

IMPACT

on HEALTH & WELLNESS for FAMILIES

FAMILY VOICES®
...keeping families at the center
of children's health care



FAMILY SUPPORT



With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, FamilyVoices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. www.familyvoices.org and www.fv-impact.org. This digest is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration—Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Child, Adolescent, and Family Health UCMC21535.

Raising a healthy family is important, hard work.

At one time or another, nearly everyone needs support. It's a good idea to think ahead about who might be able to help—family, friends, or health providers.

Family health and well-being is a blend of:

- **The Family:** Every family is different and needs unique supports. And the support your family needs will change over time. Your family may move, your children will change schools. You may have a new baby or a death in the family. It's important to recognize how these changes affect your family and find the right support for each situation.
- **Community:** The area where you live will have resources to help your family. These resources might include shelters, food, clothing, and help getting fuel to heat your home. These supports are for everyone. Your culture, citizenship, religion, or disability will not matter. There are community supports that also help families learn

about environmental hazards—conditions in your area that can cause health problems, such as lead paint or second hand smoke.

- **Health Partnerships: A Medical Home** is not a place. It is a way for children and families to receive health care from a primary care provider they know and trust. The health provider and family work together to make sure children and teens are healthy and know about any special health needs. They respect each other and make decisions as a team. Health providers value the family's role as the constant in their children's lives. They know you know your child best. Your provider will ask about your family, listen to your concerns about your child's health and development, and ask how you are doing.
- **Children with Special Health Care Needs:** Your primary care provider can help you learn about your child's medical condition. She can also help coordinate your child's care with other members of your child's health team and tell you about area resources and supports.

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Child and Family

Children learn from their parents, so set good examples. Eat healthy foods, get plenty of exercise and rest, and take time to pursue your own hobbies. And get involved in your community. This will help you develop partnerships with teachers, coaches, health providers and others who can help support your child and family.

Ages and Stages

Infancy: Mothers and fathers have important roles in caring for their newborn. Parents need to talk about ways to share responsibilities so they each have a break and can rest. Even if parents are not living in the same household, both can still be involved.

Early Childhood: Your child is becoming more independent. At the same time, your child may also be fearful of strangers, which can make it hard to separate from you or other family members. Talk with your health provider about ways to make transitions easier for you and your child. Your provider can tell you about early intervention services for young children who may have developmental delays.

Middle Childhood: Your child is getting even more independent, but still needs your guidance and support. If your child needs special education services, you can get help and support. Watch how your child handles school, other children, changes in the family, and stress. If you think your child's moods are more than a response to a good or bad day, talk to your health provider. He can help you figure out if your child deals with stress in an age-appropriate way, or if it's a sign of a mental health need.

Adolescence: Do not let eye-rolling stop you from talking to your teen about school, friends, activities, and healthy behaviors. Your 11 – 21 year

old still needs your support and guidance. Parents still have a lot of influence on their teen's choices. Your healthcare provider can also talk to your youth about healthy behaviors and ways to avoid risky behaviors.

What Can Families Do to Promote Family Support?

If you have questions about your child's health and development, speak to your healthcare provider. He or she can assess your child's development, reassure you when things are on track, and provide guidance and support if your child needs help.

- Before your baby is born, you may want to find a pediatrician, family practitioner or other primary care provider who will be your partner and help care for your child's health.
- Parenting can be overwhelming. If you ever think you might hurt your child, seek help. Call the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline—anytime (24/7) at 1-800-4-A-CHILD.
- You may want to join a playgroup so you can connect with parents whose children are at similar ages. While the children play, the parents can talk and share stories, ideas, and resources. You can discuss good ways to handle children's moods and behaviors.
- Be a healthy role model for your child. Eat well, exercise, talk to your children about their day, and avoid risky behaviors.



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Resources

Family Voices IMPACT website: www.fv-impact.org for additional resources and to subscribe to the Bright Futures: Family Matters free, electronic newsletter.

- **Childhelp:** Information about prevention and treatment of child abuse. www.childhelp.org/
- **Family-to-Family Health Information Centers** in each state help families raising children and youth with special health care needs connect with services and supports, such as healthcare financing options or parent-to-parent programs. Find the Center in your state at www.fv-ncfpp.org/
- **Kids Health** has information about different kinds of primary care providers and questions you may want to ask at http://kidshealth.org/parent/system/doctor/find_ped.html
- **Maternal and Child Health Library Knowledge Path**
 - **Community Services Locator:** An Online Directory for Finding Community Services for Children and Families. www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_community.html
- **National Family Caregivers Association** has resources and tips for parents and caregivers to take care of themselves. www.nfcacares.org
- **National Fatherhood Initiative** provides support for fathers. www.fatherhood.org
- **Parent Technical Assistance Network** provides special education information and support. www.parentcenternetwork.org/

- **U.S. National Library of Medicine:** learn more about prenatal care, and locate a primary care provider. www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/prenatalcare.html

Credits

The American Academy of Pediatrics is the home of Bright Futures. This material is adapted for families from Hagan JF, Shaw JS, Duncan PM, eds, 2008, Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 3rd Edition, Elk Grove, IL. See “Promoting Family Support, pgs 13 – 37. See also: <http://brightfutures.aap.org>



FAMILY VOICES MISSION

Family Voices aims to achieve family-centered care for all children and youth with special health care needs and/or disabilities. Through our national network, we provide families tools to make informed decisions, advocate for improved public and private policies, build partnerships among professionals and families, and serve as a trusted resource on health care. www.familyvoices.org