



How to Advocate for Yourself in the Healthcare Benefits System

Parents Reaching Out provides resources that focus on helping families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. Keeping your family healthy means knowing how to navigate the health care system and talk with your doctor or other providers. We hope these tip sheets will give you the information you may need to access the best, most cost-effective medical and related services to meet the needs of your family.

For a lot of people, it's tough to be your own advocate. It can be an intimidating process, but often we have no choice but to advocate for ourselves. Outcomes will be better, if you take the time to prepare before meetings, phone calls or visits with health care providers.

Here's what you'll need to do to prepare yourself to advocate:

- Know the facts.
Review paperwork you have received. Make notes of dates and important details. If you are appealing a denial of a service, read the denial carefully to know why it is being denied.
- Keep good records.
When you make calls to your insurance, take note of who you talked to, the date and time, and what the conversation was about. Keep copies of all paperwork, both what you send and what you receive.
- Do your research.
If the health plan is denying you a service or medication, research the information about the service and why it is medically necessary for the condition. Print out what you find and include it as part of your grievance or appeal.
- Practice what you want to say.
Tell your story to someone you know and ask for feedback.
- Know what you want.
Know how much you are willing to compromise or whether you are willing to compromise at all.

When you advocate your position:

- Tell your story.
Be organized and communicate the facts in a logical way.
- Stick to the important points.
Know what is important for the other person to hear and tell the information as simply as possible.
- Understand the negative points.
You can take the impact out of the bad points and make them less negative.
- Be respectful, but firm.
Focus on the story that you are telling. Have all documents with you when you advocate your case.

The Right Question

The best way to get information is to ask questions and listen to the answers. Asking “the right question” will help get specific information and may help to open discussions about possibilities. Thinking about the questions you need to ask and writing them down will help you.

Closed-Ended Questions get a yes or no answer.

Can this medicine be used safely with all my other medications?

Open-Ended Questions create discussions and provide more specific details.

What are the possible side effects?

What do I do if a side effect occurs?



If you have questions about being a healthcare advocate for your child go to

<https://www.pacer.org/>

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