

Creating Open and Honest Relationships with Professionals

Sometimes it can be hard to develop a trusting relationship with professionals in your life. Here are some tips on learning how to comfortably and confidently approach this!

Get to Know Yourself:

- Educate yourself on your condition or disability. Having knowledge about your illness or conditions will earn you respect with the professionals. They will be more likely to listen if they know that you know what you're talking about.
- Learn what rights you have as an individual so you can protect yourself.
- Create a one pager describing you and what you want. This is a chance to let people know who you are and that you're not just your illness or disability. Only give certain information until you trust the person.
- What information do you want the professionals to know about your culture and diagnosis?
- Who are all the people in your coordination network and who may be working with you?
- What are your hopes for the future and treatment?

Some Additional Questions You Might Ask the School:

- How will the information I give the school nurse be kept? (The answer should be-- in a secure office software that is password protected.)
 - How will the information I give the school nurse be shared and with whom?
- (The answer should be-- with only those who need it for your education and safety. Not everyone will have access to it.)

Get to Know the Professional:

- Get all their credentials and documents to make sure they are indeed qualified. Research a particular person and see what others have said about him. Check online.
- Interview the Professional. (Do not work with someone who will not be interviewed.)



Types of Questions to Ask During an Interview:

- What do you know about my illness/disability?
- Do you have any experience treating other youth/young adults similar to me and my needs?
- How would you treat my condition? (Note that any plans of action or treatment should be laid out transparently, so that any problem areas can be talked about easily.)
- What's your experience working with people from my culture?
- How long are you planning to be part of my care?
- What do you expect from me and what are the consequences if I don't meet those expectations?

After interviewing different types of professionals, pick the ones you liked and hold an introduction meeting. You should have one with the school staff, primary care physician and behavioral health providers. This will be your chance to ask a lot of questions. Make sure you have a list of questions and difficult issues that need to be covered. It may be difficult to directly address the professionals with your concerns so emailing them, or even handing a note would be easier alternatives. Make sure they actually listened to what you said and answer your questions. Find out if there are red flags such as rules the professionals have that you find disagreeable and cannot compromise on. Once you choose the right school staff/ Primary Care/Mental Health Provider you can begin sharing your information with them.

Sharing Information with the Professionals

- School nurse offices are not the most secure place. It's a Doctor's job to be trusted but not the teachers. Therefore be extremely careful when sharing information with school staff. Ask yourself, "Do I really care if the information I am sharing right now gets out?" If the answer is yes then you probably shouldn't share it. In that case only share what may be life threatening.
- Know what type of information your comfortable sharing with each professional. There may be things you want your Mental Health provider to know that you don't want your doctor to know. Know your audience and think how they might respond to this information.
- Ask yourself if sharing this information going to be helpful or harmful to myself/others.
- Only share what is relevant at the moment.
- When sharing records or private information let the professional know the information is confidential and they should respect and keep it that way.
- Do not give out information to people who do not have the right to it. You don't have to, you can simply say no.

Protecting the information you share:

Request records and review notes to see what is being shared.

- Medical history from primary care provider.
- School files upon graduation.
- Therapy notes especially when transferring to a new mental health provider.
- The paperwork relevant to sharing my information; who is on the list to receive it? List of everyone allowed to view it.
- Review everything you sign and maintain a track record of the forms you have signed.
- Monitor release of information/consent forms.
- Write letters to professionals in communication network to verify agreements in writing.