and respectful in your communication. Tell them what has gone well and ways in which each of you can communicate better with one another. Such feedback can help strengthen and keep a healthy, respectful and working partnership.



PARENTS ARE EXPERTS TOO!

As a parent, you are the most knowledgeable expert concerning your child. You can get advice and input from others, but if you are told something that doesn't fit with your prior experiences, ask questions and share with your provider why you disagree.

In addition to realizing that you too are an expert in your child's treatment, you must also know your limits when it comes to collaborating with your child's provider. Discussing your role in the treatment process with your provider may be helpful for you to know how to work together as a team.



GET THE FACTS

It's important to get accurate information about your child's diagnosis and services. This requires asking questions. If you don't understand something a provider has said, ask questions until it is clear. A provider will assume you understand unless you let them know. Here are some helpful tips for getting the facts about the services your child will receive:

Take notes. Writing down what your provider says can help you remember what you need to know about your child's treatment.

Make a list of questions. Asking your provider questions may be difficult at first. Writing down your questions before you meet with your provider will make it easier.

Repeat what you heard. It may be helpful when discussing important information with your provider to repeat what you heard in your own words. This is an effective way of confirming that you understand what is being said.

Keep a file. Keep all the important documents related to your child's services in a file or binder that's accessible. Review the information regularly to make sure you have all the most up-to-date important facts related to your child's treatment.