

**A pediatrician's presence at a school meeting can help all school meeting participants maintain focus on working together to help the child. He/she can answer any medical problems or concerns they may have about the child.**

### **Supporting Schools**

Teachers may be uncomfortable contacting a pediatrician. In preparing these materials, we were asked how to open the lines of communication. It may be helpful to the parents and in the best interests of the child for you to contact school personnel directly.

School personnel have told us it is helpful when:

- **Both** pediatricians and parents communicate with the same person at school to ensure continuity of information exchange.
- **Email** is used to set up times to meet. As many educators use email to communicate with parents, you will likely be able to get the email address from the parent. If not, call the school office to be put in contact with the teacher, or visit the school's webpage.

**Visit the BC Pediatric Society website for information for Pediatricians and Families:**  
[www.bcpeds.ca](http://www.bcpeds.ca)



### **Did you know?**

Pediatrician formal meetings with schools are covered by Fee Code 0545.

- Needs a formal, scheduled meeting.
- Date/time/results to be documented in the chart and people present.
- Must last at least 15 minutes and can use up to 1 hour per patient per day.
- Not to exceed a maximum of 4 hours per patient per year.
- Can be in person or on the telephone.
- Needs to be for services related to psychiatric/developmental/major chronic disease/multiple mental handicaps.

Please see guidelines in the medical services commission guide.

### **Additional Resources**

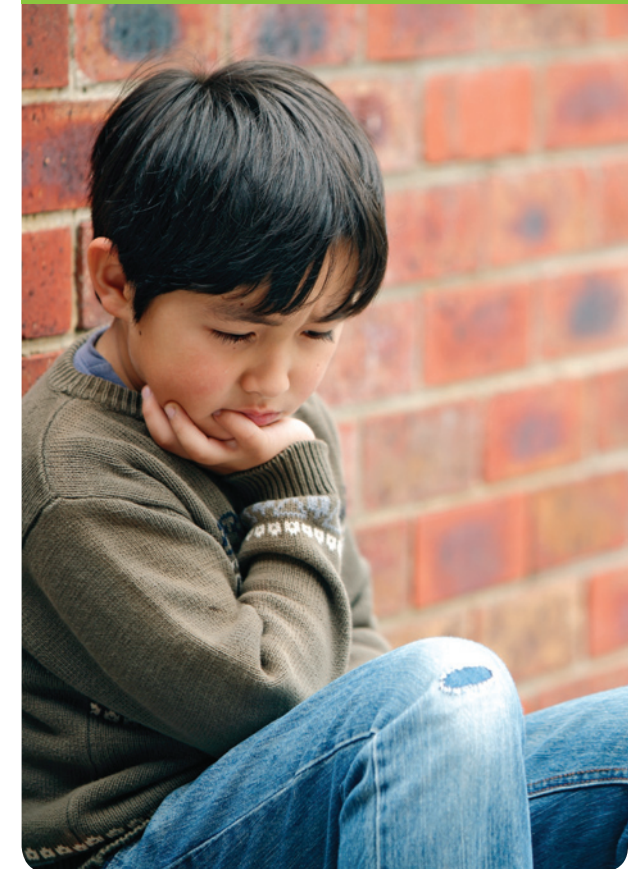
There are many excellent resources for parents of children with mental health challenges. Here are three you can recommend with confidence:

- F.O.R.C.E. (Families Organized for Recognition and Care Equality):  
[www.forcesociety.com](http://www.forcesociety.com)
- The Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre for youth and young adults:  
[www.keltymentalhealth.ca](http://www.keltymentalhealth.ca)  
[www.mindcheck.ca](http://www.mindcheck.ca)
- BC Pediatric Society:  
[www.bcpeds.ca/families/](http://www.bcpeds.ca/families/)  
See tab "Mental Health"

Fall 2012



**Information for pediatricians to help parents develop their child's social relationships and friendships**



This brochure helps you prepare parents for a successful conversation with their child's teacher or other education professional with respect to developing friendships.



Some children face a variety of challenges in developing positive social skills including the ability to make friends. A constellation of factors including learning disabilities, anxiety, ADHD and/or other types of mental illness may be factors contributing to a child's social isolation and lack of social skills.

Parents can be uncomfortable about approaching school personnel or their pediatrician for help with a child who has mental health challenges and difficulty with social relationships. This brochure helps you prepare parents for a successful conversation with their child's teacher or other education professional.

**"It is rare that I have had direct contact with a doctor, but when it happened, it has been to the benefit of the child."**

— *Teacher*

Advice to parents will vary depending on the severity of the challenges.

### **Children with Social/Emotional Challenges**

The handout which accompanies this brochure can provide help to parents of children with significant social/emotional challenges. See *Making Friends: Tip Sheet for Parents*.



Arrows in the handout point to questions parents can use to initiate conversations with school staff about social learning opportunities for their child. The questions follow general information or specific examples of activities that can support social/emotional development, and empower parents in the process.

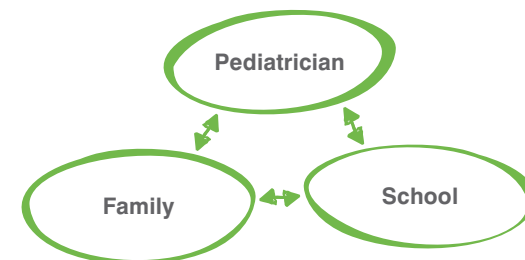
### **Children with Moderate to Severe Behavior Challenges**

Children with more severe mental, emotional and behavioural challenges will likely already be receiving school based interventions, support, and monitoring of achievement toward behavioural goals. Parents concerned about their child can maintain close contact with the school team. See "PLANS" on parent handout for a brief description of some of the plans that may be developed by a school-based team.



## **The Pediatrician-Family-School Triad**

*Direct pediatrician communication with Schools can be extremely useful.*



Nurturing positive social relationships and making friends is an important issue for families, health professionals (pediatricians, family doctors, mental health professionals) and educators (teachers, education assistants, and counselors). Together, parents, health professionals and educators can create a strong triad.

Pediatricians can play an important collaborative role in helping parents by connecting them with the school. As a pediatrician, you can facilitate communication with school staff after your consultation with the parents and the child who is having difficulties making friends.

### **Supporting Parents**

When talking with parents, reassure them that you are available to help support communication with the school. Here are some suggestions:

- **Coach** parents to be clear about what they want from a meeting with their child's teacher or other school staff.
- **Remind** parents that it is OK to ask the teacher questions. Parents and teachers need to work together to benefit the child.
- **Clarify** essential information with parents, such as specific strengths and needs of their child. Help the parent determine what they are comfortable sharing with school staff about their child and their family as a unit.