

When children in foster care are enrolled in Arizona's behavioral health system, a Child and Family Team (CFT) is developed. Some children exhibit behaviors and symptoms that may require psychotropic medication. The CFT may discuss the possibility of psychotropic medication for your child and refer your child for a psychiatric evaluation.

Each child is unique and has different needs. However, an overwhelming amount of information is discussed at the evaluation and medication monitoring appointments. It is important to be prepared and remember to ask questions during your appointment.

BEFORE the appointment, consider the following questions, and be mindful whether these issues are addressed during the evaluation:

✓ **Discuss the purpose of the appointment and possible medication with the child (and birth parent if applicable)**

Discussions with the child should always occur in a manner that considers the child's age and development.

Department of Child Safety (DCS) Specialists should advise the birth parents about the child's medications and treatment.

✓ **Be prepared to address the child's behaviors in detail**

- What behaviors have you observed that concern you?
- How often do these behaviors occur (daily, 2-3 times a week, monthly, etc.)?
- How long do they last (5 minutes, 1 hour, all day)?
- How intense are they (mild, moderate, severe)?
- What interventions have been tried? What interventions have been successful?

- How consistent have you been trying interventions other than medication?
- What has been the child's response to any medications that have been tried?
- Have there been any side effects? How long did they last?
- If currently on medications, has the child been taking the medications as prescribed?

✓ **Be sure to bring any relevant records available such as:**

- Medical
- School (transcripts, IEP etc.)
- Previous evaluations (psychological, educational, etc)
- Have a sound knowledge of the child's history to supplement any available records.
- Contact information for primary care physicians (PCPs), DCS, placement information, therapists or other providers.

DURING the appointment, typically, the practitioner will address these issues, but knowing what to expect can help you leave with the information you need.

✓ **Bring support if necessary**

The initial evaluation may be lengthy and may require you speak to the prescribing practitioner alone. Having someone to stay with your child can reduce stress and anxiety for you and the child.

✓ **Do not assume that medication will be prescribed in all cases**



There are many reasons why a practitioner may not prescribe medication. They may require additional information or assessments from the school, PCP, CPS or other entities, your child may not require medication or the practitioner may want to attempt other services before prescribing medication.

✓ **Medication Information**

- What are the side effects? How long will they last? How can I alleviate them?
- Is the medication known by any other names?
- Is this medication addictive? Can it be abused?
- Are there alternatives to taking medication?
- What happens if my child misses a dose? What if my child takes more than the prescribed dose?
- Are there any long or short term effects on my child's physical health and development?
- Where can I find more information about this medication?
- Who do I call if I have any concerns or problems with this medication?

✓ **Treatment & Diagnosis**

- Does my child require a diagnosis to be prescribed medication?
- What does the specific diagnosis mean?
- What symptoms will the medication treat?
- What other services or supports will compliment the medication?

✓ **Review the Informed Consent**

Be sure that all items listed on the consent are discussed with you before signing.

Feel free to ask questions.

- Provide the Child Safety Specialist with a copy of the consent.

AFTER the evaluation, there are still things to consider; following are some examples.

✓ **Use the correct pharmacy card if medication is prescribed**

Medications prescribed by the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) provider should be filled using the card issued by the RBHA.

Medications prescribed by a PCP should be filled using the Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program (CMDP) ID card.

✓ **Monitoring**

- How will the medication help my child and how will I know if it is working?
- How long before I see improvement?
- How long will my child need to take this medication?
- Can my child ever “take a break” from the medication?
- Are there any laboratory tests which will need to be completed before my child begins taking the medication?
- Will any tests need to be done while my child is taking the medication?
- How often do you need to see the child? Can another professional conduct these appointments?

✓ **Consent & Consultation**

- Will you or have you communicated with the PCP?
- Do I have to sign a new consent if the dosage or medication is changed?
- Do I have the right to a copy of the consent?
- Will you discuss the medication with the child?
- Does the child know why they are taking medications and what the side effects are?

- What recommendation do you have for explaining the medication to my child?

✓ **Be sure to schedule the next appointment before you leave**

Always request that the provider attempt to schedule appointments after school whenever possible and available.

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Are you prepared for your child's psychiatric evaluation?

