

## Establishing Relationships

You should expect high quality of care and responsibility from your providers, and they should be able to expect responsibility from you as well.

It helps your providers when you:

- ♥ Give them all the information the need in order to give your child the best care
- ♥ Ask questions when you do not understand.
- ♥ Honestly express your concerns; and
- ♥ Give them the same respect you expect from them.

When you establish open relationships with your providers, you lay a foundation for negotiating with them and eventually building strong working partnerships and mutual trust.

**Thank your providers when you like what they do; too often they only hear from dissatisfied clients.**

**You may end up making systems work better for your child and family.  
When you advocate effectively for all children with special needs,**

## Keeping Track of Facts

Some people learn better if they take notes. If you are one of those people be sure to have a pencil and paper with you when you visit or talk with your child's provider. It may also help to have another adult with you during any stressful meeting with a provider so that his person can later help you clarify what was said at the meeting.

Keep a record book in which you note all phone contacts with any of your providers; who you talked to, the date, the answers you received, the resolution of the problem and when you expect a call back or need to call back. Family Voices of North Dakota has a Care Notebook especially for this purpose. If you do not have one give us a call, and we will assist you.



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# Effective Provider Relations and Advocacy



## Providers

A provider is any professional your child receives medical services from such as a Primary Care Provider (PCP, Case Manager, Dentists, other doctors, specialists, social workers, therapists and any other type of health worker and individual providing services to your child.

It is important to establish good working relationships with your providers.

Good provider relationships (like any good relationship) requires time, effort, and patience on both sides; building these relationships can pay off for you and your child as you negotiate care for your child.

### ♥Your Primary Care Provider

Work with your PCP to meet your child's basic care needs. Your PCP coordinates medical care, including routine physicals, preventative health services, referrals to specialists and hospital visits. They take care of prior authorizations for certain services and can assist with appeals to private insurance and Medicaid when you have reached certain limits in services. Be sure to keep your PCP informed of contacts you have with other health care providers, and always contact your PCP within 24 hours of your child being seen in an emergency room

## Your Case Manager/Care Coordinator

Work with your child's case manager or care coordinator to coordinate all your child's services and needs. The case manager/care coordinator will help you establish goals, develop a comprehensive plan to meet your child's needs, help with referrals, or special transportation needs your child may have and coordinate other care such as medical care.

Some insurance companies provide case management services, DD programs as well as Children's Special Health Services. If you do not have one, ask if one is available if you feel you may need one.

## Advocacy

There are agencies that can provide advocacy services. Call FVND if you need assistance or an advocate and they can direct you who to contact. An advocate is someone who pleads the cause of another, or champions another person's needs. Building good provider relations is an important way you advocate for your child.

Because you know your child's and your family's needs better than anyone, you may be the best advocate for your child. You can also encourage your child to advocate for himself. One way he can learn advocacy skills is by observing you, but also provide opportunities for your child to speak for and advocate for himself with providers to whatever extent he can.

## To Be a Better Advocate

- ♥Gather information. Ask questions
- ♥Know your rights
- ♥Keep organized records
- ♥Trust that you may see things professionals may not as you're with your child most of the time.
- ♥Be open to learning new things
- ♥Enlist allies. Seek support from other people.
- ♥Seek out other families of children with special needs as they can share their experiences and what they found helpful.
- ♥When you feel ready, find opportunities to help change systems, such as: volunteer to join an advisory board, offer to participate in state agency consumer groups to develop and improve policies that benefit others and other forms of advocacy.

**When you advocate effectively for your own child's needs, you may end up changing a whole system to better meet other children's and families' special needs.**