



## Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network

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### MAKING INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT MEDICATION

All healthcare involves teamwork. The best treatment is collaboration between those receiving, those providing, and those coordinating care. Working together doesn't just lead to good treatment. Working together *is* good treatment.

It's important that you have mental health and medical providers you can trust. Trusting someone does not give them the power to make decisions for you. Patients (and parents of children) have a responsibility to consider all treatment options, so as to make a truly informed decision known as "Informed Consent." Informed Consent is not a one-time event. It continues with treatment and you can withdraw it at any time.

Children and youth who may take medication for mental health problems should be included in the decision-making discussions as much as possible. This ensures that their experiences and concerns are heard and helps them buy-in to the choices that are made.

Your medical provider has a responsibility to share their expertise and:

- ❖ Explain anticipated benefits of treatment
- ❖ Explain potential side effects and risks
- ❖ Explain other treatment options
- ❖ Explain anticipated result of no treatment
- ❖ Consider and explain costs of the treatment (depending on your insurance)

You have a responsibility to ask for information you can understand to help you:

- ❖ Know **BEFORE** beginning any treatment:
  - What do you hope to gain by this treatment and how likely is it to work?
  - How easy or difficult will it be to follow this treatment? **Will you be able to do this?**
  - What are the risks if you choose not to use this treatment?
  - What can be done *instead of* this treatment or *in addition* to improve the results?
- ❖ Ask questions so you truly understand the chances for potential side effects and risks of treatment
- ❖ Share information regarding other conditions and any treatments you are using, so that mental health medication treatment can be coordinated with other treatment providers. Be sure to include nutrition, vitamin/supplement and alternative therapies.

As you research to learn more about medications, consider:

- ❖ **Not all the information on the internet is reliable**
- ❖ Drug companies advertise medications that will make the most money, not necessarily those that are safest or most effective
- ❖ FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approval:
  - Approval means a drug is safe and effective; it does *not* mean *safest* or *most effective*
  - FDA approval is costly and time-consuming - Only makers of brand-name drugs can afford this
  - Many older generic drugs are safer and more effective than ones with FDA approval
  - Very few drugs are FDA approved for children & adolescents - this does *not* mean they are unsafe
  - Whether or not they are safe and effective is a great discussion to have with your provider

You have choices!

- ❖ Ask about the time frame to make a decision. You should not feel pressured into making a decision NOW, unless there is high risk in delaying. You may want to discuss your choices with family members, your treatment team, or others who are important to you.
- ❖ You can ask for a second opinion
- ❖ You can signed an Informed Consent and begin treatment
- ❖ You can decline the suggested treatment at this time

We look forward to working with you to develop the best possible treatment plan for yourself or your child and family.

**For more information on specific psychiatric medications, go to the MVBCN website at:  
[http://www.mvbcn.org/home/mv1/smartlist\\_181/choosing\\_medication\\_treatment.html](http://www.mvbcn.org/home/mv1/smartlist_181/choosing_medication_treatment.html)**