

NC Family to Family Health Information Center

"A beacon for families of children with special health care needs."

NC Family to Family Health Information Center
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The Medical Home Concept

What is a "Medical Home"?

It is a concept (like "customer service") that promotes a best practice in pediatric and adolescent medical care. It promotes a partnership between the family, the medical professional and caregivers and is designed to improve the quality of health care and general well being for the child or young adult. Though not limited to Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN), it is the coordinated medical care parents of children with special health care needs have needed.

What can a Medical Home do for my child and my family?

The American Academy of Pediatrics developed the concept of a Medical Home to promote quality medical care. This attempt to address a "perfect medical experience" for our children, will also increase **proper use** of primary care providers and **reduce inappropriate use** of the emergency rooms for non-emergency primary care services. A physician who has embraced the concept is referred to as a medical home physician and is usually a Pediatrician or a Family Practice doctor.

At the core of the Medical Home is the primary care physician and his/her practice that can offer the following quality care:

- **Accessible:** Your physician is convenient, located in your community, affordable and takes your insurance, including Medicaid. Their office is at least ADA accessible or better and you and your child/youth are able to speak directly to the physician.
- **Comprehensive:** Care is delivered or directed by a well-trained physician. Ambulatory and inpatient care is available 24 hrs/day and 7 days/week and 52 weeks/year. Preventive care is provided as well as primary and tertiary care needs. The Physician advocates for the child, youth and family to obtain necessary care. Extra time is scheduled for children with special health care needs.
- **Continuous:** The same primary care professionals are available from infancy through young adulthood and assistance with transition is available. The medical home physician continues to participate in care when a child is hospitalized or at another facility.
- **Family-centered:** Mutual responsibility and trust exist between the patient and family and the medical home physician. The family is recognized as the experts in their child's care and as the principal caregiver and center of strength and support for the child. Clear, unbiased and complete information and options are shared. The physician is known to the child/youth and family and understands the diversity in each family.

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- **Culturally Competent:** The family's cultural background is recognized, valued, respected and incorporated into the care plan. Efforts are made to ensure understanding of the results of the medical encounter and care plan (including use of translators or interpreters). Written materials are provided in the family's primary language.
- **Coordinated:** Care among multiple providers is coordinated through the medical home. Families are linked to community and family resources. The medical home practice will keep the complete record/database containing all pertinent medical information. The plan of care is coordinated with other medical professionals along with educational and other community organizations as needed.
- **Compassionate:** Concern for the well-being of the child/youth and family is expressed and demonstrated in all interactions. Efforts are made to understand and empathize with the feelings and perspectives of the family as well as the child/youth.

What do I need to do to get my child a Medical Home?

Since a Medical Home is a partnership between the child/youth family and the physician and other care providers, this implies that the family must get involved. Learn more about the concept and get a few materials that can help you educate your physician about it. Understand that a physician will have to spend more time with you depending on the complexities of your child's medical needs; so being prepared for a doctor visit, when possible, is important. And actually no matter how competent and caring a medical home physician is, the family must communicate needs, concerns and important information and they must follow-through with agreed upon therapies, procedures and care.

Where Can I go to find more information on access to a Medical Home?

The American Academy of Pediatrics website www.aap.org has an extensive list of materials and other tools for all families and particular families that have a child with special health care needs. For those without internet access you can call the Family to Family Health Information Center (housed at ECAC) and we will be glad to send you appropriate information.