The importance of a medical home for you and your child with special health care needs

Children with special health care needs often need more or specialized health care services. They may receive these services through different offices, doctors, therapists, and other providers focused on your child’s health. As a result of your child’s complex condition and many different providers, you may need help organizing this care. A medical home can provide this assistance.

What is a medical home?

A medical home is not a house, office, or hospital, but instead an approach to providing complete primary care. In a medical home, a pediatric clinician works in partnership with the family/patient to assure that the medical and non-medical needs of the child are met. Through this partnership, the clinician can help the family/patient access and coordinate specialty care, educational services, out-of-home care, family support, and other public and private community services that are important to the overall health of the child and family.

How can I build a family-centered medical home?

Your child’s pediatrician or family physician may not have all of the following pieces of medical home in their practice, but it will help to know what to ask for and what you can work on together. You can use this list when choosing a new physician for your child, or as a way to start a conversation with your child’s doctor about medical home.

Accessibility: Does your child’s primary care doctor:

► Allow you to call after hours, on weekends, and holidays?
► Accept your child’s health insurance?
► Have an accessible office and equipment for your child?

Knowledgeable: Do staff within your child’s primary care office:

► Know you and your child when you call?
► Recognize and accommodate your child’s special needs?
► Respond promptly to requests for prior approvals, letters of medical necessity for your child’s insurance, or documentation for other programs and services?
► Provide written materials in a language you understand?

Communication: Does your child’s primary care doctor:

► Ask you to share your knowledge about your child?
► Seek your opinion when decisions are needed?
► Talk to you about how your child’s condition affects your family (other children in the family, child care, expenses, work, sleep)?
Acknowledge and respect your family’s cultural values and religious beliefs?
Provide interpreter services if needed?

Teamwork: Does your child’s primary care doctor and office staff:

- Help you set short-term (3–6 months) and long-term (the next year) goals for your child?
- Give you important information, such as recommendations or new treatments, in writing?
- Work with you to create and update a written plan of care for your child’s medical and non-medical needs?
- Review your child’s medical records with you when needed?
- Help you consider new and emerging treatment choices for your child’s condition?

Support: Does your child’s primary care doctor and office staff:

- Help you connect with family support organizations and other parents in your community?
- Provide information on community resources?
- Find and share new information, research, or materials that are helpful in caring for your child?
- Help you to advocate on behalf of your child?
- Plan for adult health care services (if appropriate for your child’s age)?

Coordination: Does your child’s primary care doctor and office staff help you:

- Follow up with referrals?
- Help you to find needed services such as transportation, durable medical equipment, home care, and ways to pay for them?
- Explain your child’s needs to other health professionals?
- Reach out to your child’s school or day care providers to help them understand your child’s medical condition?
- Encourage and support frequent communication between all persons involved in your child’s care (with your consent)?
- Organize and attend team meetings about your child’s plan of care that include you and other providers?

Resources for families

http://www.medicalhomeportal.org/
The Medical Home Portal

http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/
The National Center for Medical Home Implementation

Wyoming Department of Health—Maternal and Child Health Unit, Children’s Special Health Program. Find out more about the medical home initiatives in Wyoming and get help finding health care providers who support the medical home model. (307) 777-6921

References


Wyoming Family to Family Health Information Center

http://www.uwyo.edu/wind/f2f/
Wyoming Institute for Disabilities: 1-888-989-9463
UPLIFT–Federation of Families: 1-888-875-4383

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