

Medical Home: What is it?

You may have heard the term “medical home” and wondered what it means. You might even envision a child with multiple medical conditions living at home with specialized equipment, medications, and treatments. In actuality, however, a “medical home” is an approach to providing comprehensive, high quality primary care. A medical home is **not** a building or place. It is a partnership that involves you, your child’s doctor, clinical specialists, community resources, and others all working together to support both excellent health care and family satisfaction.

A visit to a doctor’s office that is using a medical home model would look something like this: The office staff warmly greets you as you sign in. A short while later, a kind nurse checks your child’s blood pressure and carefully reviews health history. When the doctor enters, you engage in a genuine conversation on the latest developments in your child’s health, and then together, you develop a working plan to address current medical needs and overall health.

To ensure that all children receive high quality medical care, The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Center for Medical Home Implementation list several essential components of the medical home model. A medical home should be: accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective. Each of these key components is explained in more detail below.

For more information about medical home and other topics, contact Indiana Family to Family.

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What does it mean for care to be accessible?

- Care is provided in your community.
- The doctor’s office accepts your insurance.
- The location meets American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- Access to health advice or care is available at any time (24 hours per day, 365 days per year).

What does it mean for care to be family-centered?

- The office staff recognizes that you and your family are the principal caregivers and the center of strength and support for your child.
- Your doctor and family share the responsibility in decision-making.

What does it mean for care to be continuous?

- The same doctors are available from infancy through adolescence.
- Communication occurs between doctors and specialists to ensure your child’s needs are met at any age.
- Assistance is provided to secure a medical home for adolescents transitioning to adult care.

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What does it mean for care to be comprehensive?

- Preventive and primary care is provided.
- Growth and development assessments are conducted when appropriate.
- Care coordination is practiced among all of your child's doctors.
- Referrals to specialty-care services are provided when needed.
- Child/family counseling and health education are available.
- Your doctor is knowledgeable about community resources and shares that information when needed.

What does it mean for care to be coordinated?

- You and your family are connected to appropriate support, education, and community services.
- The office staff communicates and works with all agencies to ensure that all your child's needs are met.
- You, your doctor, and the office staff maintain a centralized record containing important information on your child's care.

What does it mean for care to be compassionate?

- The doctor shows concern for the well-being of your child and your family as a whole.
- The doctor is sensitive to the wide range of emotions that families may experience when a child has special health care needs.
- The office staff is flexible and responds to requests and needs.
- Appointment times are scheduled with consideration for your family's needs.

What does it mean for care to be culturally effective?

- Your family's cultural background is recognized, valued, and respected.
- The office staff is sensitive to stereotypes and cultural assumptions.
- Materials are provided in a language that you are able to read and understand, and translation services are available when needed.

For practical tips on engaging with your child's primary care physician under the medical home model and other tools, visit the National Resource Center for Patient/Family-Centered Medical Home: <https://www.aap.org/en/practice-management/medical-home/tools-and-resources-for-medical-home-implementation/medical-home-resources-for-families-and-caregivers/>

*Information in this fact sheet is adapted from the National Center for Medical Home Implementation website, and some content is excerpted from "What is a medical home? And what does it mean for yourchild?" University of Chicago, Division of Specialized Care for Children, publication 40, 16, 2003.

Programs and systems change often. It is important to ensure that you are using the most current information. This fact sheet was updated August 2023. Please check <https://www.inf2f.org/fact-sheets.html> for the most recent edition.

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