



# Patient Advocacy 101

**Children don't always have the words, the knowledge, or the power to speak up for themselves, and as their parent, you are your child's biggest advocate.**

- **Do Your Research-** Learn about your child's condition. Ask questions about processes and policies. It is helpful to educate yourself in order to be an effective advocate. Make an effort to "learn the language".
- **Come Prepared-** Write down any questions beforehand. Collect documentation that supports your position. Be aware of and use trusted resources. Ask where you can get additional information.
- **Be Persistent-** Don't get discouraged. It is important to let people know in a respectful way when you disagree. Continue to ask for clarification and more information to help aid in your understanding. Try asking in a different way if you aren't getting what you need.
- **Find Your Allies-** It is important to find people who can help us. They may be doctors, nurses, administrative staff, or even other parents. Seek out those who can help you and build those relationships.
- **Don't Be Afraid to Speak Up-** You are your child's voice. You are an expert on your child and your opinion and knowledge are an important part of the team. Professionals may seem intimidating, but everyone is there to achieve a common goal- proper care for your child. If you have questions or don't understand, let them know. Trust your instincts. You know your child best.
- **Practice Good Communication-** Be thoughtful of your tone and volume when speaking and try to listen as much as you speak. Watch non-verbal cues, make eye-contact and try to keep your emotions tempered.
- **Stay Alert-** If something doesn't seem right, speak up. Even trained professionals make mistakes.
- **Seek Support-** Connect with people who can provide help and support. This may be family, other parents, groups or organizations to help you through this stressful time
- **Be Kind-** The stress of illness can be emotional. Be mindful of your attitude and tone as sometimes we express anger and frustration without realizing it.
- **Give Thanks-** Expressing gratitude towards those who have helped makes everyone feel valued, builds positive relationships, and can bring you a sense of well-being



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## Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center

(MIF2F) exists to share resources, information, and learning opportunities for families of children and youth with special health care needs across Michigan, and also for the community partners and healthcare providers who care for them.  
[www.F2FMichigan.org](http://www.F2FMichigan.org)

## MI F2F offers:

- Information and resources related to caring for a child or young adult with special healthcare needs.
- Parent peers and individuals with experience navigating the maze of special health care services and programs.
- A network of Family Leaders across Michigan to help us identify community supports and resources for families.

