



Finding a

MEDICAL HOME

What is a “medical home”?

Every child with special health care needs (CSHCN*) deserves family-centered, consistent, high quality health care. In fact, in this changing world, it’s more important than ever that every family with a CSHCN find health care stability.

Every family should have a strong, respectful relationship with a health care provider who knows the child’s diagnosis well and who views the family as a trusted partner in decision-making. What we are describing is called a medical home. It’s not built of bricks or wood, but instead is built by physicians, families, and other health professionals who are coming together as a medical home team to help children stay healthy and achieve their maximum potential.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) describes the medical home as a model of delivering primary care that is accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered, coordinated (planned out), compassionate, and culturally effective. (See <http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/> for more details).

Where can you find a medical home?

Finding a starting place for a medical home within your community may take time. A medical home can be started with a pediatrician, family practitioner, pediatric specialist, a nurse practitioner, or other primary care provider who has the knowledge and skills to treat the child’s special condition while also providing routine check-ups, preventive health care, and needed vaccines.

When you find a doctor who respects and honors your culture and traditions and with whom you and your child are comfortable sharing concerns and questions, then you have begun building your medical home. Your medical home team may include a doctor, nurse, and a health educator as well as other health care professionals, like a pharmacist or physical therapist. These team members are like having “health coaches” who help your child get healthy, stay healthy, and get the care and services that are right for you.



* Children with special health care needs (CSHCN) have or are at risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions and require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children in general.



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What happens inside a medical home?

Your medical home team members will listen to your concerns and needs, as well as your child's. Your team will learn your child's health history and will plan for the long-term health needs of the whole child and family. Working in partnership with you, the team will ensure that the medical and non-medical (e.g., respite, early intervention, medical equipment/supplies, recreation) needs of your child and family are met.

Some other jobs for your team include:

- ensuring that your child has the proper immunizations
- talking about normal child development concerns
- getting help with school-related issues
- finding resources in the community for your child
- keeping all of your child's medical records in one place (request our tool to help with this at <http://www.familyvoicesal.org/resources-frm-CareNotebook.php> or by calling us at the number below).
- developing a care plan for your child, in partnership with you and your child

What are my responsibilities on the team?

Parents must remember that they are ultimately responsible for managing their child's medical care and appointments. The most effective parent advocates maintain complete health care records within a notebook and carry it to all appointments. Open, two-way communication within your team means the best care for your child. You should be prepared with a prioritized list of questions/issues when you go to appointments.

Family Voices of Alabama's annual Partners in Care Summit will help you build communication skills, which will help you build better partnerships. Our summit sessions are available at <http://www.familyvoicesal.org/programs-videoTraining.php>. Other tips are available in our "ABC's of Partnering with Your Health Care Provider" brochure.

Most parents are pleased with their child's doctor, but sometimes things just don't feel right. If your doctor is not available when you need him (or her), if you often feel confused about recommendations and why certain treatments/medicines are prescribed, or if you feel like your concerns are not taken seriously, then you should address this with your provider.

If things don't change and you think it may be time to change doctors, please download a copy of our tip sheet titled "Questions for a New Health Provider."



This information is provided by Family Voices of Alabama and the Family-to-Family Health Information Center.

To learn more: www.familyvoicesal.org • 877-771-FVOA (3862)