

## Individualizing Healthcare for Patients with Developmental and Behavioral Challenges

It can be very difficult for patients with developmental and behavioral challenges to understand and cope with invasive healthcare appointments. Often patients are managed with restraint and swiftness, leaving them traumatized and more mistrusting of healthcare professionals. Because of these experiences, some families do not make follow-up appointments for care, which negatively affects the patient's health status.



**Referral criteria** include patients (1) who have been diagnosed or are being evaluated for a developmental disability and/or behavioral condition **AND** (2) who have demonstrated inability to cope and cooperate during a healthcare encounter without additional preparation and support.

The **Adaptive Care Team** at Cincinnati Children's are proactive team members who facilitate parent/staff collaboration to prepare and plan safe, sensitive support for these patients with unique needs undergoing healthcare encounters. These staff members receive education, materials and support to promote their confidence and competence. The Adaptive Care Team develops an adaptive care plan using parent and staff input. The plan includes various supportive strategies.

To meet individual needs, each plan is tailored to the specific patient and may include (but is not limited to):

- Pre-registration
- Photo preparation books
- Films
- Customized stories
- Practice homework
- A tour of the area
- A play session or rehearsal in the treatment space
- Pre-medication

Support during the appointment may include visual schedules, distraction with materials or DVDs, practiced coping strategies, comfort holds, weighted blankets, modified exam protocols, numbing cream, pre-medication, nitrous and other innovative efforts.

The end result of these pre-emptive and supportive measures is that the patient's experience of care is improved. In addition, patient cooperation increases significantly, thus improving staff safety and productivity. Parent and staff satisfaction also increases, since these strategies help facilitate decreased distress, as well as more thorough exams and treatments. These interventions "Change the Outcome."

