

DOC Talk: Family Centered Service - Feb 1,2009
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When you read in our brochures or on our website that our centre provides family-centered service, what can you and your family expect when you visit KidsAbility? What does this look like? How will the experience be different?

- 1) Expect that you, the parents, will be recognized as an expert regarding your child, and expect recognition that you know your child and the needs of your child best.
- 2) Expect that you will work as a partner with the therapists and staff that are involved with your child's program or therapy at KidsAbility.
- 3) Expect to receive support in all decisions around the services for your child.

Family-centered service is considered a "best practice" approach for children with special needs. Evidence suggests that parents are more satisfied with services provided according to these principles and most of the children's rehabilitation centres in Ontario have adopted this service model. CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research in Hamilton has published research evidence that shows family-centered care is highly valued by parents and families.

What should parents expect from therapists and staff at KidsAbility as a consequence of this commitment to family centered care? Parents should expect that service providers will be respectful and supportive; expect them to work as partners in their child's team; provide accurate and comprehensive information, both general information about their child's condition and also specific medical information about their own child. Parents should expect that the specific family situation and needs will be taken into account in determining when, where and how services are provided. Parents will be involved in goal setting for their child, and can expect to receive progress and treatment reports in user-friendly language. Parents are expected to support the therapy goals defined for their child and may be provided with strategies to use at home.

Our strategic plan Vision 2020 reflects strategies that are consistent with family-centered service. For example we are reviewing intake procedures to streamline access to services and connections with other providers. We are trying to provide more flexibility in hours of operation and looking at new waitlist management strategies. We provide a parent resource centre and our pool is available for family use. Our recently formed Parent2Parent group provides opportunities for parents to connect with other parents. This peer-to-peer support has been identified by them as a priority for what can be a difficult and isolating journey. Parents have told us that we need to improve in the area of providing information, and defining strategies for knowledge sharing has become a focus for KidsAbility.

Want to know more about family centered care? CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research is easily found on the internet at www.ths.mcmaster.ca/canchild or just use Google. Our resource library can also help you find material.

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