

Psychotropic Medications: Considerations When Working With Children



**CENTER ON CHILDREN,
FAMILIES, AND THE LAW**

Training Collaborative

Psychotropic Medication Questions

Questions for Caregivers

Reasons

1. How is the child/youth doing in your care?
2. Do you have any specific concerns? Is there anything you are worried about?
3. Was there ever a time when you didn't have these concerns/worries? And if so, what was different?
4. Do you feel that you have enough education and support to manage these concerns in an informal manner?
5. Does the child/youth's need outweigh the support you can provide?
6. Do you see these concerns impacting their daily life? If so, how?
7. What are some ways you are helping this child/youth manage the concerns?
8. Are you seeing progression or regression?
9. What do you think would be a positive next step?

Alternatives

1. Do you feel you can give the support needed to support the current concerns without further intervention?
2. Has the child/youth identified things he/she would like to do? Or things he/she think will help him/her?
3. A psychiatrist is recommending medication to assist with the concerns, do you have any other ideas that you would like to consider?

Questions for Youth

Reasons

1. How are things going for you?
2. Do you think you are having any struggles right now? (be sure to normalize this!)
3. What is working for you?
4. What isn't working for you?
5. How have your eating and sleeping habits been? Have they changed?
6. Do you think the people in your life can support you?
7. Do you want anything to be different?
8. Notify the youth that someone has indicated a concern and ask them about it specifically.
9. Ask the child/youth if they have ever taken a medication in the past? Did it help?
10. Have you ever heard of kids who take medicine to help them? What have you heard? What do you think about it?
11. Would you be willing to attend an appointment to look at some things that might help you?

Alternatives

1. Are there activities that you would like to be involved in that you think would help you?
2. Have there been other things in your life that have helped you when you have had these concerns in the past?
3. Do you have coping skills that work? What are they and how do they work?
4. There are some adults that think a medication might help you, what do you think about that?
5. Is there something that you think would help you?

Questions for Prescribing Providers

These questions should be asked during the appointment with the prescribing provider present.

Reasons

1. What is your DSM V diagnosis?
2. Do you have a medical diagnosis as well? Are they related?
3. Do you recommend medication?
4. What is the name of the medication you recommend?
5. What is the recommended dosage and how often?
6. Why would this be the way to help this child/youth?

If you are reaching out about the appointment after the fact and you are calling the doctor to fill out a checklist, you may also want to ask the following questions:

7. Have you had contact with the child/youth's therapist? School? Other?
8. How long did you spend with the child/youth?
9. Did you talk with the caregiver or an individual with knowledge of the child/youth's daily needs?

Alternatives

1. What other medications might help the child/youth?
2. What alternatives to medication (meditation, changes in diet, exercise, etc.) might help the child/youth?
3. Should the child/youth try other things that might help them at the same time as the medication?

Risks

1. How might this medication harm the child/youth? What are the side effects of the medication? How long do side effects typically last?
2. Will the medication cause weight gain? Weight loss? Is there anything that needs to be done to keep current weight while taking the medication?
3. Is this medication addictive (hard to give up once started)?
4. What are the effects if the medication is taken with alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs?
5. What are the effects if a person isn't taking the medication consistently as prescribed?
6. What should be done if a problem develops (sickness, missed dose, side effects)?
7. Are there foods that should be avoided while on the medication? Are there special things that should or should not be done while taking the medication?
8. Will blood work or other kinds of medical tests before, during, or after treatment need to be done? What will the doctor look for?
9. What should be done if someone starts the medication and then wants to stop it?
10. How often should the child/youth see the physician who prescribed the medication?

Expectations

1. How will the team, including the child/youth know this medication is working?
2. What changes will we see? How soon should we begin to see changes?
3. How long will they need to take the medication?
4. How common is it for individuals his/her age to be on this medication?
5. How much experience do you have with this medication?
6. What adverse reactions should we be looking for?
7. How often should the child/youth see the physician who prescribed the medication?
8. Will you provide a letter on dosing to the school, if applicable?

