

16 TIPS

FOR DEALING WITH PROFESSIONALS



As a parent, you have the privilege of being responsible for your child's well being. One of your primary jobs is to coordinate the services of all the different professionals who play a role in your child's life.

These days, most children come into regular contact with at least two or three of the following professionals:

- child care workers
- doctors
- coaches
- therapists
- teachers
- counselors
- dentists
- caseworkers

In times of crisis, your child may be involved with more professionals than those mentioned here. If your child has special needs, you are even more likely to be dealing with lots of professionals frequently.

Parents know their children best—what they are like, the services they're receiving and their special needs. It's up to you to make sure that all of the professionals who come into contact with your child are working *together with you* on behalf of your child.

Think of yourself as the coach of a team. If all of your players go in different directions, they will never get to the goal line, no matter how good each player is. It is the coach's job to get everyone to understand and follow the game plan. The coach helps the players make the most of their individual strengths and use the combined power of the team to assure victory.

Here are some tips for how to work with your child's team of professionals more effectively so that you can get the best results for your child.



I don't feel like you're treating me as an equal.

1

You have a right to be treated with courtesy and respect, just as professionals do.

Everyone responds better when treated respectfully. Don't let professionals talk down to you. You, the parent, know the most about your child. It's not acceptable for you to be treated as less than an equal.



Let's solve this problem together so we can figure out the best plan of action.

2

You and the professional are partners in working out your child's problems.

You can both help your child best if you work together as a team, rather than as two people from opposite sides.

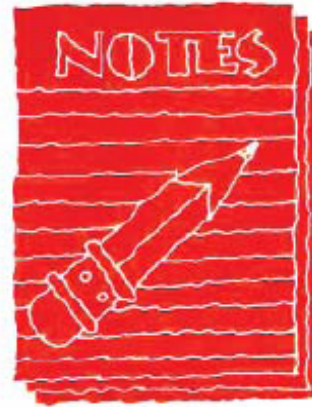


Let's share our information so we can come up with the best solutions.

3

You know your child better than anyone else.

Don't be intimidated by professionals. They may know more than you about their profession, but you know your child best. You each have special knowledge that can help your child.



Here's a list of the questions I'd like to discuss with you today.

4

Be as clear as possible.

Before an appointment, make notes to yourself of things you want to discuss with the professional. Bring the list with you. Be specific and use examples whenever you can. Many people forget what they want to say when they're nervous. A list will help you remember. Write down the answers as you get them. You may not be able to remember everything later.

gobbledy goop



I don't understand those terms. Could you explain them to me?

5

Ask the professional to explain things to you in plain English if you don't understand the terms being used.

Sometimes professionals talk in their own "language" and use words that only people in their field understand. Don't be embarrassed to ask for an explanation. You have the right to know exactly what they are saying. After all, it's your child they're talking about.



I still don't understand why you think that.

6

If you don't understand how the professional came to a conclusion, ask for the specific reasons behind it.

A recommendation will always make more sense if you clearly see what led to it. Continue to ask questions until you understand the professional's thinking.



In many cases, that might be the right approach, but I don't think it would work for my child because...



You may disagree with professionals about their recommendations for your child.

Don't be afraid to say so. Professionals are only human. Sometimes they are mistaken. You know your child in a way they can't. If you think what they're suggesting won't work for your child, say so. Based on your input, professionals may change their recommendations.



I'm too upset to continue right now.



Explain your point of view in a calm, courteous way.

Don't attack the professional just because you don't agree. If you are calm rather than angry when expressing your opinion, the professional will be much more likely to see you as a partner who has a different point of view rather than as a "difficult parent." Most professionals are really trying to help your child. It's okay to disagree, to express emotion, cry or be angry, but if you are feeling "out of control," it may be better to end early and schedule another meeting.



I'm glad we're both on time so we can get as much done as possible.

9

Parents and professionals should respect each other's time.

Like you, professionals can get very busy. That's why it's so important to make an appointment—to ensure that both of you have enough time to meet and thoroughly discuss any problems. Then try to be on time. If either of you is late to a meeting, it may make you both late for the rest of the day.



I think we need to discuss this more. Can we find another time to get together?

10

If you need more time with the professional, say so.

If one appointment isn't long enough to get all your questions answered, the professional should be willing to schedule more time to meet with you. You are entitled to this. It may mean having to set another meeting on another day, but you have a right to get complete, clear information about your child.

