



The Role of the Primary Care Clinician in Providing Culturally Competent, Family-Centered Care

Strategies for System Change in Children's Mental Health: A Chapter Action Kit

Primary care practitioners have long been an important first resource for parents who are worried about their child. In today's growing and diverse culture, the need for the provision of culturally competent, family-centered care becomes more evident. Following are the 10 elements of culturally competent, family-centered pediatric mental health care adapted from the National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs.¹ "Every Child Deserves a Medical Home" training program that may assist the primary care clinician in engaging families:

Element 1: Recognize the family as the constant in the child's life. Health care providers may change over time.

- Acknowledge who the key family members are.
- Ask families what they value.
- Identify family routines.
- Recognize the expertise of families; listen to their ideas and opinions.
- Invest in teaching families what they need to know to care for their child.
- Mold the care plan to match family strengths, needs, concerns, and resources.
- Share decision-making.

Element 2: Facilitate family and professional collaboration at all levels in health care.

- Listen to families and follow their lead.
- Be accessible to families.
- Build confidence in families, and tell them often what they do well.
- Support families in their role as an advocate for their child.
- Create win-win solutions.
- Create family options; be sensitive to energy and resources.
- Assist families in learning how to be good historians, keepers of information, and care coordinators.
- Provide families with information and resources.
- Involve families in designing, implementing, and evaluating a care plan for their child.

¹Adapted from the National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs. *Every Child Deserves a Medical Home Training Program*. 3rd ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2004

Element 3: Honor the diversity of families.

- Learn about other cultures; ask questions.
- Be aware of your own values and beliefs and how they shape your actions and decisions.
- Respect family values and beliefs, including interest in alternative remedies.
- Be nonjudgmental.
- Consider ways to sensitize the entire office staff about the diversity of families.
- Provide educational materials in multiple languages as needed, and offer translation and interpreter services.
- Decorate the office to reflect cultural diversity.
- Recognize what nonverbal behaviors are communicating to the family and vice versa.

Element 4: Recognize family strengths.

- Look for and identify strengths in communication skills, participation, interest, knowledge, parenting style, support systems, culture, and spiritual values.
- Ask families:
 - What are your strengths? Concerns?
 - What are your child's likes? Dislikes?
 - What is the best way to approach your child?
 - What do you want? Need?
 - What has worked in the past? What might work now?
 - What are your opinions and needs in the current situation?
- Be sensitive to questions that might be construed as blame.
- Develop the plan of care to build on family strengths.

Element 5: Share complete and unbiased information.

- Encourage families to write down information, questions, and suggestions before an office visit.
- Avoid making assumptions or speaking in jargon.
- Offer opinions, but be sure the family understands all options.
- Repeat critical information, expectations, and next steps.
- Invite questions and expressions of concern.
- Provide written information, videotapes, audiotapes, or illustrations when possible as a backup.
- Be available for follow-up discussions.
- Schedule adequate time to talk with families.



Element 6: Promote family-to-family support and networking.

- Be sensitive to family needs and the need for support.
- Validate the value of family-to-family support.
- Provide information about resources.
- Be informed about area support groups and/or encourage families to create support groups if possible.
- Recognize the child's need for support.
- Recognize the support needs of other family members (eg, grandparents, siblings).

Element 7: Incorporate developmental and behavioral needs.

- Ask questions about developmental and behavioral issues at each visit.
- Listen for family concerns, past experiences with developmental/behavioral issues, use of complementary therapies, stigma, and differences among family members about perceived needs and interest in help-seeking behaviors.
- Conduct developmental and behavioral surveillance and appropriate screenings.
- Assist families to understand and support the developmental and behavioral needs of their children.
- Create relationships with referral sources, including developmental specialists, behavioral health professionals, and agencies providing support services.
- Become informed about special education programs and services and mental health/substance abuse services.
- Make certain that treatment is adapted and adjusted for the developmental stage of the child.
- Encourage family advocacy.
- Encourage families to model self-advocacy skills for their child.
- Design office space to accommodate developmental needs of children.
- Plan for and support developmental transitions.

Element 8: Implement comprehensive policies and programs.

- Ask families what they need (a checklist can help).
- Inform families of available programs and resources.
- Keep brochures and applications on hand.
- Develop a resource library for families and children with mental health concerns.
- Develop a parent advisory group to assist in designing and implementing care, services, and programs.

Element 9: Design accessible health care systems that are flexible, culturally competent, and responsive to family needs.

- Be available (eg, flexible hours, evening hours, and weekend hours).
- Consider transportation needs and options for families who are seeking care.
- Eliminate financial barriers to the greatest extent possible (eg, flexible payment options, and assist families to apply for services such as Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), SSI, Title V, or public mental health programs).
- Use community-based care coordination services to help families gain access to needed community-based services.

Element 10: Family-professional collaboration.

- Promote a relationship in which family members and professionals work together to ensure the best services for the child and the family.
- Recognize and respect the knowledge, skills, and experience that families and professionals bring to the relationship.
- Identify and acknowledge differences of opinion among family members about the child's needs and approaches to care.
- Acknowledge that the development of trust is an integral part of a collaborative relationship.
- Facilitate open communication so that families and professionals feel free to express their concerns about both medical and psychosocial issues.
- Create an atmosphere in which the cultural traditions, values, and diversity of families are acknowledged and honored.
- Recognize that negotiation is essential in a collaborative relationship.
- Include some acknowledgment of mutual respect for each others' culture, values, and traditions.
- Recognize, and adapt to, the family's level of readiness to address a problem, accept a type of treatment, or change a behavior.
- Express interest in collaborating with other health care providers who are involved in the child and family's care.
- Communicate the expectation of a continuing relationship with the child and family when the child is referred for behavioral or subspecialty care.

Developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Mental Health for "Strategies for System Change in Children's Mental Health: A Chapter Action Kit." For more information, visit www.aap.org/mentalhealth/mh2ch.html.



American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

The recommendations in this publication do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or serve as a standard of medical care. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate. Original document included as part of *Bright Futures Tool and Resource Kit*. Copyright © 2010 American Academy of Pediatrics. All Rights Reserved. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not review or endorse any modifications made to this document and in no event shall the AAP be liable for any such changes.