

Steps to Becoming a Parent Partner in Your Physician's Office

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Ideally, you already have a doctor you feel provides family-centered care. But if not, your first step will be to locate a new doctor! If you need assistance with locating one in your area, The American Academy of Pediatrics Pediatrician Referral Service (herein after called AAP Pediatrician Referral Service) is intended for use by the general public to allow them quick access to information on pediatricians.

If you are looking for a pediatrician who specializes in the care of children with disabilities and/or children with developmental or behavioral issues, you can use the Pediatrician Referral Service to search for a pediatrician by specialty. You can also search on a website for a pediatrician by last name, city, state, zip code or area code at www.aap.org/referral/.

Another option, and my favorite, is to contact Texas Parent to Parent (www.txp2p.org) and see if they have any physician referrals from parents in your area of Texas. The important thing to remember is that just because a doctor is on someone's referral list does not mean that you will approve of them.

Okay, so you have a doctor; it does not have to be the pediatrician, it could be the sub-specialist (neurologist, orthopedist, cardiologist, dermatologist, etc.) that you feel is the doctor who coordinates your child's care, the one who keeps up with all the other things going on with your child in order to make sure that he/she receives **continuous, comprehensive, and coordinated care**.

If it is a physician you have been working with for a while, you may feel comfortable giving him/her the Medical Home Brochure and asking what you can do to help his office become more involved. Of course, this is after you have expressed your appreciation for all the wonderful care your child has received over the years.



However, just like everything else in our lives, it is easier if you have ideas of ways you can "help" the office become more family-friendly, provide families with much needed information, help the office run smoother, and even SAVE the office \$\$\$\$\$. The latter is a very important point because cost is usually one of the first responses from the office manager or physician as to why things cannot be changed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes in the philosophy of Medical Homes for all children because not only does it enhance the quality of care a family receives, it also enhances the overall effectiveness of the practice. The AAP has developed a link on their website that covers the reimbursement arena for practices.

The following is a list of a few ideas to help you get started.

1. Ask your child's doctor if some of the family-centered things he/she does could become more general practice. Suggest that the office organize a meeting of parents, staff, and providers to talk about how to improve services for families like yours.
2. One thing that has been discussed in meetings is accessibility: How easy is it for you to get to your appointment?
 - a. What could make it easier?
 - b. When you get to the office, is parking available?
 - c. Can you put a wheel chair lift down and get a person in a wheelchair out of the vehicle in the space provided?





- d. Are the doors electric?
 - e. Does a staff member help you get in?
 - f. Is there ample space in the office for a person in a wheelchair?
 - g. How long is the wait time?
 - h. How difficult is the wait time for you and your child?
 - i. Is there enough time during the actual visit?
 - j. Is there some sort of code to alert the appointment desk to schedule extra time during the visits of patients with special needs?
3. Offer to set up a Parent Resource and Networking Bulletin Board in the office. This may sound like a lot of (free) work and it can be but it does not have to be! TxP2P's website has a Resource Directory that is regularly updated and printable. Are there meetings in your area? If so, put it on the board too! Remember to keep the board current.
 4. If there are parent meetings in your area, maybe some of the information would be helpful to the office staff - invite them to attend the meetings.
 5. Invite the physician to speak at one of the meetings or maybe the office would like to host a "Parents Night." There are numerous topics that could be a possibility (disability specific topics, potty training, behavior, transitions, resources, etc.).
 6. Does your child have a Care Plan? How about an Emergency Room Information Sheet? A positive point to stress is that if the patient goes into the ER with an Emergency Care Plan, they will not have to contact the physician in the middle of the night when their patient shows up!

If you have a care plan, discuss it with your doctor and let them help you make sure the information on it is really what a stranger would need to know about your child to provide the proper care. Offer to share your plan with other patients in the office; this could also be another topic for a parent meeting.

You may even be able to get your local emergency department to host or sponsor such a meeting because of the valuable information the plan would provide them. If you do not have a care plan, you can search the internet or go to the AAP website at www.medicalhomeinfo.org/tools/care_notebook.html, contact Texas Parent to Parent, or contact the CSHCN Services Program office at the Department of State Health Services, 1100 West 49th St, Room 442, Austin, TX 78756, www.dshs.state.tx.us/cshcn/default.shtm or call the CSHCN Services Program Inquiry Line at 1-800-252-8023. ♥



[Providers Partner with Families in Medical Homes](#)

Parent-professional teamwork is a key part of developing medical homes for all children.

What are families looking for in a health care provider?

- ♥ A respectful listener
- ♥ Someone who sees their child as a "whole" person
- ♥ A caring attitude
- ♥ Understanding, support, and someone to be there for them
- ♥ Clinical know-how
- ♥ Someone who can add to their power and knowledge
- ♥ Someone who allows for and supports hope