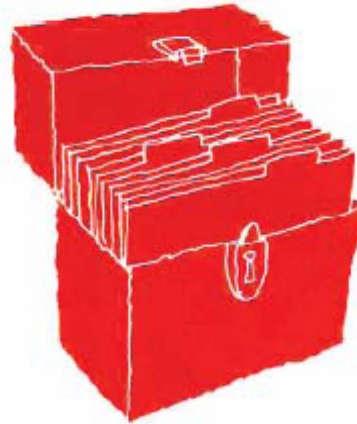


When would it be useful for us to visit again?

11

Keep in regular contact with any professional involved with your child.

In some instances, it's important to see a professional on a regular basis if you are going to get the best for your child. Check with professionals to see how often they recommend you contact them.



My child had his last shot in January.

12

Find a safe place to keep all of your child's important records.

Professionals often need to know your child's history so they don't do things over again. Keep all of these records in a box or file to help you remember what services your child received, from whom and when.



Have you talked to my child's doctor to make sure what you're suggesting is okay?

13

Encourage members of your child's professional team to talk with one another.

Remember, professionals who work on behalf of your child will perform better if they are working as part of a team rather than all alone. Part of your job as the "coach" of your child's team is to make sure the "players" are communicating.



Thanks for all your help; it's really made a difference for my family.

14

If you are pleased with a professional, say so.

Just like everyone else, professionals like to know when they are doing a good job. A simple "thank you" can mean a lot and will go a long way towards guaranteeing that they continue to do the best job for you.



What is your supervisor's name?

15

If you can't work things out with a professional directly, you may need to discuss your problems with a supervisor.

Make sure you've made every effort to resolve things with the professional before you see a supervisor.



I don't think this is working out. Could you suggest someone else who might be able to help me?

16

If you have tried all of the above and still cannot get along with the professional, think about changing to a different person.

Sometimes people simply cannot get along. If you have done the best you can and still do not feel comfortable with a professional, you'll be better off finding someone else to help your family.


Pertinent Phone Numbers

For information or referral in
the following areas:

Head Start Programs:

Community Action Agency (513) 241-1425

Child Care:

4C for Children (513) 221-0033

**Emergency Assistance
for Social Services:**

Free Store (513) 241-1064

**Concern about Development
of Young Children (0-3):**

Help Me Grow (513) 281-GROW

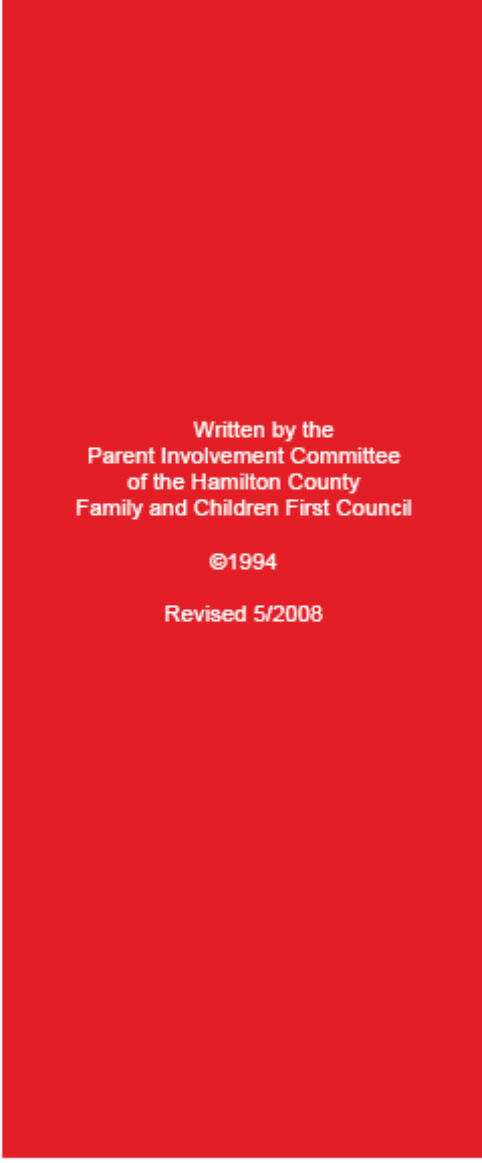
Mental Health:

Center Point Health (513) 221-4357

**Mental Retardation and
Developmental Disabilities**

Hamilton County Board of MR/DD
(513) 794-3308

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