Caring for Your Child
Parenting Children with ADHD

Being the parent of a child with ADHD can be hard at times. It is important to remember that with help, most children with ADHD will succeed. As a parent, you will often need to be the manager of the team that helps your child to succeed.

How to Start

Stop blaming yourself

- ADHD is not caused by poor parenting, but a child’s home environment can affect whether the ADHD behaviors get better.

Learn about ADHD

- There is a large amount of information available about the diagnosis of ADHD and its treatment. Books, tip sheets and websites can help to guide you in learning useful information. We have listed some resources at the end of this sheet.

Make Sure Your Child Gets a Proper Evaluation

ADHD is best treated when you know your child’s strengths and weaknesses. A full evaluation helps you understand these strengths and weaknesses and provides you with treatment options. The diagnosis of ADHD is usually made by a pediatrician, psychologist, neurologist, or psychiatrist.

Assessments should include:

- Medical history
- History of growth and development
- Review of strengths and weaknesses in school
- Review of child’s social and emotional functioning (i.e. peer relationships or expressing feelings)
- Family history of medical, developmental and psychiatric problems
- Information from both parents and teachers (including behavior rating scales)
How to Increase School Success

Ask for help

- Ask your health care provider about ways to get support for your child and family. Your child’s pediatrician or the school psychologist or guidance counselor at your child’s school is a good place to start.

Become your child’s case manager

- Write down and save all information about your child. This includes copies of evaluations, documents from school meetings, records of prior treatments and contact information. Having all this information in one place will help you, the school, and other professionals to better understand your child’s needs.

Learn about your child’s educational rights

- Two laws provide children with ADHD the right to some help in school. The names of these laws are:
  - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)
  - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

- Each state has an information center that can help you learn more about your child’s rights (visit www.taalliance.org to find the center in your state)

Be active in school team meetings and talk to the teacher

- If your child needs help in school, it important that you are involved in the process. Do your best to meet with the teacher and talk about your child’s strengths and weaknesses. You should also discuss how ADHD affects him at school and begin developing a school plan that will meet your child’s needs. Remember that you are an expert when it comes to your child. The school needs your input.

- It is likely that the school principal, a special educator, the guidance counselor, and/or the school psychologist will also be involved in supporting your child. You may request that other professionals working with your child also provide input. Try to identify the adult at school who is a “champion” for your child. Then stay in close contact with that person.

Become your child’s best advocate

- You are a member of the team developing the plan for your child because you know your child best. Listen to what others suggest, but also let the school team know what you think will be most helpful to your child.
How to Increase Success at Home

Behavioral Family Therapy/Behavior Management

- Learning new skills and strategies to manage misbehavior will help you to focus on certain behaviors and provide consistent directions. Behavior management will also help your child learn from his or her mistakes. Professionals who specialize in behavior management/behavioral family therapy include psychologists, licensed counselors, and licensed social workers.

Join a support group

- Groups help to provide additional information as well as support to families. Support group chapters can be found on www.chadd.org.

How to Boost Your Child’s Confidence

Praise your child

- Remind your child that you love and support him or her no matter what the difficulties may be. Setting aside “special time” with your child also helps him/her to know you care.

Assist your child with social skills

- If your child is having problems getting along with other boys and girls, remind him or her how to cooperate with and respect others. It is important to provide opportunities for your child to have positive interactions with other children.

Identify your child’s strengths

- Many children with ADHD are used to hearing about their weaknesses, it is important for you to show them their strengths so that they will have a feeling of pride and success.

Recommended Readings and Resources

- Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete Authoritative Guide for Parents written by Russell Barkley
- Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood written by Hallowell and Ratey
- Making the System Work for Your Child with ADHD: An Expert Parent’s Guide to Getting the Best Care written by Peter Jensen
- Problem Solver Guide for Students with ADHD: Ready-to-Use Interventions for Elementary and Secondary Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder written by H.C. Parker
- National Resource Center on AD/HD Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder website: www.help4adhd.org