

Build Your Community of Support and Information

No where is the building of a community of support and information more critical than in assisting youth in negotiating the mental health and education systems.

■ **It is important for YOU** to contact those who are willing to advocate for your personal support. Ask your provider if they can recommend any groups you can contact to further assist you with additional support and information.

■ **Talk to other parents** in your area. Families of special needs youth are particularly understanding and helpful.

Embracing Families and Resiliency



*The Ohio Federation
for Children's Mental Health*

is an organization formed by parents and family members to offer education and advocacy for children with mental health issues and their families.

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*What you need
to know when*



Advocating for Your Family

and

Working Together with Community Agencies



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When FAMILIES become involved with an AGENCY . . .

Parents will find new and unfamiliar information.

The following steps form a broad outline of the basic things that parents should collect and organize. Keeping names, dates, addresses, reports, and other items will help you deal more effectively and be better understood when advocating for your child.

1. A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING and everything in its place

- **Pick a place to keep everything you receive** that is easy to get to.
- **Make and keep copies** of papers you have sent, and notes you have taken.
- Materials should be easy to carry so that you can take them to meetings or hearings. Take the files or papers that you think you might need, in case you forget something, or to be able to back up what you say.
- Do not take so much material that it becomes too large to carry.
- Bring a copy of minutes or notes of the last meeting related to this meeting.
- Be sure to take paper and pen and **TAKE NOTES.**

2. STARTING OUT

Collect everything that you were given at the first contact with the agency or organization. THINGS TO KEEP are:

- Consent forms
- Rules and regulations
- Laws
- Insurance information
- Medical and dental papers
- Agency and Organization information
- Mission statement
- List of programs and services
- Client rights and responsibilities
- Parent involvement and supports

3. WHO to Know

To remember all the new faces and names in your life, you should have a page with all of the agency information at hand:

- Main telephone number
- Main address
- Emergency phone number
- Case worker name | phone | ext.
- Supervisor name | phone | ext.
- Director name | phone | ext.
- Client Rights Officer name | phone | ext.

4. TELEPHONE LOG

Write Down ALL your phone contacts to remember what they were about. Journal things such as:

- Date, day and exact time of the contact
- First, last name and title of each person you spoke with
- Appointments made (date, time, location)
- Referral contacts given
- The Questions you asked
- The Answers you received
- Write down as much information as possible, especially who gave it to you

5. LEARN how to Resolve Issues Know your Goals.

- Write down the details of any problem.
- Keep the facts separate from the feelings you have about them.
- When you provide specific times, dates and issues, the professionals you are dealing with will have information to work with.
- Think of resolutions that will satisfy your family, keeping in mind the rules and policies of the agency.
- When forming solutions be realistic and reasonable.
- Address the details of the issue and possible solution to the person directly involved first.
- If it's still a problem, write the details as a request sent directly to the Supervisor.
- If the issue is not resolved, go to the Client Advocate, with a copy of the information, to ask for help in going to the Agency Director.
- You may eventually wish to contact a child-serving advocacy agency to accompany you.
- Be consistent in expressing your goals to each person you contact.

Keep in mind that you are **THE KEY** member of your child's team. Your input is critical because you know your child best. It's up to **YOU** to advocate for your child.