Talking With Providers About Treatment Choices and Evidence-Based Programs

Families are encouraged to ask questions to their child's doctor or provider about the treatment being recommended, and should come prepared with a notebook to record the answers to their questions. Families should also share their values and preferences with providers.

Important Questions

- Why are you recommending this treatment and what are the alternative treatments, if any?
- What is the goal of the treatment being recommended and will it help us get the outcomes that we want? (Share the outcomes you want, such as improved school attendance and performance, less child and family distress, improved behavior and relationships with family and peers, improved functioning, etc.)
- How will we know if we are reaching our treatment goals?
- How does the recommended treatment promote my child's strengths, capabilities, and interests?
- What are the risks and benefits associated with the recommended treatment?
- How does the recommended treatment work and what is involved?
- Is there research or evidence to support the use of this treatment? If so, are you following a manual that describes how it works?
- Is there research showing that the recommended treatment works for families like ours? Tell us about the research supporting the recommended treatment.
- What training and experience do you have with the recommended treatment?
- If you are not recommending an evidence or research-supported treatment, why not?
- How will our family be involved in the recommended treatment and how can we best support the treatment?
- What changes can we expect to see and how long will it take before we see these changes?
- How do we measure and monitor progress?
- What should we do if problems get worse or we do not see an improvement?
- How do we reach you after hours or in an emergency, and if we cannot reach you, will someone else from your office be available. If so, who?
- Is the recommended treatment covered by our insurance and what is the cost?
- Are there psychosocial interventions that might be tried before medication is used, or effectively used in combination with medication, which may help to lower the required medication dose?
- Does research support the use of the recommended medication for a child that is my child's age and with similar needs?

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- How does medication fit within the overall treatment plan and how will we coordinate with other treatment, such as therapy, school behavior plans, and more?
- What should we be looking for in changes in behavior, changes in symptoms, and who should we contact with questions about these changes and the medications?
- What are the potential risks and benefits of the medication and other treatment options, and what are the potential side effects?
- How will our family, our child, and the treating provider monitor progress, behavior changes, symptoms, and safety concerns? (Close monitoring is critical with all medications at all times, however, it is especially important when medication is started and when dosages are changed.)
- How will we know when it is time to talk about stopping medication treatment and what steps need to be taken before the medication is stopped?
- How can we best develop a clear communication plan between our family and the treating providers (therapist and psychiatrist) to ensure open lines of communication?
- What is my child has a crisis and is hospitalized? Who can we contact in your office, especially if someone wants to change medications?

Source: *Choosing the Right Treatment: What Families Need to Know About Evidence-Based Practices*
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