

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR CARE PROVIDER

A key to getting the best care for your child is to work in partnership with the people who are part of her medical care. Partners are two or more persons working together on a common goal (in this case, caring for your child). Partners bring their strengths together to accomplish something that neither one could easily do alone.

Your doctors are the experts in diagnosing medical conditions and outlining options for your child's treatment. Your role as a parent is equally important. For some parents, this may be difficult to accept. You may just be getting to know your child. You may not be in the position to see her daily. Still, as a parent, you have the love and long-term commitment of her welfare. You have ideas that may work in your child's specific situation. You help prepare her for a doctor's appointment so it's not so scary; you comfort her if it is. While you may not have all the technical knowledge, you ARE qualified to make final decisions about what will work best for you and your family.

Sometimes getting the best care for your child depends on your ability to work in partnership with professionals who are diagnosing or treating her. Here is a checklist of characteristics of successful partnerships:

- ✓ Be clear. Tell providers how important their support or cooperation is to your child's care. Let people know what you need or want – and specifically how they can help.
- ✓ Put yourself in the doctor's shoes. Think about what you can do to make the doctor's life easier.
- ✓ Seek out professionals who are willing to work with you. If you don't think you are working well with a professional, let her know. If things do not work out, find another provider. With Medi-Cal, some health care plans, medical groups, or hospitals, there may be a medical service coordinator who can help you get answers to your questions.
- ✓ Share the whole picture. If your child has complex medical issues, it may be useful to call a meeting of all the professionals involved in her care so that you can discuss your child's complete medical picture.
- ✓ Be honest about your strengths and limitations. Exchange complete information and admit it if you do not have the answers. Trust and respect each other's judgment.
- ✓ Commit to team efforts and goals. Find creative solutions to problems. Support each other in getting things done.
- ✓ Problems can arise. If so, remember that solutions may not come easily. Often these are not under the control of you or your doctor. For example, getting approval for occupational therapy requires the doctor to submit a request for authorization, then wait for approval. If the approval is denied, then an appeal process may be used. This takes time and patience.