

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M GETTING GOOD TREATMENT?

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/ID PROGRAM
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Treatments that can be effective for psychiatric and behavior issues vary widely, and no two children's needs are exactly alike. But there are some general standards that you can use to determine whether the care your child is getting follows best practices, whether the treatment involves behavioral therapy, medication or both.

Here are some general guidelines:

Treatment should have a specified goal. How will my child's mood or behavior respond to the treatment, and how will those changes be measured?

Treatment should be evidence-based. Your mental health practitioner should be able to tell you what research supports using the treatment and how effective it was in reducing the symptoms it is designed to target.

Your clinician should have expertise in using this treatment. Specific training and experience are important whether your clinician is prescribing psychotropic medications and/or engaging in behavioral therapy.

A clinician prescribing medication should take great care in establishing the dosage for your child. Children vary widely in their responses to medication, and only careful changes in doses and timing will establish the most effective dose, as well as whether or not the medication works for your child, and how well it works.

A child taking medication should be closely monitored as he changes and grows. As children develop, their response to medication can be expected to change. Medication checks should occur frequently.

Your child should feel comfortable with the clinician. An effective professional needs to be able to develop a good rapport with your child. Your child needs to be able to share his thoughts and feelings, and if he is engaged in behavior therapy, trusting the clinician is essential for him to make progress.

You should have good communication with your child's clinician. To get good care for your child, you need to feel comfortable sharing your observations and concerns with your clinician, and know that they are being taken seriously. It may not be anyone's fault that a clinical relationship doesn't work out, but that doesn't mean you should stick it out.

You should be involved in behavioral treatment. Evidence shows that most effective behavior treatments give parents a role in helping children get better. Your clinician should be enlisting your help (and that of your family) to continue treatment outside sessions.

The professionals involved in your child's treatment should work together. Children do best when the specialists involved in their care, including pediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, etc. are in touch with each other, sharing information and agreeing on goals and the steps to achieve them.

Excerpted from Parents Guide to Getting Good Care, <https://childmind.org>