

family

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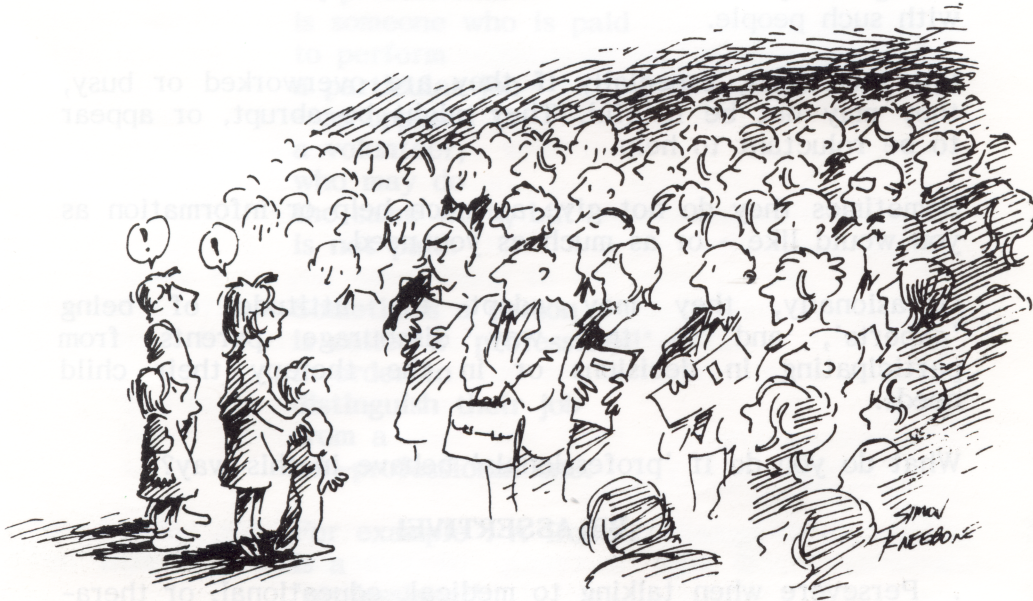
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Abstract

This is a pamphlet which provides very good strategies for dealing with professionals, when those professionals are not being as helpful as they could be and when parents feel they are being discouraged from participating in decisions about their child. **Keywords: Families, Professionals**



DEALING WITH PROFESSIONALS

A lot of 'professionals' will be helpful, supportive, and caring. They should be - and it is always easier to deal with such people.

But sometimes, especially if they are overworked or busy, they may not be helpful. They might be abrupt, or appear to be reluctant to help.

Sometimes they do not give as much help or information as you would like - or as much as you need.

Occasionally, they may adopt the attitude of being 'experts', and in this way discourage parents from participating in decisions or in the therapy their child needs.

What do you do if 'professionals' behave in this way?

BE ASSERTIVE!

- . Persevere when talking to medical, educational, or therapeutic professionals.
- . Don't be put off with vague explanations, or a lot of jargon.
- . Ask questions until you are satisfied that you have all the information you need.
- . If you disagree with something, get a second opinion - there is nothing wrong with 'shopping around'.
- . If you are not satisfied with your child's progress or treatment - ask for a review, or an interview.
- . Ensure that your opinion is heard and taken into account - **but** retain a calm attitude, and keep your temper.

You will have to tell professionals what services you need. Sometimes this means explaining your needs to several different people - either to get several different services, or to get to the right person. When you ask for services, or explain what you want, remember to :

- **Be clear about what you want.**
Do you want an assessment, or a service?
How soon do you want it, and from whom?
- **Make sure you are talking to the right person.**
It is frustrating to have to go through several people and explain your requirements over and over.
- **Try to cover everything.**
Write down the things you need and any questions you want to ask.
- **Make sure you've got the right message** about getting your needs met. Ask questions and write down the answers (it is easy to forget what was said).

IMPORTANT INTERVIEWS

At times an interview will be important in determining future therapies or educational opportunities. You may need to make decisions, or convince a professional to do something.

If possible, your partner should attend an interview with you. If this is not possible, and you can't change the interview time to one which you both can attend, ask a friend to accompany you.

This is important in remembering what was said, or to have support - to feel that someone is on your side!

KEEPING RECORDS

Whenever possible, keep a record of who you talked to, or what was promised. Send a copy to the professional you met.

File letters that are sent to you, and write down conversations that are important.

If you telephone, note which day it was, the name of the person you contacted, and what was said.

If you are making a complaint, it is useful to have a record of events - including who was involved, what the circumstances were, what was the outcome.

WHAT NEXT - if you are dissatisfied

If you have talked to all the right people, and been assertive, and kept a record of everything, and **still** no result for your child - **WHAT DO YOU DO?**

- **GO HIGHER**

If the professional cannot help you, go to their supervisor. Inform the person that you will be speaking to their superior.

- **GO TO AN ADVOCACY GROUP**

Get in contact with a local parent advocacy group, or NSW Council for Intellectual Disability.

- **CONTACT POLITICIANS**

Write or phone the Minister concerned, and send copies of your letters to your local Member of Parliament.

- **AS A LAST RESORT - GO PUBLIC!**

Tell the media (newspapers etc) about your difficulty.

A 'professional'
is someone who is paid
to perform
a particular job
- as opposed to
a volunteer,
who may do
the same work, but
is not paid.

Sometimes a person
is called a 'professional'
in order to
distinguish their job
from a
non-professional one.

For example : A Doctor
is a
'professional'.

Doctors, nurses,
therapists,
direct care staff,
teachers,
managers/administrators,
para-medics,
aides, programmes staff,
vocational officers,
social workers,
are all
'professionals'.

Some Advocacy Groups :

NSW Council for Intellectual Disability

4 Doig Avenue, Denistone East, 2112

Telephone : (02) 807.1411

Disabled Peoples International

7 Franklyn Street, Glebe, 2037

Telephone : (02) 552.1411

Citizen Advocacy, NSW

7/70 Macquarie Street, Parramatta, 2150

Telephone : (02) 635.5810

Self Advocacy, NSW

2nd floor, 302 Pitt Street, Sydney, 2000

Telephone : (02) 267.2177

Citizen Advocacy - Northside

24 Olga Street, Chatswood, 2067

Telephone : (02) 411.1599

INWORDS - Inner Western Organisation for Disabilities

P.O. Box 159, Canterbury, 2193

Telephone : (02) 750.9344

**This leaflet is one of a series
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