Second Opinions

Ask more questions or request a second opinion when:

1. Treatment has not resulted in improvement within a reasonable amount of time from starting a new medication (discuss with parents if parental rights are intact).
2. A parent, caregiver, guardian, youth or health care provider has concerns about the medication and discussions with the prescriber have not resolved the issues. In addition to seeking a second medical opinion, if a parent or youth still has concerns about psychotropic medications being prescribed to a youth, and they are a system involved youth, consider the following steps:
 - a. Seek the Guardian Ad Litem's input, legal parties, or court involvement
 - b. Seek consultation from outside parties, including physicians within the youth's system
 - c. Consulting with your legal department

***Anyone is encouraged to discuss their concerns with the primary prescriber first and request their assistance with obtaining/requesting the second opinion when appropriate.**

Request a Psychotropic Medication Consultation:

Medicaid Clients:

At any time that questions or concerns arise, individuals have the right to contact their managed care organization (MCO) and request a review or consultation.

Suggestions of when requesting a staffing concerning a psychotropic medication may be appropriate include the following (but is not exhaustive):

1. Care coordination by the MCO is requested
2. A discussion about what medication claims the MCO has on file
3. A review of medications by the MCO's pharmacist is desired
4. A discussion about coverage for a particular psychotropic medication is desired

Non-Medicaid Clients:

1. Contact prescriber for in-depth discussion
2. Contact primary health care plan

If you are a professional and choose to utilize an informed denial (refuse a medication):

1. Ensure all steps to the informed process have been followed and thoroughly documented.
2. Seek supervision and provide rationale to supervisor.
3. Ensure the team is aware of the decision and any problem solving or further discussion has occurred.
4. Ensure a detailed plan is documented to address the needs of the youth.

Monitoring and Review

Questions to ask the youth:

1. How are you feeling on the medication?
2. Are you taking the medication? Consistently? As prescribed?
3. Who gives you your medication?
4. Is it working for you? How do you know?
5. Is there anything about the medication, good or bad, that you want me to know?
6. Have you had any thoughts of hurting or killing yourself or others?

Questions to ask the caregivers:

1. How do you think the medication is working?
2. Are you seeing the changes expected?
3. Have there been any changes with the medication?
4. Do you have concerns?
5. Have you seen any effects that are a concern?
6. Who is giving the medication?
7. Is the youth/child taking the medication? Consistently? As prescribed?
8. Do you have the support you need to assist in building the skills?
9. Has the child/youth expressed any suicidal and/or homicidal thoughts?

Questions to ask to community provider (including schools if relevant):

1. How do you think the medication is working?
2. Are you seeing the changes expected?
3. Do you have concerns?
4. Have you seen any side effects that are a concern?
5. Are there things that you are doing in your "environment" that are supporting the changes?
6. Has the child/youth expressed any suicidal and/or homicidal thoughts?

Child/Youth Who is Missing

1. Ensure that all parties have been notified and follow appropriate legal and ethical obligations.
2. Ensure that you have notified the prescribing physician and identify any adverse reactions or safety concerns that may occur as a result of medications being stopped suddenly.
3. Ask for medical instructions of continuing medication when child/youth is found.
4. Ensure you have thoroughly documented the prescribed medications, concerns that may arise, and any other relevant information an individual should be aware of if they come in contact with the missing child/youth.
5. Ensure that all documentation is up to date and accurate.
6. When child/youth is found follow the medical directions regarding continuing a medication that has been missed or stopped for a period of time.
7. Notify all individual involved, including the prescribing physician, when a child/youth returns and has access to the medications again.

Resources

Websites

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):**
<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Mental-Health-Medications>
- **National Institute of Mental Health:**
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications>
- **Medline Plus: Trusted Health Information for You:**
<https://medlineplus.gov/druginformation.html>
- **Dulcan's Helping Parents and Teachers Understand Medications for Behavioral and Emotional Problems:**
<https://www.appi.org/Dulcan>

Apps



[Epocrates](#)



[Psych Drugs](#)

Notes

Notes

Developed by UNL – CCFL Training Collaborative

See within content for source information

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

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