

Engaging Patients & Families



1 Entering the room

- Introduce yourself and other staff who enter with you; shake hands with patient and family.
- Apologize for any wait longer than 15 minutes and reassure families you will give them the time they need.
- Ask people in the room to introduce themselves, or ask patient to tell you who they brought with them today.
- Demonstrate you are prepared, and explain why families may need to tell their story more than once: *“I’ve reviewed the notes from your referring physician, but it would be helpful to me to hear you describe what’s happened in your own words.”*



2 Establishing the relationship

- Engage with the family at eye-level: Sit if they sit, stand if they stand.
- If using a computer, orient yourself to maintain eye-contact and explain purpose of note taking.
- Ask non-clinical questions that help you get to know them better.
- Leverage team members in creating positive interactions.
- Give children choices when you can: *“Should I check your right ear or your left ear first?”*



3 Listening

- Show respect for all questions and concerns; avoid making statements that make families feel judged.
- Demonstrate active listening, be “in the moment.”
- Avoid checking your phone, watch, etc. during the visit. If you must do so, explain why.



4 Teaching & answering questions

- Walk through your assessment and decision making process; “think out loud”
- Drawing pictures or using illustrations, whenever it makes sense to do so, helps families understand and remember.
- Use teach-back methods with patients and family to ensure they understand.



5 When a visit isn't going well

- Pause; take a “time out.” Express that you sense you are not on the same page with the family. Seek to understand and address their concerns.
- Verbalize that you are **on their side** in seeking the best path forward, even if you are in different places regarding diagnosis or next steps.
- Take time to explain why you have reached the conclusions you have and why you believe they are in the best interest of the patient and family.



6 Close & extend the relationship

- Confirm that you have addressed all concerns and questions that the patient or family may have.
- Provide them with the name and contact information (yours, or another team member) to use if they have any follow-up questions or concerns once they are home.
- Providing your business card demonstrates to families your care and concern extends beyond this visit.